

E c o n o m i c &

S o c i a l A f f a i r s

STATE OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

EDUCATION

3RD Volume



United Nations

States of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Education



Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Social Policy and Development
Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

STATE OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

EDUCATION

3RD Volume



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UN-DESA

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State of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Education

Foreword

Mariam Wallet Aboubakrine

Chair of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Recognizing the gaps in analytical research on the situation of indigenous peoples, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues called for a report on the state of the world's indigenous peoples. The Forum believed that this report will help dispel the myths and inconsistencies about indigenous peoples, and demonstrate their unique identity and traditions, as contributions to the world's bio-cultural diversity. In response, DESA issued the *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* in 2009. This was the first global, authoritative report by the UN system to focus on indigenous peoples, with the 2014 second edition focusing on *Indigenous Peoples' Access to Health*.

The third edition has been prepared with the contributions of experts on indigenous education, a key focus area for the UN Permanent Forum. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, who started his career as a teacher, recently said that mothers and fathers around the world would make any sacrifice for their children's education. Indigenous peoples fully realise that education is key for preserving their traditions and building their future.

The 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides the normative framework for our work on the rights of indigenous peoples. Article 14 of the Declaration reiterates that indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language. This edition of the State of the World's Indigenous Peoples analyses

the situation of indigenous peoples and their right to education. It describes the different contextual backgrounds and policy impacts on indigenous peoples, faced with the challenge of embracing mainstream education, while at the same time revitalizing their own languages and cultures.

Ten years has passed since the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted, yet many challenges remain. There are alarming reports of indigenous languages in danger of extinction. Conservative estimates suggest that more than half of the world's 6,700 languages will become extinct by 2100 and the majority of the languages under threat are indigenous languages. This publication provides concrete actions to secure the identity, languages and cultures of indigenous peoples, and implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect.

The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development includes explicit consideration of indigenous peoples, and pays particular attention to education. Sustainable Development Goal 4 focuses on ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote life-long learning. If we want to achieve this goal is necessary to ensure equal access to education for indigenous children, including children with disabilities. I hope that this publication helps readers to better understand where we are, so that this Goal can be reached.



Overview
State of the
World's Indigenous Peoples:
Education



State of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Education

Overview

An estimated 370 million indigenous peoples in the world today represent a significant part of the world's vast cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage. Indigenous peoples possess unique knowledge systems, which are recognized as crucial for sustainable development. At the same time, social, economic and political marginalization of indigenous peoples is pervasive in all the regions of the world.

The education sector not only mirrors and condenses the history of abuse and discrimination suffered by indigenous peoples, but is also a locus of the continuing struggle for equality and respect for their rights. Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹, affirms the two intertwined principles of equality and self-determination which underpin indigenous peoples' rights and contextualizes those rights within the area of education in the following terms:

- ≡ **Equality:** indigenous peoples have the same right to education as all other human beings,² a right which they should be able to enjoy without any discrimination.

- ≡ **Self-determination:** indigenous peoples have the right to an education that adequately reflects their culture, language and methods of teaching and learning.

¹ General Assembly resolution 61/295, annex.

² See the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly by its resolution. 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948, article 26.

While there are differences within and between indigenous peoples, countries and regions, the regional reports included in the present publication reveal almost universal patterns of violation of indigenous peoples' rights. Some of the key issues identified across regions are described below.

Non-recognition of indigenous knowledge and learning systems

Indigenous values, institutions, practices and economies are often based on sustainable management of natural resources. Along similar lines, indigenous peoples have their own methods of knowledge transmission, based on oral traditions. When States and religious organizations developed frameworks of formal education for indigenous peoples, often, either indigenous cultures, languages and practices were ignored or their preservation was discouraged. In consequence, such preservation was confined to the domestic sphere or suppressed entirely, resulting in the disruption of the transmission of languages, cultural values and practices. Globally, formal education has contributed to the loss of both indigenous languages and traditional bodies of knowledge and lifestyles.

Education as a vehicle for assimilation

Formal education for indigenous peoples has often been conceived as a means of their assimilation into mainstream national society. In the worst cases, entire peoples experienced forced removal of their children or their forced enrolment in residential schools, where widespread abuse of indigenous children was practised. In 2015, upon receiving the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, entitled *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*,³ the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, stated that the Indian residential school system had had "a profoundly lasting and damaging impact on indigenous culture, heritage and language".⁴ The accounts presented here are not of distant events but rather of contemporary traumatic experiences, with whose consequences thousands of communities are still struggling to cope. The wounds are so deep that learning about the past in the classroom may even lead to re-traumatization.

Marginalization of indigenous peoples in formal education

Many regions lack the disaggregated data needed to establish the exact dimensions of the discrimination and marginalization undergone by indigenous peoples. Where data does exist, they reveal a pattern of persisting disparities between indigenous peoples and the non-indigenous population in all the regions of the world with respect to educational access, retention and achievement. Furthermore, cultural perceptions of gender roles and gender-based discrimination also influence the patterns of exclusion and inclusion.

³ Toronto, Ontario, James Lorimer and Company, 2015.

⁴ Statement issued on 15 December 2015.



Towards an education that strengthens indigenous peoples' rights

Nearly all regions exhibit an increased recognition of the right of indigenous peoples to what is referred to as intercultural bilingual education (IBE), that is, education that is adequate culturally and linguistically. Available evidence across regions indicates that intercultural bilingual education leads to improved educational outcomes and enhanced self-esteem, and helps overcome discrimination and related social problems.

However, the transformation of education from an instrument of assimilation and integration into a means of self-determination is a multidimensional and complex long-term process, which advances at a pace that depends on the conditions of the region, country and community concerned.

Indigenous peoples face fundamental problems when attempting to reconcile their own forms of culturally transmitted learning with national systems of formal education. While decolonization within the sphere of education may, in principle, be perceived as a process that revitalizes indigenous knowledge systems, there are several conceptual and practical challenges which have proved difficult to address. Clashes related to epistemology-related factors, values and institutional structures, as well as the power relations involved, are present in the experiences in several regions.

Indigenous peoples have begun a re-conceptualization of educational processes, emphasizing indigenous languages, spiritual beliefs, values, community involvement and connection to land, territories and resources. However, the process of achieving systemic change in education-related legislation and governance, human resources, curricula, materials and assessment, based on indigenous goals and aspirations, requires time, effort and resources. Hence, there is a critical need both for national and international support and for capacity-building to ensure that academics and professionals, especially among indigenous peoples, can act as leaders in effecting this significant paradigm shift.

Finally, it is important to note that even in those regions where intercultural bilingual education is progressing, this is considered a matter of concern for indigenous peoples only. The conviction that every learner should be taught about all the cultures and languages that make up the national heritage, in order to promote understanding and tolerance, has yet to be mainstreamed across most national educational systems.

A rights-based approach to indigenous education

As previously stated, indigenous peoples' right to education is affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the right to education and culture are protected in a variety of international instruments including:

- ≡ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- ≡ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁵
- ≡ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁶
- ≡ The Convention on the Rights of the Child⁷
- ≡ The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination⁸
- ≡ Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO): The Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107),⁹ and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)¹⁰ as well as the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111),¹¹ among others.

As States and other actors plan their policies and strategies for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹² they need to adopt a human rights-based approach to keep the promise that indigenous peoples will not again be left behind. Through linking the relevant articles of the above-mentioned human rights instruments with the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), States and indigenous peoples can generate a human rights-based guide to indigenous peoples' education, which should determine the policies and strategies to be pursued to 2030.¹³

The concept of indigenous peoples

There has been considerable debate centred on the definition of the term "indigenous peoples". Today, the prevailing view is that a single formal universal definition of the term is unnecessary for the recognition and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, and will fail to capture the diversity, range and complexity of the situations of indigenous peoples throughout the world.

⁵ See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577. No. 27531. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

⁸ Ibid., vol. 660, No. 9464.

⁹ Ibid., vol. 328, No. 4738.

¹⁰ Ibid., vol. 1650, No. 28383.

¹¹ Ibid., vol. 362, No. 5181.

¹² General Assembly resolution 70/1.

¹³ See, e.g., sdg.humanrights.dk.



The Special Rapporteur of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, José R. Martínez Cobo, in his *Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations*,¹⁴ offered a working definition of indigenous communities, peoples and nations. They are “those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them”¹⁵ and “form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system”.¹⁶

As explained in that study:

“This historical continuity may consist of the continuation, for an extended period reaching into the present, of one or more of the following factors:

- (a) Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them;
- (b) Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands;
- (c) Culture in general or in specific manifestations (such as religion, living under a tribal system, membership of an indigenous community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle, etc.);
- (d) Language (whether used as the only language, as mother tongue, as the habitual means of communication at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language);
- (e) Residence in certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world;
- (f) Other relevant factors.”¹⁷

According to the same study: “On an individual basis, an indigenous person is one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group)”,¹⁸ which thereby “preserves for these

¹⁴ Vols. I to V of the study were issued under the document symbols E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7 and Add.1-4. Document E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7/Add.4 (Vol. V) was also issued as a United Nations sales publication with Sales No. E.86.XIV.3.

¹⁵ E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7/Add.4 (Vol. V: Conclusions, proposals and recommendations), para. 379.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., para. 380.

¹⁸ Ibid., para. 381.

communities the sovereign right and power to decide who belongs to them, without external interference”.¹⁹

ILO Convention No. 169 also enshrines the importance of self-identification. Article 1 (2) thereof affirms that “[s]elf-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of th[e] Convention apply”.

The importance of self-identification is also underlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In article 33 thereof, it is affirmed that indigenous peoples “have the right to determine their own identity” (para. 1) and “to select the membership of their institutions in accordance with their own procedures” (para. 2).

¹⁹ Ibid., para. 382.



About this publication

This publication, which comprises seven chapters, focuses on the issue of access to and quality of education for indigenous peoples within the seven socio-cultural regions determined to give broad representation to the world's indigenous peoples: Africa; Asia; Central and South America and the Caribbean; the Arctic; the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia, and Central and Eastern Europe; Northern America; and the Pacific.

The authors provide an overview of educational issues in each sociocultural region and analysis of the challenges faced by indigenous peoples in their efforts to access and utilize all educational services in that region.

Chapter I, written by Monica Aleman Cunningham, provides an overview of the various challenges faced by the indigenous peoples in Africa in gaining access to a quality education while also maintaining their own education systems. Today, there are many factors that negatively affect indigenous peoples' access to formal education in the African region, including the lack of or deficiencies in school infrastructure in the areas where they live, and the lack of mobile schools and culturally adequate boarding facilities for nomadic and semi-nomadic indigenous children. Many indigenous families also face the financial burden imposed by tuition fees and the indirect costs of education (for materials, uniforms, school meals and transport). There is also a lack of qualified bilingual teachers and learning materials in the mother tongue. Many indigenous children in Africa experience poor learning conditions (e.g., a shortage of desks and chairs, and poorly lit and poorly ventilated classrooms) and unsafe school environments (characterized by discrimination, physical abuse and gender-related violence). Militarization in indigenous territories, including the use of community schools as military detachments, affects children's education by disrupting the daily learning cycle and instilling fear.

Chapter II, written by Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson and Yvonne Vizina, provides an overview of the educational issues and challenges faced by the indigenous peoples of the Arctic region, and the successes that have been achieved. The first challenge is associated with the attempt to create culturally relevant education for the indigenous peoples of the Arctic which privileges and integrates traditional values and practices. The authors also focus on the subjects of institutional and structural support for indigenous education, including intercultural bilingual education, as well as challenges, such as discrimination and a lack of recognition of indigenous peoples and their traditional knowledge systems and practices.

In **Chapter III**, Prashanta K. Tripura provides an overview and analysis of the situation of indigenous peoples in Asia. The Asian region accounts for approximately 70 per cent of the estimated 370 million indigenous people worldwide, many of whom experience non-recognition of their identities, exclusion and marginalization. While available data

is limited, the general trends observed globally for indigenous peoples also applies to Asian countries. Indigenous students tend to have lower enrolment rates, higher drop-out rates and poorer educational outcomes than non-indigenous peoples across Asia, as in other parts of the world. The author affirms that it is important for indigenous peoples to exercise the right to self-determination as a means of enabling them to develop and preserve their own education material and revive and reclaim their cultural traditions and indigenous identities.

Chapter IV, written by Juan de Dios Simón Sotz, addresses the issue of access to and quality of education for indigenous peoples in Central and South America and the Caribbean. The estimated 45 million indigenous peoples in the Latin American region constitute 60 per cent of the region's poor. There has been some progress through both the enactment of national legislation which recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples and the partial incorporation of the perspective of indigenous peoples in the educational system. At the same time, progress made over the last two decades has not been able to reverse the impact of centuries of exclusion and discrimination. Hence, human development indicators (education, health and income) of indigenous peoples are still low, compared with other groups. The author therefore concludes that while advances have been made in Latin America in respect of access to and quality of education, much remains to be done. Several factors, including the geographical remoteness of some indigenous groups, widespread discrimination, economic vulnerability and lack of teachers with both intercultural and linguistic competency, hinder the educational advancement of indigenous peoples.

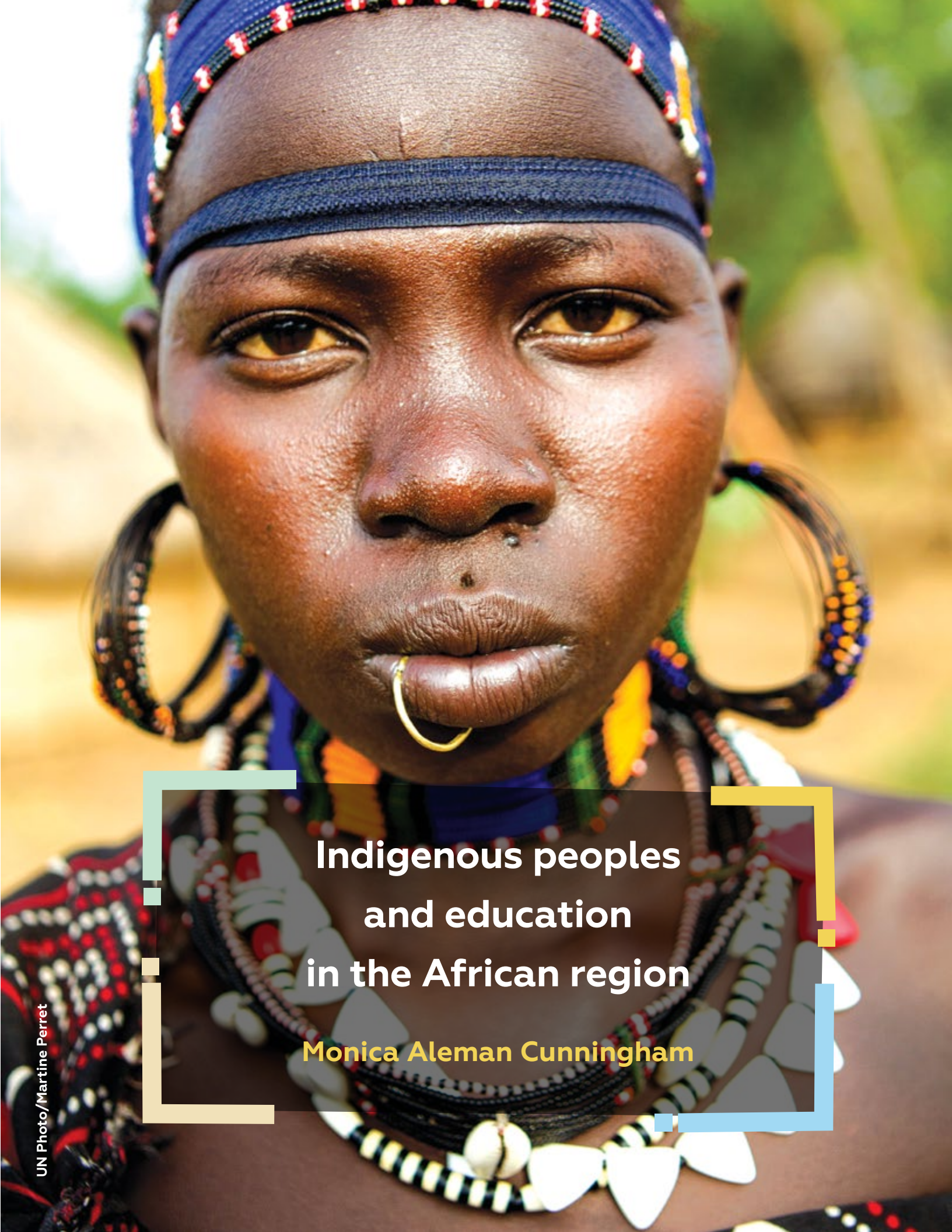
The author of **Chapter V**, Dr. Octaviana Valenzuela Trujillo, examines the key barriers to education faced by the indigenous peoples of North America. In Canada and the United States of America, the most daunting challenges faced by indigenous peoples are the prevalence of culturally and linguistically unresponsive curricula and systems, poverty, high dropout rates, and lack of access to educational opportunities. While in both countries indigenous peoples exhibit diversity and dynamism, this critical factor is ignored by the majority of education initiatives. From the author's perspective, the most important means of improving indigenous education are, among others, a curriculum that includes cultural and linguistic competency, training educators, increasing the number of indigenous peoples in positions that enable them to influence education initiatives, embracing alternative methods of education, and incorporating community-based values and goals.

Chapter VI, authored by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, begins with a general discussion of the issues in education facing indigenous peoples of the Pacific region. Both an analysis of the issues in education faced by the indigenous peoples of Australia, New Zealand, French Polynesia and Hawaii and an overview of the higher education, research and training context are then provided. Indigenous knowledge, science and research are the focus of the three case studies that follow. In the author's view, higher or further



education is critical to the realization of the aspirations of indigenous peoples. It is institutions of higher learning that train the teachers and other professionals who will then go on to deliver services to indigenous peoples, set policy agendas and govern those very institutions.

The challenges confronting indigenous peoples in their efforts to access quality education in the Russian Federation is the subject of **Chapter VII**, authored by Konstantin Zamyatin. The barriers faced by indigenous students at each education level – primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational – are examined. One of the main issues considered is the lack of accommodation of indigenous peoples' languages inasmuch as higher education is provided only in the Russian language. Another issue is the absence of federal legislation on alternative forms of teaching and the lack of separate curricula for indigenous peoples. The author stresses the need for a shift away from the use of boarding schools in order to afford children the opportunity to attend nomadic schools. He also highlights the importance of including the input of indigenous peoples in the development and implementation of educational programmes and curricula.



**Indigenous peoples
and education
in the African region**

Monica Aleman Cunningham



Chapter I

Indigenous peoples and education in the African region

Monica Aleman Cunningham

Introduction

Indigenous peoples in Africa often face enormous challenges. This is mainly due to the reluctance of some African States to acknowledge the existence of indigenous peoples within their territories, with these challenges varying from country to country. This is often related to the goal of nation building and achieving national unity in multi-ethnic societies. Many African Governments argue that all Africans are indigenous. As a result, official records such as the national census do not encompass the different ethnic groups, including indigenous peoples, in the country or their languages (International Labour Organization and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2009a, p. vi).

While many indigenous peoples in the African region live in geographically isolated self-sustaining communities, many also live in villages and towns alongside and among the majority populations. This poses challenges. There is growing recognition of the need for a form of intercultural bilingual education that is rooted in indigenous peoples' own culture, language, values, worldview and system of knowledge yet also

receptive to other systems of knowledge, values, cultures and languages. In this regard, indigenous peoples have a desire to learn the majority language so that they can fully participate in public life, access higher education, influence political decisions and embrace economic opportunities (ibid.).

Children belonging to indigenous communities suffer a disproportionate lack of access to educational opportunities and health care, which results in their lack of access to land, skills and secure employment and permanently marginalizes them in the countries in which they live. While indigenous peoples possess their own education systems grounded in particular cultural contexts which have enabled them to survive for millennia, they have also advocated for greater recognition and inclusion of those systems which incorporate their perspectives, cultures, beliefs, values and languages. For indigenous peoples, their right to education is a holistic concept which encompasses the mental, physical, spiritual, cultural and environmental dimensions (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2005).

Indigenous peoples and education in the African region

The right of indigenous children to education has been asserted in several human rights instruments.²⁰ The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights²¹ which entered into force in 1986, affirms that every individual shall have the right to education (article 17 (1)) and that every individual may freely take part in the cultural life of his or her community (article 71 (2)). For indigenous peoples, this signifies the right to be educated in their own culture.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,²² affirms the right of children to enjoy equal access to free and compulsory basic education. It also requires States to take measures to address dropout rates and special measures in favour of disadvantaged children. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples'

²⁰ In the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is stated that all children have the right to a primary education, which should be free to all, and that all young people should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education of which they are capable (article 28); that children's education should be directed to developing each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest and to encouraging the child to respect human rights, others, and their own and other cultures (article 29); and that minority or indigenous children should have the right to enjoy their own culture, practise their own religion and use their own language (article 30). The text of the Convention is available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

²¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1520, No. 26363. Available at <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/achpr/>.

²² Available at www.achpr.org/instruments/child/#a11.



Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)²³ imposes obligations on States parties to take measures to eliminate discrimination against women in relation to access to education and to address the poor enrolment and retention of girls in schools.

Recognition (and non-recognition) in national constitutions

The issue of recognition of indigenous peoples in the African region gained prominence during the deliberations of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. In 2001, the Commission decided to establish a working group of experts to consider all aspects of the rights of indigenous peoples in Africa and to promote consideration of the matter by African States (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1999).

The *Report of the African Commission's Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities* (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2005), which was adopted by the African Commission at its twenty-eighth ordinary session in November 2003, conceptualizes the situation of indigenous peoples in the region.²⁴ This groundbreaking report established criteria for identifying indigenous peoples in Africa which focus on self-identification; special attachment to their ancestral lands and territories; collective physical and cultural survival as peoples; and a way of life and modes of production that are different from national models. Other criteria include marginalization, dispossession, discrimination and exclusion.

The Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities reiterates that education is essential for the self-development of indigenous peoples and for empowering them to fight domination and its consequences. Education is vital to the survival of indigenous groups. Hence, the right to education for indigenous peoples is as important with respect to basic and early child education as it is with respect to adult formal or informal and technical education. To this end, access to primary education for the child, especially the girl child, and access for adults to higher education, including secondary, technical and tertiary education as well as literacy programmes, are important components of the right of indigenous groups to education.²⁵

Achieving a better understanding of the educational situation of indigenous peoples in the African region entails comprehending the importance of the fact that many countries on the continent do not specifically recognize indigenous peoples in their constitution. However, some steps have been taken towards ensuring a greater recognition of

²³ Available at <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/women-protocol/>.

²⁴ Further information is available at <http://www.achpr.org/mechanisms/indigenous-populations/about/>.

²⁵ See, in this regard, the press release of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights regarding the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2016. Available at <http://www.achpr.org/press/2016/08/d309/>.

indigenous peoples, either through specific legislative action or through administrative and other measures. For example, Namibia, which refers to indigenous peoples as “marginalized communities”, has set up the Division San Development programme under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister to ensure that marginalized people in Namibia are fully integrated into the mainstream economy.²⁶

In Burundi, there have been efforts aimed at encouraging the political integration of the indigenous Batwa. The national Constitution and the Electoral Code explicitly recognize that the protection and inclusion of minority ethnic groups within the general system of good governance is a principle that must be guaranteed. The Constitution allocates three seats in the National Assembly and two seats in the Senate for Batwa (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2012). In 2010, the Central African Republic became the first country in Africa to ratify the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169); however, implementation has been slow owing to the ongoing conflict and political instability in that country (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2016).

On 25 February 2011, the Republic of the Congo enacted Act No. 5-2011 on the rights of indigenous peoples, a milestone on the path towards the recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights in Africa and elsewhere. This law provides for the right to education of indigenous children at all levels of the national educational system without discrimination (article 17), and for financial assistance to indigenous children for education at all levels (article 21).²⁷ However, as the enabling regulations for implementation of the law have not been adopted, and the interministerial committee needed to follow up on the implementation of the law has not been established, the Act has yet to yield tangible results for indigenous peoples (N’Zobo, 2016, pp. 381-382).

Uganda is home to a number of indigenous peoples, the most prominent being the Batwa, the Benet and the Karamojong. While there is no official Government policy on recognition of indigenous peoples, some groups are recognized as marginalized and vulnerable or as minorities. The Ministry for Gender, Labour and Social Development has established a data bank which provides information on minority ethnic communities. In addition to employing the word “minorities”, the Ministry uses the term “indigenous peoples” for minority ethnic groups. The cumulative effect of characterizing all ethnic groups as indigenous peoples has been to prevent indigenous peoples such as the Batwa from enjoying their collective rights (International Labour Organization and African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, 2009).

²⁶ See “About us” at the Marginalised Communities Division website (<http://www.sanddevelopment.gov.na/aboutus.htm>).

²⁷ See the comment made by the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa, on the legislation enacted by the Republic of the Congo on behalf of indigenous peoples.



Educational policies

In Angola, more than 40 per cent of all children are not educated,²⁸ although school is, in principle, free and mandatory. Owing to the high incidence of poverty, and the expenses associated with education, there are high rates of absenteeism and dropping out, especially for the San who are often jobless and illiterate. Schools are few and sometimes completely absent in regions where indigenous peoples reside. The impact has been compounded by a lack of sanitation, derelict or unsafe buildings, and a low number of qualified and available teachers. For the San, language has become an added barrier to learning.

70 per cent of births are not officially recorded by the public authorities of Angola.²⁹ As a result, children without identity documentation often find it impossible to access education. Further, many families consider the costs to be incurred in obtaining a birth certificates extremely high. In order to improve the situation of San communities, some provincial Governments have developed specific strategies and plans for addressing the needs of those communities in the areas of education, health, agriculture, land and water, as well as social needs.³⁰

In Botswana, San communities have the lowest levels of participation in the formal education system (Hays, 2011). The many factors responsible include poverty, social stigmatization, abuse and unfriendly school and hostile environments. There are also issues associated with learning in a foreign language and culture, the absence of successful San students who can serve as role models, and the lack of availability of formal education and real economic opportunity in the areas where San are living. In general, it is difficult for San children to obtain the skills necessary for entry into the labour market, as well as to participate in the decision-making processes that affect them.

Botswana has invested heavily in its education system over the past four decades following independence. Its education system — one of the most successful in the African region — provides up to 10 years of compulsory basic education (for ages 6–15) (Hays, 2011). The Remote Area Development Programme (RADP), under the Ministry of Local

Schools are few and sometimes completely absent in regions where indigenous peoples reside. The impact has been compounded by a lack of sanitation, derelict or unsafe buildings, and a low number of qualified and available teachers.

²⁸ Humanium, "Children of Angola: realizing children's rights in Angola". Available at <http://www.humanium.org/en/africa/angola/>. Last updated 6 November 2011.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Terre des hommes/Help for Children in Distress, "Angola" (2014). Available at <http://www.tdh-southern-africa.org/angola/>.

Government, caters specifically for children from remote and impoverished communities. There are no official figures for the proportion of “remote area dwellers” (RADs) who are San; however, it is presumed that they account for most of the remote area dwellers served by the programme. A common estimate is that more than 80 per cent of remote area dwellers nationwide are San and for some areas, the figure stands at 100 per cent (Hays, 2011).

The Government of Botswana earmarks resources specifically for the purpose of providing RAD children with the opportunity to attend Government schools, which includes the building and staffing of hostels to accommodate children from remote areas. Schools and hostels tend, however, to be unwelcoming to minority students, including many San students. San students at boarding schools experience feelings of pain and alienation which are at times acute. Further, students frequently report instances of abuse by hostel staff and other students, poor hostel conditions, stigmatization as a result of being identified as remote area dwellers and a general lack of cultural sensitivity in the classroom and within the hostel environment (Smith, n.d.).

Government policy in Botswana stipulates that education must be provided only in English or in Setswana, the dominant Bantu language which is the mother tongue of approximately 82 per cent of the population (Hays, 2011). For speakers of minority languages, there is no education in the mother-tongue. Hence, all school subjects are taught in English or Setswana; cultural representation in curriculum materials conveys the perspective of the dominant population, and styles of teaching derive their essence from the dominant culture. Government assistance to remote area dwellers is specifically non-ethnic, and no special provision is made for children who do not practise Setswana as their home language.

The Constitution of 2 June 1991 establishes the right of every citizen of Burkina Faso to an education. While, in theory, education is free, public schools require a parental contribution for the enrolment of each child. The cost of this contribution, together with the expenses for books and other school necessities, is greater than many families can afford. And once enrolled, a child may face additional obstacles, including the issue of school accessibility, the need to keep up with school dues, hunger and under- and malnourishment, and classroom overcrowding, as well as possibly great variation in the quality of teachers and administrators, especially in areas that are more rural.³¹

In Burundi, the strategy of the Ministry of Education consists of educating indigenous Batwa children alongside all other Burundian children in order to promote their integration. Although primary education has been free since 2005, direct and indirect costs prevent most Batwa children from attending school. Several state-level mechanisms can help Batwa children overcome this obstacle, such as the Education Sectoral Plan

³¹ Wisdom Spring [Uplifting, honoring, and preserving the wisdom of indigenous cultures], “Our education initiative”. See <http://www.wisdomspring.org/our-work/education/> (accessed 8 August 2017).



(2008-2011); the Poor Children's Programme, which raises the capitation grant to schools so that they can cover fees and stationery (Avocats Sans Frontières, 2013); and the School Feeding Programme, run by the World Food Programme (WFP) with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which targets areas of the country with the most severely malnourished children (World Food Programme, 2017). The Back to School and Child Friendly School campaigns supported by UNICEF also target Twa children (United Nations Children's Fund, 2014). They use strategies that entail, inter alia, building schools closer to homes, and providing uniforms, food and school supplies to girls at risk, as well as sensitizing teachers with respect to the rights and special educational needs of Twa children and girls. Teachers also need to be trained on how to recognize discrimination against Twa.

The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo clearly states that "primary education is compulsory and free in public establishments". In reality, however, education is not free, as parents generally have to pay teachers' salaries.³² Thus, children of indigenous peoples do not usually have access to education. Furthermore, the majority of villages of indigenous peoples lack the infrastructure for state education. A World Bank study indicated that only 18.7 per cent of indigenous Batwa children are enrolled in primary education (aged 6-11) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, compared with the national average of 56.1 per cent. Furthermore, 30.5 per cent of indigenous peoples (aged 15 or over) are able to read and write, compared with 65 per cent nationally (Wodon, Ben-Achour and Backiny-Yetna, 2010).

Efforts are being made under the Education Sector Strategy 2016-2025, which includes provision of free primary education with specific reference to indigenous peoples, as set out in the section on the development of a programme of inclusive education, special education and education of vulnerable children; and measures to improve equity in higher education. This reflects the recognition of the issue by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the Government's commitment to improving educational access for the indigenous population.

The education system in Ethiopia faces numerous challenges associated with the diversity of languages and lifestyles. Indigenous communities in Ethiopia understand that education is their path to a better future. However, while more schools are being built in remote and rural areas with the assistance of development organizations, and an increasing number of children are obtaining access to education, there is more to be done. Children enter community schools at age 5. While the language of instruction in primary schools can be chosen by those communities, English has been established

³² Global Forest Coalition, "NGO report on indigenous Pygmy peoples: universal periodic review of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2014) – Indigenous peoples in the DRC: the injustice of multiple forms of discrimination" (September 2013). Available at http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/RAPPORT-ALTERNATIF-UPR-ONG-PEUPLES-AUTOCHTONES-RDC-_ANGLAIS.pdf.

as the language of instruction in secondary and post-secondary schools. Enrolment tends to be high in primary schools but many children and youth do not complete their schooling. Many factors contribute to the low rate of school completion. For example, in some areas there are no secondary schools. Children are often required to travel long distances to school, which consumes time and energy and puts them at risk for abduction. In some families, children must work to bring in income; in others, traditional beliefs regarding females prevent girls from obtaining an education.

Nomadic and pastoralist communities in Kenya are among the most marginalized social groups and are widely excluded from mainstream national policymaking processes. Despite pledges by the Government to implement education for all, the literacy levels of those communities remain low compared with those of non-pastoralist groups (Kossaiba, 2013). Following the country's independence, formal education in Kenya was

In 2011, the Amazigh peoples won a landmark victory with the official recognition of their language and culture in a new constitution.

considered to be a tool for nation building and achieving national unity. The results of the new Government policies alienated indigenous communities, as the education system was viewed as an instrument of social disruption and as a means of dispossessing them of their livelihoods, culture, land and natural resources. Indigenous children were – and still are – discouraged from using their language and wearing their traditional garb (Kaunga, 2005).

On the other hand, formal education is perceived to be a process capable of integrating indigenous peoples into the wider society – a process that is fundamental to their accessing positions of leadership and authority in order to

ultimately organize and advance indigenous peoples' interests and rights. Education is also viewed as a means through which indigenous peoples can articulate their concerns at the local, national and international levels and, more importantly, create civil society organizations that advocate for their rights. Formal education has also had a positive effect on indigenous women by enabling them to give voice to their experience of social and cultural discrimination, and in turn, to develop strategies for addressing the issues that they face. Further, it is indigenous peoples with formal education who have raised these issues, which include violations of their rights, discrimination against the girl child, early marriages and female genital mutilation, at various levels of decision-making, including at international forums (Kaunga, 2005).

In order to help the Turkana peoples in Kenya adapt to recurrent drought and ensure that every child's right to an education is honoured, the Government of Kenya and UNICEF have introduced an innovative programme in the Rift Valley – a programme of mobile schools which move with the Turkana (Slavin, 2011). Mobile schooling is a key strategy under the Nomadic Education Policy supported by UNICEF, which enables children to access education within the context of nomadic lifestyles.



Tamazight (the Amazigh language) had been introduced into Morocco's education system in 2003. In 2011, the Amazigh peoples won a landmark victory with the official recognition of their language and culture in a new constitution. Although a timetable for the expansion of Tamazight classes across primary schools was established around the same time, this plan has not been implemented. The initial goal was for Tamazight to be taught in all of the country's schools by 2008. Today, only 14 per cent of primary school pupils are able to take Tamazight classes (*Morocco World News*, 2015).

The 2030 plan published by the Ministry of Education just before the beginning of the 2015/16 school year made no mention of the Amazigh language. According to Meryam Demnati, a researcher with the Royal Institute for Amazigh Language and Culture: "The Ministry of Education's indifference is causing the level of Tamazight teaching to plateau and decline, not to mention the 2030 plan produced by the same ministry, which is based on Arabic, with no mention of Tamazight. Instead of being rolled out, at the very least, in primary schools, there are scarcely half a million children being taught Tamazight, out of 4,141,000 pupils in primary and 815,000 pupils in secondary school."³³ However, the situation took a dramatic — and positive — turn in late 2016, with Morocco adopting Tamazight as an official language alongside Arabic, rounding out a reform programme launched by King Mohammed VI in 2011. Writing using the Tifinagh alphabet of the Berbers is visible on public buildings, vying for space with signs in Arabic and French.³⁴

There are approximately 35,000 San in Namibia. The Government has taken proactive steps to increase San access to education. In 2000, the Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture of Namibia, having identified "educationally marginalized" groups in the country, including the San, developed policies specifically tailored to these groups. The right of Namibia's marginalized groups to receive culturally appropriate education in their mother tongue during the first years of school is embedded in the Government's education policy. The Nyae Nyae Village Schools Project, among others, entailing the establishment of model schools, provides examples of the achievements and challenges associated with initiatives in this area.

Despite state policies and legislation, education outcomes for the San people remain the poorest of all such outcomes among the social groups in the country (Nkhoma, 2012). According to various commentators, only 67 per cent of San children in Namibia enroll in school and only 1 per cent complete secondary school. The major challenge stems from the fact that the provision of education systems and the content of these systems are often managed by people who are not San. From the first day of school, San children have to contend with a myriad of challenges, ranging from culture and

³³ Interview with Meryam Demnati, 22 September 2015. Available at [tamazgha.fr: le site berbériste \(http://tamazgha.fr/L-Etat-marocain-est-anti-amazigh.html\)](http://tamazgha.fr/L-Etat-marocain-est-anti-amazigh.html).

³⁴ News 24, "Morocco goes bilingual as king rounds off reforms", 27 September 2016. Available at <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/morocco-goes-bilingual-as-king-rounds-off-reforms-20160927-3>.

language shock and unprecedented levels of discrimination practised both by teachers and by fellow learners, to bullying, economic barriers and the long walk to distant schools. These challenges often keep San children from attending school.

There have been discussions with regard to seeking alternative approaches to integrating San children into the education system. These include integrating San culture and indigenous knowledge into the school curriculum, using local language (the mother tongue) in at least the first four years of schooling, removing all economic barriers to education such as user fees, promoting inclusive education policies, and addressing issues of bullying and discrimination in schools. While there is a general appreciation of the efforts made so far, there is also a general acknowledgement that most of these interventions have not addressed the core needs of San children, a major reason being that there is very little, if any, involvement of the San themselves in the development of such interventions. The San must be at the centre of any intervention and their full involvement and participation must be ensured. The San must be able to determine the type of education their children need and how that education should be provided.

The lack of recognition of ethnic groupings in Rwanda has generated an institutionally led process of negation of the identity of the Twa as a minority. There is no specific legislation protecting Batwa rights, including their overall right to education as well as their right to receive an education that is consistent with and respectful of their distinctiveness as indigenous peoples.³⁵ In 2008 and 2009, 54 per cent of Batwa women and girls interviewed had never gone to school (United Nations, General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 2011). With its goal of promoting integration and reconciliation, the Government of Rwanda is implementing assimilationist educational policies, an approach which indicates that the Government does not view respect for the distinct identity of the Batwa to be a priority. Official recognition of the Batwa identity as a first step would give them access to mechanisms for the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples' rights, including education tailored to their specific needs (Lewis, 2000). Government and non-governmental development programmes need to target the distinctive culture, history and livelihood of the Batwa, thereby facilitating the integration – not the assimilation (Lewis, 2000) – of Batwa communities into Rwandan society (Collins, 2016).

Some progress has been made thanks to the Government's nine-year basic education policy, consisting of compulsory and free primary and general-cycle secondary education for all Rwandese children (Rwanda, Ministry of Education, 2008). As a result of this Governmental effort, in 2011, about 95 per cent of Batwa children were attending primary school. However, only about 45 per cent of Batwa children were in secondary school and very few (only 5 per cent) had gone on to university. In 2011, only 11 Batwa

³⁵ UNESCO.org, "Indigenous peoples: UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) related to Educational and Intergenerational Transmission". Available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/indigenous-peoples/education-and-intergenerational-transmission/undrip-ed/>.



youth completed their university studies, with 22 more continuing their studies into 2012 (Kalimba, 2011).

Since the Batwa suffer from the most severe forms of chronic multidimensional poverty (Warrilow, 2008) and systematic social, economic and cultural discrimination (ibid), a standardized national educational strategy is not effective enough to assist them in reaching the same educational level as the rest of the population. Affirmative action is needed to bridge the wide educational gap between the Batwa and the Bahutu and Batutsi groups. A grant system based on the model used to support genocide survivors, for example, would enable Batwa students who have finished high school to go on to university (Minority Rights Group International, 2008). There are also programmes conducted jointly by indigenous Batwa organizations and the Government aimed at raising awareness among officials of the specific problems of the Batwa (Lewis, 2000). Another good example of positive affirmative actions is the Ministry of Local Government policy of promoting vocational training for the Batwa youth who are unable to continue their academic education (Collins, 2016).

In the Congo, the adoption of the national law on indigenous peoples in 2011 signalled a policy shift in respect of the Government's recognition of and support for its indigenous peoples. In 2015, the education sector became more inclusive of indigenous children, through provision of school supplies to students, assistance to schools for indigenous children and teacher training. The independent "observe, reflect, act" schools, which are tailored specifically to the needs and culture of indigenous children and are supported and promoted by the European Union, UNICEF and WFP, were taken into account in the development of the national education strategy. Although there has been some improvement, rates of access to services by indigenous peoples is two to three times lower than those of other groups: their school enrolment ratio is 44 per cent, while their civil registration rate is 32 per cent (United Nations Children's Fund, 2013).

The current education policy of South Africa encourages mother-tongue education for the first three years, and provides development funding for all of the official languages. However, although the Khoe and San languages are recognized, they are not official languages and thus there is little Government funding available for their development. While the Northern Cape Education Department has expressed its commitment to designing a curriculum and materials that incorporate San languages and culture, the persisting lack of funding and logistic difficulties have slowed this process. As a result of decades of linguistic persecution during the apartheid era in South Africa, most San and Khoe currently speak Afrikaans as a first language, with only a few elders still speaking their mother tongue. Thus, for these groups, mother-tongue education is more an issue of language restoration than one of effective pedagogy, although it is still a crucial aspect of community development.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania recognizes education as a fundamental right and for this reason, education is compulsory for seven years, that is, until

children reach age 15. At the same time, performance in primary- and secondary-level education is declining dramatically. For indigenous pastoralists and hunter-gatherers, school attendance is much lower and the dropout rate much higher, although in the absence of disaggregated data, the exact figures are not known.

Most children in the United Republic of Tanzania attend school up until age 13, and some do not attend at all. The factors accounting for non-attendance and dropping out range from distance to school, proximity of wildlife, collusion between education officials and parents to prevent children from attending school, and curricula that are not in harmony with the interests of indigenous peoples. For example, the examination pass rates have been steadily decreasing, from 72 per cent in 2009 to 53 per cent in 2011. Among indigenous communities in Tanzania, the situation is worse. Not only are there fewer schools to begin with, but they lack trained personnel and other essentials, which make it difficult for children to succeed in national examinations. There is also a high illiteracy rate among parents, which greatly affects school enrolment, retention and completion. Very few indigenous peoples have access to education owing to the lack, or poor quality of infrastructure and/or ignorance, which has also limited their ability to hold leadership positions which require some form of formal education.

Education is a constitutional right according to the Constitution of Uganda (1995) which states that all persons have a right to education (article 30), including children, and that a child is entitled to basic education, which should be the shared responsibility of the State and the parents of the child (article 34 (2)). It is therefore the duty of the Government and parents to ensure that all children obtain a basic education regardless of whether they are from marginalized, vulnerable or minority groups. While, legally, every child is guaranteed an education, many children are denied the opportunity because of defects of the education system and the poor socioeconomic status of the country, as well as lack of parental understanding.

Educational challenges and innovative approaches

Due to the lack of resources and infrastructure, the indigenous nomadic populations in Burkina Faso can enjoy their rights to education and health to a very limited extent only. The pastoralist way of life prevents children from being educated within the country's formal education system; and the increasing marginalization of indigenous pastoralist children has been the result of the gulf between them and the children in the rest of the population who attend primary school (International Research on Working Children, 2007). Moreover, within indigenous pastoralist communities, there are many families whose members can neither read nor write.

The Peul pastoralists are gradually settling in some parts of Burkina Faso. However, many who are nomadic follow seasonal migration patterns, travelling hundreds of kilometres into neighbouring countries, particularly Benin, Ghana and Togo. The lives



of the Peul pastoralists are governed by the activities necessary for the survival of their animals. Tuareg communities are less nomadic and they tend to underutilize the Government resources and services that are available to them, such as education and basic health care, owing to culturally based mistrust and miscommunication. In this regard, Tuareg leaders often complain that the local Governments impose social services on their communities without respecting Tuareg cultural traditions (Global Security, 2017).

In Burundi, the Batwa have extremely limited access to social services, especially education beyond the primary level. Only one in four Batwa children under age 18 attend primary school, and only one per cent of those students reach high school. In 2008, there were only 429 Batwa students throughout the country who were attending high school, out of a total of 289,000 students. In 2006, just seven Batwa students were enrolled in university. Batwa women and girls in Burundi have reported being sexually harassed at school by male teachers or students or on the way home from school, resulting in unwanted pregnancies, poor academic performance and increased school dropout rates (Warrilow, 2008, p. 14).

In Ethiopia, there have been some developments with respect to provision of education to the children of indigenous pastoralists. Children play a critical role in the pastoralist lifestyle. Boys as young as six begin to herd their family's sheep and goats, while girls marry very young in order that parents may acquire additional livestock through the dowry. These are some of the reasons why pastoralist parents do not send their children to school. The fact that some indigenous groups consider education a luxury presents a challenge for teachers. To cater for the needs of the children, teachers use the alternative basic education system which responds to the special needs and constraints of pastoral life. The system provides flexible school hours, which allows pastoralist children to fulfil their household responsibility for herding cattle towards water and pastures while still having time for school (Sewunet, 2014). Further, there is continuous enrolment throughout the year as a means of encouraging children to attend school, as well as campaigns aimed at convincing parents to send their children to school.

In Kenya, indigenous peoples are mainly pastoralists and hunter-gatherers, fishermen and members of small farming communities. Pastoralists are estimated to constitute 25 per cent of the national population of 38.6 million (based on the 2009 census), while the members of the largest individual community of hunter-gatherers is approximately 79,000 (Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Both pastoralists and hunter-gatherers face insecurity with respect to land and resource tenure, poor service delivery, poor political representation, discrimination and exclusion. At the same time, the pastoralists' identity and culture contributes to Kenya's cultural diversity, national economy and conservation of biodiversity (Kaunga, 2005).

The participation of indigenous children in formal education in Kenya has been and continues to be a serious concern. As formal education is perceived to be in direct

conflict with pastoralist mobility trends, boarding schools were established as a means of addressing the educational needs of pastoralist children during the drought seasons. However, boarding schools have had their own problems, ranging from inadequate care of the children and increased education costs (as many boarding schools were privately run by missionaries) to an increased incidence of pregnancies, resulting in higher school dropout rates for girls. Further, there are only a few boarding schools in pastoralist districts that cater for pastoralist children. Kiswahili and English are the recognized languages of school instruction. Speaking in the mother tongue is discouraged and children are punished when they are caught doing so on the school premises. As a result, children have developed negative attitudes towards their mother-tongue language to the extent of using Kiswahili even at home (Kaunga, 2005).

Some pastoralist development and human rights organizations have formulated innovative approaches which have enabled pastoralist children to access certain relevant and appropriate forms of basic education, which has recently come to be called informal education (as opposed to formal schooling). In 1997, the Ministry of Education formulated a policy on non-formal education to help address the existing disparities in education. The poor areas of Nairobi and a few pastoralist organizations took advantage of this policy to initiate the kind of innovative approaches that have enabled several out-of-school children to enrol and attain basic numeracy and other essential skills.

Indigenous students in San communities across South Africa experience high dropout rates, which results in low success rates. This has been attributed to a number of interconnected factors, including the lack of mother-tongue education for most San communities, cultural differences between home and school, cultural practices such as hunting trips and initiation ceremonies that keep students from attending school, frequent abuse at the hands of school authorities and other students, and the experience of alienation in boarding schools.

In South Africa, with the support of UNICEF through the Schools for Africa partnership, the Nelson Mandela Institute of Rural Education has been carrying out research on and providing support for bilingual learning since 2008 through an initiative called the Magic Classroom Collective. The aim of this initiative is to support teachers in applying mother tongue-based bilingual approaches to literacy and numeracy development and to provide tested tools for strengthening the child's learning of the home language and acquisition of English. The programme is currently operating in 17 schools, within three isiXhosa-speaking communities of Eastern Cape.³⁶

In Uganda, as in many other parts of the world, there are no disaggregated data on indigenous peoples that can give an accurate description of their education situation.

³⁶ United Nations Children's Fund, "South Africa: the impact of language policy and practice on children's learning – evidence from Eastern and Southern Africa 2016". Available at [http://www.unicef.org/esaro/UNICEF\(2016\)LanguageandLearning-SouthAfrica.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/esaro/UNICEF(2016)LanguageandLearning-SouthAfrica.pdf).



The factors that have hampered their access to education in Uganda are no different from those that impact other indigenous peoples worldwide. These include deficient school services, poverty, gender-based constraints, and school systems that are discriminatory and/or that do not address indigenous peoples' needs. Education services in indigenous areas tend to be underfunded, of low quality and poorly equipped. Poor and indigenous children often attend the worst schools, are served by the least educated teachers, and have access to the fewest learning resources.

The region of Karamoja has the lowest school enrolment rates at both the primary and secondary school levels. The education facilities in this region are very poor, with schools lacking basic infrastructure such as classrooms and scholastic materials such as books, pencils, pens and chalk. A variety of factors are responsible including the marginalization of the region, which has affected not only education but all other services; and the nomadic lifestyle, which militates against children's settling in one place long enough to access school.

In Uganda, there is evidence that the Government is aware of the need to make schooling relevant to communities. Working with such civil society organizations as Save the Children Norway, the Government introduced the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) programme, which is designed to offer a curriculum and education methods that are consonant with a nomadic lifestyle. The programme also ensures the participation of the community in the education of their children, with the facilitators being drawn from among the members of the community, mainly the elders. If well implemented, Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja can reduce the "deficiencies" that are traditionally associated by the Karamojong with formal Western-style education and can prevent the educational segregation of the Karamojong (International Labour Organization and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2009a). The curriculum focuses on areas of study, such as crop production, livestock, health and peace and security, that are directly relevant to the Karamojong way of life.

The situation of the Batwa people of the Great Lakes region of Africa is highly precarious. The vast majority of Batwa adults have had little, if any, opportunity to go to school. They send their children to school when possible in order to give them the opportunities that they themselves have not had. Often, these children must leave early on, however, because of hunger, lack of materials and discrimination (Warrilow, 2008, p. 5).

In Uganda, working with civil society organizations, the Government introduced the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) programme, which is designed to offer a curriculum and education methods that are consonant with a nomadic lifestyle.

Impact of conflict

That indigenous peoples are often caught up in the midst of civil wars is evident in many parts of Africa, where several conflicts of varying intensity continue. The reasons for instability differ from country to country. Breaking the conflict trap is exceptionally difficult, and once a country has experienced large-scale internal conflict, as is currently the case for the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan, only an extraordinarily broad effort, often undertaken with the assistance of the international community through comprehensive peacekeeping or peacebuilding efforts, is able to break that cycle (Cilliers, 2015). For all children in such situations, including indigenous children, access to any kind of schooling is difficult, if not impossible, and even more so in refugee camps and other temporary shelters.

There is an ongoing civil war raging in the Central African Republic between the Séléka rebel coalition and Government forces, which began in December 2012. The Mbororo people, being nomadic cattle herders, have seen their lives and livelihoods disrupted or destroyed by the conflict. The Aka people were also reportedly among those targeted for attack by combatants, with their traditional home region in the south-west suffering incursions by armed groups in 2013.

The Central African Republic, one of the poorest countries in the world, is facing its worst humanitarian crisis since it became independent in 1960. Almost half of the country's population of 4.8 million are in immediate need of humanitarian assistance (European Commission, 2017). There is no national capacity to assist those affected, and relief efforts are being conducted under highly challenging conditions. Humanitarian organizations are still providing the bulk of essential services across the country. Nearly one million people in the country are now either refugees or internally displaced persons. Access to education is an ongoing issue for mainstream populations and indigenous peoples alike. As of July 2014, 59 per cent of schools remained closed owing to the absence of teachers, occupation of school buildings by armed groups, and continuing insecurity; and children in many areas have missed entire school years (International Rescue Committee, 2015). Indigenous children are in an even more dire situation: they are five times less likely to stay in school and twice as likely to have no education at all (Wodon, Ben-Achour and Backiny-Yetna, 2010).

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo led to the loss of some five million lives between 1994 and 2003. Although peace accords had been signed between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2003, many of the eastern areas of the country are still plagued by violence as various rebel groups continue their operations. Although the Democratic Republic of the Congo has made progress in improving education, recurrent crises still affect over 15 million people, and it remains one of the world's least developed countries in terms of education.



The Tuareg are semi-nomadic herders and traders living in northern Mali and across its borders in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya and the Niger. Because of conflict, the Tuareg and other Arab ethnic groups from northern Mali have faced massive displacement, and account for 60 per cent of the total ethnic make-up of Niger refugee camps.

The many obstacles confronted by Tuareg children within the refugee camps include the lack of infrastructure; insufficient teaching and learning materials; lack of running water and bathroom facilities, especially for girls; lack of infrastructure designed to support students with disabilities; and language barriers. Moreover, the curriculum does not consider the realities of students' lives; and teachers also face poverty, hunger and psychosocial stress. Further, there is an insufficient number of female teachers and of teachers trained to teach students with disabilities and, currently, there is no system in place for the certification of teachers in refugee camps.

In 2015, UNICEF launched a peacebuilding programme in Timbuktu and Gao; and non-Governmental organizations have been invited to participate in a thematic group led by the Ministry of Education, the aim being to design tools for school-based peacebuilding activities and review the existing curricula in order to integrate peacebuilding therein. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the conflict in Mali has produced some 139,000 refugees, many of whom are Tuareg, who have been internally displaced and are living in communities or refugee camps in neighbouring Burkina Faso and other countries. The Tuareg of Mali have lost their cattle, crops and shops owing to looting and revenge attacks (Poulsen, 2016). This situation has also put pressure on the Peul and Tuareg communities in Burkina Faso.

Main findings

Indigenous peoples' right to education has been undermined in many countries owing to a number of important factors, which include lack of physical and financial access, language barriers, textbooks with discriminatory content, and failure both to provide culturally relevant materials for students and to recognize many African indigenous communities' right to education.

Within indigenous communities with limited resources and opportunities for education, many indigenous families prioritize education for boys. Indeed, poverty in indigenous communities is directly linked to the decision of families to take girls out of school to prepare them for work. Since girls carry out important household tasks, which include assisting their mothers in performing chores and taking care of their young siblings, they are often kept at home. They are also married off early so that their families can

benefit from bride-price payments. Conflict may also prevent families from allowing girls to attend school, since travelling to a distant school during periods of insecurity is viewed as more dangerous for girls than for boys. Hence, in some indigenous communities, the levels of illiteracy among girls remain high, as do their dropout and failure rates.

Many countries in the African region have a long tradition of sending children to residential schools, particularly at the secondary level, a practice that dates back to the colonial period. There are still residential schools in parts of English-speaking Africa. The long distance between village communities and secondary schools often render those schools inaccessible to students, including indigenous students, which is why many students drop out of school after completing the primary level. Residential schools, on the other hand, contribute to the enhancement of the academic performance of students, including that of girls, by sparing them the burden of travelling long distances and performing domestic chores. One of the disadvantages of residential schools is the risk they pose of physical and sexual abuse: indigenous girls are often at risk of becoming pregnant and then dropping out of school and in some cases, expelled from school.

Recommendations

Despite the ample protection afforded by international and regional human rights instruments, in reality, the right to education of indigenous peoples in the African region is far from having been fully achieved. Not only is the enrolment rate for indigenous children, especially for the girl child, very low, but there is a higher dropout rate among indigenous children. These figures are usually attributed to such factors as the absence of schools within the vicinity of indigenous communities, the prohibitive costs of education according to the standards of indigenous peoples, the lack or inadequacy of specialized infrastructure and teaching staff, discrimination and exclusion of indigenous interests from curricula. In general, national schooling systems are inadequate with respect to addressing the specific needs of indigenous peoples in Africa and the issues associated with their ways of life and cultures.³⁷

There are many concerns within the area of education that need to be addressed for indigenous peoples to secure their right to education. These include the following:

1. It is important that States grant formal recognition of indigenous peoples in the African region;

³⁷ See the press release of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights regarding the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2016. Available at <http://www.achpr.org/press/2016/08/d309/>.



2. As is the case for indigenous peoples in many other parts of the world, there is an urgent need to disaggregate data so that the education situation of indigenous peoples in the African region can be accurately described;
3. There is a need for improved State and civil society engagement with indigenous peoples at local and national levels.
4. National curricula and materials should be intercultural and include accurate information regarding indigenous peoples, their cultures, histories and experience. Negative and discriminatory stereotypes should be eliminated from the curricula and materials of all schools and educational institutes, not just those for indigenous learners (IASG Thematic Paper for WCIP, 2014, pp. 8-9);
5. Indigenous peoples must be supported and empowered to take the lead in developing quality education systems. They should identify their own educational priorities and curricula and should be involved in the development of pedagogical material. Teacher training and education delivery should be planned and implemented with the active involvement of indigenous communities (IASG Thematic Paper for WCIP, 2014, p. 1);
6. There is a need for the kind of intercultural bilingual education that is rooted in peoples' own culture, language, values, worldview and system of knowledge while, at the same time, remaining receptive and open to, and appreciative of, other bodies of knowledge, values, cultures and languages;
7. Mother-tongue language instruction is recommended for indigenous children, youth and adults. Where the indigenous language is not the mother language (i.e., where the language is not being transmitted), language revitalization programmes should be integrated into the education system);
8. The educational attainment of indigenous women and girls often lags behind that of other segments of the population. Special priority must therefore be given to ensuring that indigenous women and girls have access to and benefit from education;
9. Teaching in formal education should not only focus on the dominant culture, but also support and emphasize the value of traditional knowledge, culture, livelihoods, worldviews and pedagogic methods. For this to be accomplished appropriately, infrastructure, curricula and pedagogical materials should be tailored to the unique needs of indigenous learners, communities and peoples. These efforts may include modified schedules, distance learning initiatives, mobile schools and culturally and linguistically appropriate pedagogic materials;

10. There is a need to register the birth of indigenous children. A birth certificate is an important document, since it provides proof of birthplace, used to acquire a national identity card and passport;
11. There is an urgent need for mobile classrooms and radio and television programmes for the benefit of the children of nomadic families; and,
12. Within refugee camps, there is an urgent need for stronger infrastructure, sufficient teaching and learning materials, and running water and bathroom facilities, especially for girls, as well as support for students with disabilities and for Tuareg and other indigenous children facing language barriers.



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**Indigenous peoples
and education
in the Arctic region**

**Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson
and Yvonne Vizina**



Chapter II

Indigenous peoples and education in the Arctic region

Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson *and* Yvonne Vizina

Introduction

Indigenous peoples of the Arctic region, such as the Aleut, Arctic Athabaskan, Gwich'in, Inuit and Sami, face significant challenges in protecting their traditional cultures and languages in the face of contemporary environmental, social and economic pressures. While the role of traditional cultures in education has improved in the past few decades, assessment of any achievements remains difficult. The present chapter provides an overview of Arctic indigenous peoples' education issues, challenges and successes.

This chapter is guided by Arctic indigenous peoples' principles regarding autonomy and self-determination. Each Arctic indigenous group possesses a worldview unique to its community, which is the foundation for materializing unique cultures and languages. The intergenerational transmission of indigenous knowledge, through culture and language, is a critical part of Arctic education processes, future successes and cultural security. Historical experiences, contemporary relationships and future goals are relevant to understanding and redefining educational contexts for Arctic indigenous peoples.

The Arctic region

It is important to note that the circumpolar Arctic may be defined in many ways. The Arctic has been identified geographically by its location above the Arctic Circle at 66°30' N latitude; as the global area north of the treeline; or as encompassing areas where average temperatures in July do not rise above 10°C (Dubreuil, 2011). This chapter focuses on Arctic indigenous peoples and their territories that are now associated with the national jurisdictions of the State of Alaska in the United States of America, Canada, Denmark (Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Norway and Sweden.

The map below (figure II.1), originally developed for the *Arctic Human Development Report 2004*, illustrates the demography of some of the Arctic peoples described in this chapter based on linguistic groups and provides some useful reference points with respect to indigenous territorial locations. The Arctic is, indeed, the homeland (Nuttall, 1992) that has sustained indigenous peoples for thousands of years prior to encroachments from the south (Kawagley, 1999; Keskitalo, Uusiautti and Määttä, 2012; McGregor, 2013).

Arctic indigenous peoples

The Arctic region is the homeland of many tribal groups. In the Na'Dene family, lat 60° N is home to the Eyak Tlingit and several Athabaskan tribal groups such as the Ahtna, Deg Hit'an, Dena'ina, Dene, Dogrib, Gwich'in, Hän, Holikachuk, Kaska, Koyukon, Northern Slavey, Southern Slavey, Tagish, Tanana, Tanacross, Tutchone, Upper Kuskokwim, Upper Tanana and Yellowknife. Lat 60° S, Athabaskan tribal groups near the Arctic Circle include the Babine, Beaver, Carrier, Dene, Sarsi, Sekani, Tahltan and Tsetsaut. Other indigenous peoples near the Arctic region include the Eyak, Haida, Tlingit and Tsimshian. There are approximately 9,000 Gwich'in, more than half of whom live in Alaska (Dubreuil, 2011).

The Aleut, according to Veltre (1996), have occupied all of the Aleutian Islands west to Attu Island, part of the Alaskan Peninsula and the Shumagin Islands since at least 1741. Later, the Aleut were settled in the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea. Today, there are 13 Aleut villages remaining, mostly in the Pribilof Islands and the eastern Aleutians. In 1971, following the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, a total of 3,249 Unangax registered as shareholders of the Aleut corporation. Although some Unangax no longer live in the villages of their traditional territory, having opted to move elsewhere, most still reside in Alaska or on Bering Island, Russian Federation (Veltre, 1996; n.d). The Eskimo-Aleut family includes Aleut; Inuit; Iñupiat; Kalaallit; Sugpiaq/Alutiiq, including Chugach Sugpiaq and Koniag Alutiiq; Yupik, including Siberian Yupik; and Yup'ik, including Cup'ik.



FIGURE II.1

Demography of indigenous peoples of the Arctic based on linguistic groups



Source: GRID Arendal (Hugo Ahlenius, Nordpill). Available from <http://www.arcticcentre.org/EN/communications/arcticregion/Arctic-Indigenous-Peoples/Demography>.

The Inuit population is estimated at about 150,000, with 50,000 in Greenland, 50,000 in Canada, 45,000 in Alaska and about 2,000 in the Russian Federation. Since 1977, the Inuit Circumpolar Council has represented Inuit internationally; there are also several other important representative bodies that advance Inuit interests. The total population of Greenland is about 90 per cent Inuit, with those Inuit calling themselves Kalaallit. This population has been actively asserting political independence from Denmark and its growing autonomy is expected to change future Arctic political dynamics (Dubreuil, 2011).

The Dene, Gwich'in and Inuit are among the 14 per cent of indigenous peoples whose homeland lies within the State of Alaska, United States of America. The Inuit in Arctic regions of Canada have negotiated four major land claim agreements through which they secured, inter alia, access to land and financing, and resource revenue sharing. The four land claim areas include Nunavik, established in 1975 in northern Quebec; Inuvialuit, established in 1984 in the northern parts of the Northwest Territories; Yukon Nunavut, established in 1992 as a federal territory; and Nunatsiavut, established in 2005 in Labrador and Newfoundland (Dubreuil, 2011). Although they have yet to be named formally, the Inuvialuit call their lands Nunatoqaq, which means "the ancient lands".

There are estimated to be from 60,000 to 100,000 Sami in Sápmi on the northern Scandinavian Peninsula, with about 50,000 in the Norwegian counties of Finnmark, Nordland and Troms; about 20,000 in the Swedish counties of Norrbotten and Västerbotten; about 8,000 in Lapland in Finland; and about 2,000 in the oblast of Murmansk in the Russian Federation (Dubreuil, 2011; Swedish Institute, 2014).

Sami have negotiated the establishment of political institutions referred to as the Sami parliaments, which serve as important consultative bodies for issues related to the Sami people. The Sami Act, which was passed by Norway in 1987, led to the establishment in 1989 of the Sami Parliament in that country. The Sami Parliament of Sweden was established in 1993 and the Sami Parliament of Finland, in 1996. Sami enjoy special constitutional protection and autonomy in Finland and Norway. The Saami Council was established in 1956 as an indigenous peoples' organization by Sami living in Finland, Norway and Sweden; in 1992, Russian Sami also joined the Sami Council (Dubreuil, 2011). The aim of the Saami Council is to promote Sami rights and interests in the four countries where the Sami reside.³⁸

Gaps in areas of the peer-reviewed literature

The lack of accessible statistical data on contemporary Arctic indigenous education seriously limits the scope of research results. It is not possible, for example, to provide

³⁸ See <http://www.saamicouncil.net/en/about-saami-council/>.



a comparative analysis of Arctic indigenous peoples' education because key statistics across culture groups are not available. In the case of the Sami, whose traditional territories span portions of Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden, statistics on population and education are unknown, in part because no comprehensive citizenship registration exists for Sami (Statistics Norway, 2014). Among other Arctic indigenous peoples, while some population statistics are available, disaggregated education data is not. From a programming perspective, the lack of statistical data is a barrier to education review and limits the education advocacy and development activities that can be carried out by Governments, educational authorities and indigenous communities.

It is apparent from the progress made in several areas of education policy and programming that there have been at least some consultations with Arctic indigenous peoples. For example, policy and curriculum guides produced in Canada by various provincial and territorial Governments frequently quote from the aboriginal elders and cultural knowledge holders who contributed to the shaping of the final documents (Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

Indigenous peoples and education in the Arctic region

Indigenous perspectives on education

Education in the Arctic region is guided by general provisions of international agreements and human rights instruments, and in particular the agreed standards set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.³⁹ Article 14 of the Declaration echoes the views on education that are shared globally, by affirming that:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

³⁹ General Assembly resolution 61/295 of 13 September 2007, annex.

It is important to understand the Arctic indigenous perspective on education, distinct from the international human rights framework as related to education. For Arctic indigenous peoples, traditional indigenous education is not a discrete discipline which remains separate and apart from what shapes their particular indigenous identities, but a process inclusive of all facets of life, including the language, dreams and imagination that are kept alive through the honouring of indigenous thought and creativity. Education is therefore a *holistic* process of acquiring the ancestral knowledge and cultural skills intrinsic to the formation of those identities. It is the social relationships established within communities that provide the means of both refining and transmitting that knowledge.

Responsibility for traditional indigenous processes of teaching and learning are shared within families and among community members. Each member plays a role in ensuring

For Arctic indigenous peoples, traditional indigenous education is a process inclusive of all facets of life, including the language, dreams and imagination that are kept alive through the honouring of indigenous thought and creativity.

that through the acquisition of physical and intellectual skills the commitment to an underlying philosophy – one that recognizes the interconnectedness of life forms, value systems and spiritual beliefs – is fulfilled. It is indigenous knowledge systems that constitute reality for indigenous peoples: the experiences of the members of each generation reinforce and augment the lived experiences of their ancestors. In essence, the particular expressions of traditional knowledge and cultural practices affirm the ontological representation of indigenous worldviews and forms of self-determination.

The task of creating culturally relevant education which at the same time privileges and integrates traditional values and practices may seem a daunting one today but it constitutes an important basis for cultural transmission and evolution. The past cannot be divorced from the future and so the inclusion of traditional indigenous values and

practices in education becomes a critical expression of resilience and resistance to the domination of non-traditional social values introduced from without. The contemporary structures and processes underpinning formal and informal indigenous education play a crucial role in determining the extent of intergenerational transmission of traditional culture and its adaptation to current needs of indigenous peoples.

The significant diversity among Arctic indigenous peoples signals the need to ensure that diverse education frameworks exist to meet the needs of particular groups. This can be accomplished effectively only if indigenous peoples themselves are involved in the design, implementation and evaluation cycles of current and proposed systems. Self-determination, a key principle under many international agreements, facilitates cultural protection, linguistic preservation and intergenerational transmission of



cultural identity. The lack of flexibility in education systems and their failure to accommodate local cultures result in the erosion of Arctic indigenous identity and healthy social systems.

The continuous formation of Arctic learners' cultural identity is directly influenced by education (Keskitalo, Uusiattu and Määttä, 2012; McGregor, 2013; McMillan, 2013). The socialization of those learners has been greatly altered by the structures, processes, policies and classroom pedagogies ushered in by modern education institutions, which are influenced to a large extent by the worldviews held by governing and political authorities of the state. The collision over time of those worldviews with the worldviews of local residents and the overpowering of the thought of Arctic learners by external forces result in a diminishment of the strength of traditional indigenous cultural norms (Little Bear, 2000).

While schools in the Arctic are laboratories for adaptation by indigenous learners to foreign cultural norms, it is in the home environment that most Arctic indigenous learners, through their access to family and community members, are able to hold onto local languages and spirituality in all its facets. In this framework, many indigenous learners become bilingual: they speak in indigenous languages at home or socially, while adopting a dominant non-indigenous language in school. Despite some claims that there is parental support for use of non-indigenous languages in schools, choice in this regard does not really exist. Further, parents often do not have sufficient information regarding the long-term consequences of such an arrangement for their children and grandchildren, or for the fate of the indigenous languages themselves (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). In general, learners and community members have very little real ability to influence the mandatory requirements of broader education as formulated by state authorities.

The intention in providing formal education is to assist indigenous learners, but the motivation is often an economic one, namely, the wish to enable them to take advantage of non-traditional economic opportunities. Across the Arctic, learners consequently lack opportunities to become fully grounded in traditional lifestyles, economies and philosophies. Bilingual and bicultural negotiation of education by Arctic learners can easily result in academic marginalization, exclusion or failure in schools. The disconnect from local cultures and languages leaves indigenous learners neither fully immersed in their own languages, nor necessarily capable of competing for opportunities using the non-indigenous language(s) of the majority.

Notwithstanding the rhetoric lavished on the benefit – and necessity – of attending contemporary public schools, evidence shows that “indigenous students have lower enrolment rates, higher dropout rates and poorer educational outcomes than non-indigenous people in the same countries” (United Nations, 2009a, p. 130, sidebar). Other, related issues, including the mental health of northern youth, have much direr implications. Within a holistic worldview, health is intimately linked to learning conditions that

assure the integrity of the individual as embedded within the family, the community and the nation. Contemporary education that lacks cultural inclusion produces many kinds of negative outcome and is at odds with the principle of the right to education as set forth in international human rights instruments.

Gender gaps in education also have a measurable impact on indigenous society (Jessen Williamson and others, 2004). In a study conducted in Alaska, Kleinfeld (2007) correlated the education levels of men (in general) to employability, political activism, marriage and divorce rates, and crime. The gender gap in post-secondary education achievement levels is also changing indigenous community dynamics in the Arctic region. In Alaska, for example, aboriginal women are earning bachelor's degrees at almost three times the rate of men and associate degrees at five times the rate of men and are thus able to take advantage of opportunities generated by the increasingly information-based, globalized economy. As young women increase their participation in advanced education and employment, the participation of young men is declining. In Alaska, the factor of traditional gender roles as associated with existing education programming, especially at the post-secondary level, is thought to be a determinant of increased attainment for women, and decreased involvement of men, since much of the post-secondary education programming is poorly adapted to the traditional cultural roles of indigenous men (Kleinfeld and Andrews, 2006).

In the recent past, Arctic societies had very little choice but to respond to rapid changes, both physical and societal, while having to negotiate neocolonial pressures and paternalistic policies within welfare states. The response included reinforcement of various indigenous worldviews and their enhancement through new cultural gains. In some cases, individuals relied on patterns of kinship and adapted them to what became meaningful social relationships in new urban settings (Csonka and Schweitzer, 2004). There are now few Arctic dwellers who do not live in townships or urban centres, a phenomenon that is directly linked to the limited number of education and employment opportunities available elsewhere.

In areas where the colonial authorities were dominant with regard to administrative posts, local individuals were typically hired only to fill subordinate positions. Yet, even as self-governing administrations are being established in the Arctic, civil servants from the outside continue to fill many positions. In the case of Greenland, historical cultural domination, the colonial distrust and uneven patterns of educational attainment of settlers versus indigenous groups indicate that the journey towards representative bureaucracy will have its share of challenges (Binderkrantz, 2011; Timpson, 2006).

The issue of Arctic peoples' access to a quality education requires a critical review of trends which sets aside assumptions of colonialism and builds on the strengths of indigenous worldviews (Csonka and Schweitzer, 2004; Johansson, Paci and Stenersen Hovdenak, 2004). Access to good education in the Arctic is access that is well grounded in Arctic peoples' desire to sustain their cultures, languages and philosophies in



perpetuity. The principles set forth in international agreements in support of indigenous cultures and languages were the product of decades of efforts by global indigenous peoples to give voice to their perspectives on indigenous rights (Hartley, Joffe and Preston, 2010; Henderson, 2008). The implementation of those principles would surely ease societal tension. In Alaska, the passage in 1971 of the aforementioned Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act resulted in the creation of regional non-profit corporations which possess education and training departments wholly controlled by the tribal members represented.⁴⁰

Recognizing that access to education is beneficial to indigenous peoples, the State of Alaska has committed to providing a school for each community with 10 or more school-age children. Although small rural schools face challenges in respect of staff turnover and limitations in course offerings, a majority of the elected members of the Boards of Education of the Rural Education Attendance Areas (which govern rural education) are indigenous to the area they represent.⁴¹

In Norway, all children have a right to an education, which is provided free of charge at public primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Sami education is available within their administrative area in Norway but the teaching of other subjects in the Sami language is not always possible outside that area. Teachers outside the Sami area often lack knowledge of Sami rights and may not be professionally equipped to deliver such a curriculum.⁴²



Access to good education in the Arctic is access that is well grounded in Arctic peoples' desire to sustain their cultures, languages and philosophies in perpetuity.

Indigenous education systems and integration of indigenous perspectives into mainstream education

Adherence to international human rights instruments and the creation of a national policy supporting the inclusion of indigenous perspectives are important steps toward developing integral indigenous education systems in the Arctic. The development of education systems based on indigenous knowledge systems and languages will require even greater capacity-building so as to ensure that indigenous peoples in sufficient numbers are available and prepared to affect a significant shift in indigenous education paradigms. At the institutional level, measures need to be carefully designed to

⁴⁰ Based on the responses of various Arctic organizations to a 2015 interview questionnaire provided by Karla Jessen Williamson.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Based on the responses of various organizations to an informal questionnaire, dated 29 January 2015, on Sami education in Norway (drawn up by D.A. Balto), which were used in the preparation of the present publication.

determine how indigenous perspectives are to be integrated in programming and the curriculum. Efficient capacity-building must also entail ensuring adequate institutional support for making needed changes and focusing on indigenous perspectives on culture, including issues and challenges.

In 2005, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues highlighted the need for inclusion of indigenous community members in educational policy and decision-making, for support for inclusion of indigenous knowledge and languages in primary and secondary schools and, ultimately, for ensuring that indigenous peoples have the training needed to manage and implement their own education systems (United Nations, 2009a). Indigenous communities are working with education authorities in an effort to reverse the loss of languages and cultural knowledge as a result of assimilative education.

Integration of indigenous principles of law help educators and learners explore the meaning of traditional knowledge in a contemporary world.

The Common Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Culture Programs Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education, 2000), was established by provincial and territorial Governments in Western and Northern Canada as a framework for developing curricula. The developers are given the freedom to interpret and select outcomes and correlate them with culture and language strengths. The overall aim of the framework agreed upon is to help students “find balance within themselves to live peacefully and respectfully with themselves, one another and the land” and “play a role in revitalizing aboriginal languages and cultures” (ibid., p. 13). Target goals and

outcomes are designed for grade groups around three “laws of relationships”: Laws of Sacred Self, Laws of Nature and Laws of Mutual Support, supplemented by suggestions for activities through which to develop culture and language skills. Integration of indigenous principles of law help educators and learners explore the meaning of traditional knowledge in a contemporary world.

In Norway, researchers whose purview is the mathematics curriculum concluded that “the national examination reflects Sami values to very little extent” (Fyhn, 2013, p. 364). In their study, four categories of Sami values were explored: traditional knowledge of the Sami, who view knowledge as a process (rather than as a product); *govttolasvuohhta* (reasonableness); cooperation with nature; and preservation of traditional culture. The researchers concluded that further analysis was necessary to facilitate an understanding of the processes involving retention in problem solving within a given context but at the same time viewed modelling the use of Sami concepts as a potential benefit. They also indicated a need for an ongoing questioning process with regard to who is responsible for selecting the people who create the exam tasks, how the tasks are



quality-assessed before they are approved and what criteria constitute the basis for the tasks (Fyhn, 2013).

At the outset of any project aimed at transforming existing education paradigms, it must be acknowledged by the participants that there is little alternative but to build collaborative relationships. Development of curricula incorporating two worlds of knowing that have some likelihood of being adopted by district education authorities, the administrative staff of schools and classroom teachers, requires collaboration between representatives of both worldviews (McMillan, 2013).

In Canada, the development of a science education unit of study⁴³ for Nunavut students by researcher Barbara McMillan and community educator Louise Uyarak (McMillan, 2013) represents an example of successful collaboration. Within the context of the Canadian Common Framework of Science Learning Outcomes, K-12,⁴⁴ they built upon Inuit ancestral knowledge and the goals of *Inuuqatigiit*: The curriculum from the Inuit perspective (Government of Northwest Territories, Education, Culture and Employment, 1996).⁴⁵

The construction of the unit was preceded by long-term work in an Inuit community on examining the existing science education curriculum and determining how best to include material meaningful to Inuit. The planned activities, coordinated with established science outcomes, were separated into four strands: *Nunavusiutit* (heritage, culture, history, environmental science, civics, economics, global perspectives and worldviews); *Iqqaqqaukkaringniq* (ways in which Inuit describe and improve the world using analytical and critical thinking, ethics, solution seeking, explanation, innovation, technology and the practical arts); *Uqausiliriniq* (communication and language development in relationships with others, and creative and artistic expression); and *Aullaajaaqtut* (physical, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellness; goal setting; safety; and survival) (McMillan, 2013, p. 133).

While the work respected concepts of Western science, it was Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) that was determined to be essential for the science unit. Inuit guiding principles are to be applied across Nunavut Government services, programmes and programme development. IQ was applied to programme and curriculum development.

⁴³ In Canada, a *unit of study* is a series of educational lessons connected by a common theme. A unit may be taught within a discipline (such as science) or it may be interdisciplinary (through the linking of, e.g., sciences, language arts, fine arts or mathematics).

⁴⁴ Canada's Common Framework of Science Learning Outcomes, K-12 (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 1997), published by the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, incorporates a shared vision for science literacy. "K-12", which signifies kindergarten through grade 12, comprises primary and secondary formal education in Canada that is under provincial or territorial governance. Ministers of education represent these jurisdictions.

⁴⁵ *Inuuqatigiit* is interpreted to mean encouragement of the practice of Inuit values and beliefs while linking the past and the present. See McMillan (2013, p. 132); and Government of Northwest Territories, Education, Culture and Employment (1996).

TABLE II.1
Guiding principles and concepts of Inuit *Qaujimaqatuqangit* (IQ) on which the public education system of Nunavut is based

<i>Inuuqatigiitsiarniq</i>	Respecting others, relationships and caring for people
<i>Tunnganarniq</i>	Fostering a good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive
<i>Pijitsirniq</i>	Serving and providing for the family and/or the community according to the Inuit style of leadership where each has a responsibility and a valuable contribution to make to improving his or her world
<i>Aajiiqatigiinni</i>	The Inuit way of decision-making through discussion and consensus, development of shared understanding and respect for other perspectives and worldviews
<i>Piliriqatiinni</i> or <i>Ikajuqtiigiinni</i>	Developing a collaborative relationship and working together for a common purpose and the common good
<i>Pilimmaksarniq</i> or <i>Pijariuqsarniq</i>	The acquisition, development and transmission of knowledge and skills in order to build personal capacity and improve society
<i>Qanuqtuurniq</i>	Innovation and resourcefulness in seeking solutions, using resources and solving problems through creativity, adaptability and flexibility
<i>Avatittinnik kamatsiarniq</i>	Environmental stewardship and the demonstration of responsible behaviours whose aim is to improve, care for and protect environmental wellness
^a Source: McMillan (2013), p. 134.	

IQ is utilized and applied at various levels in Arctic schools in Canada. Educators view it as a valuable resource which engages Inuit children in learning; and in this regard, curriculum developers recognize that more resources are needed. Ouellette (2011), who analysed aboriginal curricula-related developments across First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in Canada, deemed that *Inuuqatigiit* requires more sample lessons, and that units need to be updated to better reflect the Inuit way of life. With respect to methods of evaluation, he recommended that a non-binding set of criteria (such as the length of time to be spent on a concept) be developed for teachers with planning parameters.

If Arctic education is to change, then the teacher-training institutions – as the training ground for individuals who aspire to delivering curricula from indigenous perspectives – must become an object of immediate attention. There are several aboriginal teacher education programmes throughout Canada designed to serve First Nations, Métis



and Inuit learners (St. Denis, 2010) which incorporate academic and cultural bodies of knowledge. These programmes were initiated by aboriginal communities and exist in partnership with degree-granting post-secondary institutions. Culturally appropriate teacher training is the outcome of long-term planning and action taken by indigenous communities in collaboration with existing education authorities.

In Norway, separate teacher training for Sami was critical, along with the development of curriculum materials for Sami in all subject areas. There are now two separate curricula: the Sami curriculum and the national curriculum. The Sami curriculum, however, is largely an adaptation of the national curriculum. The Sami University College was established in 1989 to provide primary, secondary and upper-secondary education teacher training for applicants who speak Sami from Finland, Norway and Sweden. Once certified, these educators can teach the Sami curriculum in Sami schools or in mainstream schools in all three countries. The Sami parliament has been instrumental in advancing work on the curriculum and engaging youth in work on education issues.⁴⁶

If Arctic education is to change, then the teacher-training institutions – as the training ground for individuals who aspire to delivering curricula from indigenous perspectives – must become an object of immediate attention.

In the case of Finland, researchers believe that “[t]ransforming the Sami community’s own culture and tradition, its values, stories, expectations, norms, roles, ceremonies, and rituals into school knowledge would improve multiculturalism and the inclusion of Sami culture in schools where Sami curriculum would be utilized” (Keskitalo, Uusiautti and Määttä, 2012, p. 59). This expresses a sentiment inherent in most of the literature concerning indigenous education in general. Facilitating cultural education appropriate to local indigenous communities and increasing success in learning will benefit the members of those communities, other learners and society in general.

Many Arctic indigenous peoples live in small groups outside their core indigenous communities and may have limited access to culturally appropriate education. Keskitalo, Uusiautti and Määttä (2012) have indicated that sovereignty over education and the development of the Sami curriculum could overcome state boundary limitations for Sami who occupy territory in multiple countries. Innovation in overcoming capacity limitations is needed to foster growth of culture, language and identity. Decolonization through education, rather than assimilation, is a process that enables indigenous knowledge systems to flourish. The natural and desirable acquisition of new skills and knowledge is one facet of indigenous peoples’ cultures. In addition, the presence of a

⁴⁶ Based on responses to the 2015 informal questionnaire on Sami education in Norway (see footnote 43).

sturdy foundation of traditional knowledge is critical to ensuring that a healthy positive relationship will exist between those acquisitions and traditional indigenous values.

Governance, policies and legislation related to indigenous peoples and education

Education is a sector that is intricately linked to international human rights, environmental issues and indigenous rights. Education is essential to maintaining and revitalizing Sami history, culture, knowledge and, of course, language (United Nations, General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 2011, para. 67).

In 2000, the Sami Parliamentary Council representing Sami parliaments in Finland, Norway and Sweden was established. The Council addresses common issues including with regard to teaching, education and the Sami language.⁴⁷ The Sami Parliamentary Council and the Sami parliaments in Finland, Norway and Sweden have all indicated that their goal for education is self-determination. Engagement of indigenous leadership for educational autonomy is part of the self-determination process and is necessary for the shaping of a holistic Sami educational paradigm which will sustain Sami culture and values.⁴⁸

In Norway, both Sami and state education authorities draw on a variety of international laws and nationally developed laws and policies to support Sami education. For example, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization (ILO)⁴⁹ was ratified by Norway in 1990 and provided the means of carrying out curriculum reforms and creating the Sami curriculum. National laws that enable education in the Sami language include the Sami Act and the Education Act; further, other agreements negotiated between the State and the Sami Parliament support Sami education. The Constitution of Norway itself calls upon authorities to protect the Sami and their culture by creating conditions that enable the preservation and development of the Sami language, culture and way of life. Sami children at primary and lower secondary levels, who live in Sami districts, have the right to education based on the Sami language and curriculum. Outside these districts, children may still receive Sami education if there are at least 10 Sami pupils within the municipality.

The establishment of home rule governance of Greenland in 1979 provided full decision-making authority over education and culture for the *Kalaallit*.⁵⁰ Subsequently, work began on overhauling the Greenland curriculum, pedagogic methods and assessment

⁴⁷ Based on responses to the 2015 informal questionnaire on Sami education in Norway.

⁴⁸ Based on: responses to the 2015 informal questionnaire on Sami education in Norway (footnote 43); Henriksen (2013); Keskitalo, Uusiautti and Määttä (2012)..

⁴⁹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1650, No. 28383.

⁵⁰ *Kalaallit* is a contemporary term in the Kalaallit language for the indigenous people living in Greenland.



processes to ensure that they reflected more adequately the needs of the people of Greenland. Subsequently, there were several major accomplishments. In 2003, through *Atuarfitsialak* (meaning “the good school”), important school reforms were adopted to assist in the decolonization of Greenland, in support of *Kalaallit* culture and identity, linguistic development and preparation for future employment (Hansen and Torm, 2012; Wyatt, 2012; Wyatt and Lyberth, 2011).

A past boycott of the Arctic Council⁵¹ by governing authorities in Greenland is another strong indicator of the desire of the *Kalaallit* to expand their decision-making role (Sejersen, 2014). Greenland Self-Government (Naalakkersuisut) exercises autonomous control over its domestic sectors, including health and education. Denmark continues to support indigenous rights and a human rights-based approach to development. During the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, Denmark and Greenland advocated that, in its resolution 67/212 of 21 December 2012 on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its contribution to sustainable development, the Assembly recall the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. At the same session, Denmark co-sponsor Assembly resolution 67/153 of 20 December 2012 on the rights of indigenous peoples.⁵²

In Alaska, policy standards and guides supporting indigenous languages and cultures are available for educators. The Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools and the Guide to Implementing the Alaska Cultural Standards for Educators were developed together with indigenous educators and provide advice on inclusion of indigenous knowledge in schools. Rubrics and guidelines are included to help teachers assess how their instruction promotes the cultural well-being of their students. State regulations allow for teachers to be evaluated based on progress in sustaining cultural standards. In addition, in May 2014, Alaska Native languages were recognized as official languages of the State. These include Ahtna, Alutiiq, Central Alaskan Yupik, Deg Xinag, Dena’ina, Eyak, Gwich’in Haida, Han, Holikachuk, Inupiaq, Koyukon, Siberian Yup’ik, Tanacross, Tanana, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Unangax, Upper Kuskokwim and Upper Tanana.⁵³

Institutional and structural support for indigenous education, including for intercultural bilingual education

In Greenland, Danish and Greenlandic (*Kalaallisut*) are recognized as official languages; but given Greenland’s long history of colonization which began in 1721, the use of the

⁵¹ The Arctic Council is an interGovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular sustainable development and environmental protection.

⁵² See also Denmark and Greenland (2013).

⁵³ Based on the responses to the 2015 interview questionnaire provided to Arctic organizations (see footnote 41).

Danish language is predominant in self-Government offices in the capital of Nuuk. As far as the Kalaallit are concerned, such an arrangement creates a power imbalance. Their perspective is not recognized or acknowledged by Danes working as civil servants who constitute an administrative majority. While Danes have an advantage in operational meetings, Greenlanders have the advantage in communication with local communities. Despite these differences, the relationship between the Danes and the Greenlanders is described as generally harmonious. As Greenland moves towards self-governance, however, the issue of dominance of Danes in those relationships, as reinforced by edu-

Educational reformers in Greenland have much to do to counter the long-term effects of colonization, through processes of decolonization and reconciliation.

cation and linguistic advantages, needs to be addressed from a democratic perspective (Binderkrantz, 2011). Education systems supportive of intercultural bilingual education should prepare learners to overcome existing institutional barriers. Indeed, educational reformers in Greenland have much to do to counter the long-term effects of colonization, through processes of decolonization and reconciliation (Henriksen, 2013; Kawagley and Barnhardt, 1998; Keskitalo, Uusiautti and Määttä, 2012; McGregor, 2013; Timpson, 2006; United Nations, 2007; United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2013).⁵⁴

Norway's Sami Act of 1987 affirms that Sami and Norwegian languages are of equal worth and accords them equal status. Culture and language education are made available in Norway for Sami learners with the support of laws such as the Kindergarten and Education Acts. As the Sami language is recognized as key to transmission of Sami culture, fluency is needed to ensure that the written and oral forms of the language are maintained. In higher education, the Sami language is available up to the doctorate level, with many courses in Sami cultural traditions also being offered.

Alaska's Department of Education requires all teachers to acquire some degree of training in cross-cultural communication or multicultural education and in this regard sponsors, every two years, the Bilingual/Multicultural Education/Equity Conference. By law, the Department also requires that districts with a majority of aboriginal students establish an aboriginal language advisory curriculum committee which determines whether a curriculum for an aboriginal language is needed. The State is also funding a digital teaching initiative which includes aboriginal language instruction via videoconferencing.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ See also the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

⁵⁵ Based on the responses to the 2015 interview questionnaire provided to Arctic organizations (see footnote 41).



In the Yukon, Canada, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation has worked with the Yukon Territorial Government to develop a curriculum that accommodates both traditional cultural knowledge and a formal curriculum. Learners develop qualities of leadership and acquire land-based skills by participating in culture camps with classroom teachers, elders and community members. They share first-hand experiences with respect to traditional practices such as trapping wild animals, tracking game and camp management. Ancestral knowledge comes alive through music, legends and storytelling, the process of learning to bead, and traditional game-playing; and instruction on navigation and the weather is provided using local languages. These activities reflect a holistic approach to the learning process. Assessment rubrics for formal evaluation designed by classroom teachers and elders enable both groups to measure student progress (Ceretzke, 2010; 2011; 2012).

In recent years, the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol has become a modality for sharing vision, goals and curriculum within public primary and secondary education. Under this Protocol, curriculum documents for indigenous education, including *Our Way is a Valid Way* (Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) for Collaboration in Education, 2013), were issued. These resource guides were created to provide both beginning and experienced educators with foundational knowledge and to encourage them to apply First Nations, Inuit and Métis perspectives, cultural knowledge, and pedagogies in their teaching. The development of a culturally appropriate curriculum such as this is dependent on high-level policy and legislation, as well as adequate funding.

In 1993, the Government of the Northwest Territories produced a Dene Kede curriculum guide in collaboration with Dene community representatives who were fluent in the Dene languages. Forty thematic units were designed to encompass Dene spirituality, including the perspective of the Dene on land and sky, animals and people (Government of Northwest Territories, Education, Culture and Employment, 1996; Ouellette, 2011). It is important to note that the Dene Kede curriculum is rooted in the deeply held spiritual beliefs of the Dene and teaching units reflect their ethos. The purpose of the Dene Kede curriculum guide is to enhance Dene cultures and languages by helping students develop respect for themselves, other people, the spirit world and the land (Ouellette, 2011, p. 377)

The curriculum document entitled "*Inuuqatigiit: the curriculum from the Inuit perspective*" (Government of Northwest Territories, Education, Culture and Employment, 1996), like the Dene Kede curriculum guide, is designed to foster holistic learning; however, both documents lack systemic processes for delivery and rely too heavily on the pedagogy of the individual classroom teacher. These criticisms of the Dene Kede curriculum concern structural and procedural issues rather than content. For example, there are gaps in the curriculum which indicate that it remains unfinished. Missing units of study and the lack both of grade- or level-specific objectives and of comprehensive evaluation rubrics signifies that classroom teachers do not have some of the tools required to

meet the needs of students, especially students who are transient (Ouellette, 2011, p. 381). It has also been observed that while spirituality is an important component of the curriculum, classroom teachers may have a difficult time integrating this component into subjects such as math and science if they themselves do not possess the relevant knowledge or the necessary community connections (Ouellette, 2011, p. 381). One of the most important observations centres on the issue of holism: while the curriculum is designed to be holistic, the nature of its delivery is still determined by the individual classroom teacher, who has “ample leeway” to apply the curriculum to specific situations. There is no established process or plan among teachers for delivering the curriculum as an integrated whole; indeed, some teachers may even be resistant to using Dene Kede (Ouellette, 2011, p. 382). This brings to the fore yet again the question of teacher training in post-secondary institutions.

Canada is the second-largest geographical land mass in the world, with the Russian Federation being the largest. Yet, less than 1 per cent of faculty members across

Canada is the second-largest geographical land mass in the world. Yet, less than 1 per cent of faculty members across Canadian universities are indigenous.

Canadian universities are indigenous. New data from the National Household Survey (NHS) show that 1,400,685 people, representing 4.3 per cent of the total Canadian population, had an aboriginal identity in 2011.⁵⁶ At least 36,000 students have earned an undergraduate degree, 5,800 have received a Master of Arts degree and 100 hold a PhD (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), 2011); however, the number of indigenous faculty teaching at Canadian universities as of the 2006 census was only 600, which represents 0.9 per cent of the total number of university professors (64,222) (Henry, 2012, p. 104).

Although the number and working conditions of indigenous faculty members employed across the Arctic, in particular, are unknown, Henry (2012) is nonetheless able to reveal many of the issues faced in general by indigenous faculty in Canada which include isolation at school and from the community, having to interact with colleagues who are uninformed, and the heavy demands made on their time and on their expertise as indigenous persons, as well as more overt, serious instances of institutional racism.

The diversity of Arctic indigenous peoples is supported through the collaborative research conducted by multiple tertiary-education institutions on the educational needs of those peoples. Partner organizations – universities, colleges, research institutes and other entities focusing on education and research in, and about, the north – known

⁵⁶ See Statistics Canada, « Aboriginal peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit », Available at <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm#a1>.



collectively as the University of the Arctic (UArctic),⁵⁷ have formed a cooperative network. Together, these organizations develop and strengthen collective resources and collaborative infrastructure which enables member institutions to better serve their students and communities. Inuit, Sami and several Russian groups participated in the planning of the University of the Arctic which was launched in 2001. recognizing that the entry into the age of modernity was best effected through their involvement in crafting the transition so that they could, in their words, “preserve the best of the old and promote the best of the new” (Bollag, 2002, p. 1), Member countries and areas with institutions that now participate in UArctic include Canada, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America. Several non-Arctic institutions also participate. Participating institutions range from academic post-secondary institutions to health organizations, science and technology institutions, and indigenous organizations and institutions.

The Sami University College in Norway is a member of, and accredited by, the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium which provides an international forum for indigenous peoples and support for their pursuit of common goals through higher education. The College was commended for its contributions to the Sami language and culture on behalf of Sami children, youth and adults.⁵⁸

Main findings

Notwithstanding the preceding examples of some of the positive achievements in Arctic indigenous education, many challenges remain. The educational needs of Arctic indigenous peoples are unique to their own communities but, in many cases, they confront the same challenges faced by indigenous peoples throughout the world. Although some Arctic peoples have achieved a measure of self-determination, they still live within nation States that limit their autonomy with regard to education. Academic research work can assist indigenous peoples in moving forward but it requires the robust scholarship of researchers well versed in indigenous issues, including the principle of self-determination and how it nurtures educational aspirations.

⁵⁷ General information on the University of the Arctic (UArctic) is available at <http://www.uarctic.org/about-uarctic>. Information on the Sámi Education Institute is available at <http://www.uarctic.org/member-profiles/finland/8718/sami-education-institute>; information on the Sámi Educational Centre is available at <https://www.uarctic.org/member-profiles/sweden/8721/sami-educational-centre>; and information on the Sámi University College is available at <https://education.uarctic.org/universities/norway/8710/s%C3%A1mi-university-college>.

⁵⁸ Based on the responses to the 2015 interview questionnaire provided to Arctic organizations (see footnote 41).

In Alaska, given the vast geographical expanse of the State and the small number and small size of schools, there may be only one or two teachers delivering all of the educational instruction. Even supportive indigenous education policies and legislation may not be capable of ensuring that teachers are well versed in all of their subject matter. Moreover, high teacher turnover in remote communities generates challenges.⁵⁹

In Norway, research has shown that even with the many rights granted to, and the legislation and policies supportive of, Sami, a classroom situation where there are speakers of both the Sami and Norwegian languages presents many challenges. To avoid being accused of discrimination against speakers of Norwegian, teachers will often choose not to conduct their teaching in Sami, a choice that undermines entirely the process of facilitating systemic support for Sami education (Olthuis, Kivelä and Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013). The lack of Sami teachers, the lack of knowledge of the Sami language and the lack of awareness of Sami rights are all obstacles put in the way of efforts to provide Sami learners with the education that is intended for them.⁶⁰

In the case of Inuit, McGregor (2013, p. 88) has explained both that "Inuit education remains on the margins of Canadian indigenous educational scholarship, if even seen there", that "Inuit distinctions are not always taken into account in generalizations about indigenous experience" and that "the movement towards educational self-determination in Nunavut is largely being missed in the literature". Taking into account the historical experience of colonization, McGregor has affirmed that decolonization of schools cannot be achieved solely by integrating indigenous content and in that regard, has recommended that there be a critical examination of power relations and how those relations affects school structures, policy, decision-making, curriculum and pedagogy. She believes that teacher-student-community relationships and access to and assessment of student successes are crucial issues and that "[e]ducational change requires radical disruption" (p. 108), with respect to not only ideological challenges in the classroom but also the network of normalized beliefs and structures within which schools operate.

McGregor urges the delivery of place-based education, given the evident disengagement of Inuit youth and the uncertain provision of human resources within schools in Nunavut. Addressing some of the overwhelming social issues faced by schools and communities, she considers that there remains a need "to mentor youth through the challenges of walking in (at least) two worlds; to achieve human resource security through recruitment, retention, development and support; to participate in ongoing community, territorial and national processes for recognition of traumas and injustices associated with colonization and pursue decolonization; and to support implementation

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Based on the responses to the 2015 informal questionnaire on Sami education in Norway (see footnote 43).



of radical visions for Inuit education, rather than settling for incremental change to the way schools operate" (p. 110).

The impact of the utilization by educators of traditional forms of knowledge cannot be overstated. In Canada, provincial and territorial Governments that are benefiting from the advice of indigenous peoples within the context of education policy have come to recognize that most of the aboriginal cultures adhere to a very strict code with respect to who should be the carriers of this kind of knowledge. Considering that those cultures have had to survive under intense assimilative pressures and, in many cases, despite the banning of practices by the Government, it is not likely that all their cultural practices will be passed down through the school system. In trusting the wisdom of their Keepers of Knowledge, curriculum developers should be sensitive to the balance that needs to be maintained between what is public and what is private so that a healthy partnership between the school and the people it is meant to serve can be created and sustained (Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education, 2000).

Policy and practice are often quite different in reality. Attitudes of superiority, subtle and hostile, towards indigenous peoples and cultures are displayed across Arctic institutions, including educational institutions. Indeed, indigenous peoples, educators and researchers have described ongoing elimination or marginalization of indigenous knowledge and languages in educational settings (Government of Northwest Territories, Government of Nunavut and Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2013; Kawagley, 1999; Kleinfeld, 1971; Ouellette, 2011). For example, the historical disparagement of Aleut culture and language in schools was fully intended to undermine the self-respect of Aleut parents while Aleut children underwent the process of incorporating "white, middle-class ways" (Kleinfeld, 1971, p. 2).

Healing the deep wounds and great hurt inflicted on generations of indigenous individuals, families and communities by the residential schools system will require much time and care. A curriculum that lays bare the trauma undergone in such schools is a necessary adjunct of the healing and reconciliation process (Government of Northwest Territories, Government of Nunavut and Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2013; Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2012; and Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) for Collaboration in Education, 2000). Many residential school survivors have described the loneliness, despair and feelings of captivity experienced during their school years. Thousands of aboriginal children did not survive their experience (Moore, 2014) and many more succumbed in the aftermath of trauma.

Issues related to indigenous children and education

Too many generations of Arctic indigenous children have been the recipients of non-indigenous education pedagogy which has left them believing that their own cultural traditions are less important or relevant than the traditions of others. In fact, there is

nothing akin to having been born in the Arctic. Childhood is spent surrounded by Arctic dwellers who are grateful for the honour of being one with the strong winds, the mighty rivers and the ocean which shape their lives. The imaginations of indigenous children are lifted to new heights as they listen to stories that pay homage to Arctic natural wonders. These stories help children learn to listen, and thereby assimilate their own being to that extreme environment.

In 2012, the Alaska State Legislature commissioned the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council to study issues related to aboriginal language use. In its initial report, the Council, recognizing the historic loss of aboriginal languages and the trauma inflicted by Government policies such as those related to boarding schools, affirmed the need to foster an environment of reconciliation and healing to enable their impacts to be overcome. At present, there are boarding schools in Alaska that offer specialized courses whose length varies (the average duration is about two weeks) to ensure that aboriginal learners are not separated from their cultural communities for too long. Facilitation of parental involvement in children's education continues to be a challenge for Alaskan schools in some areas, where poverty and low scholastic achievement are also present.⁶¹

The education challenges faced by Sami children are all related to the intergenerational transmission of culture and language. If the appropriate legislation, policy and curriculum are not implemented, dominant non-indigenous cultures will exert a heavy assimilative pressure on Sami children, which will likely result in a change in the Sami language, values and way of life.⁶²

Privileging and integrating indigenous knowledge systems and languages into education will help build much-needed momentum. Indeed, expectations are high that the present education systems across the Arctic will reach their full potential. Indigenous peoples of the Arctic do perceive the great potential of systematic formal education as a valuable tool for sustaining their cultures and languages and for binding themselves securely to their lands. It is hoped that the education system will foster the kind of aspirations, strength and resilience that leads to a good life in the Arctic through the materialization of self-determination. Their diversity of philosophies, ways of knowing and languages connects Arctic indigenous peoples to other peoples and other ways of knowing. Each of the Arctic peoples desires from non-indigenous peoples the recognition that its members can sustain themselves as well as negotiate on their own behalf.

A number of insights have emerged through the research conducted on the status of indigenous education in the Arctic region:

⁶¹ Based on the responses to the 2015 interview questionnaire provided to Arctic organizations (see footnote 41).

⁶² Based on the responses to the 2015 informal questionnaire on Sami education in Norway (see footnote 43).



First, governing authorities overseeing national and regional education processes, academics working in the area of indigenous education, and the indigenous communities themselves should be strongly encouraged to provide data, information and insight on education issues. Obtaining research data from multiple sources allows for the corroboration of evidence and the drawing of effective conclusions through the triangulation of those data.

Second, while it is clear that the existing published literature is a rich source of information and insight, it is also clear that many positive activities in the areas of education policy and curriculum development, which could greatly enhance the available knowledge base on Arctic indigenous education, are not being reported on.

Third, the conduct of future research will require the participation of researchers who are able to translate documents on Arctic indigenous education from other languages.

Finally, the lack of available statistics on Arctic indigenous populations and education is a huge challenge which will require long-term planning and advocacy work. In some instances, the data simply does not exist, but in other cases, the problem is lack of disaggregation. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and other indigenous organizations have already called for disaggregated data to be utilized for a variety of planning and development-related purposes.

The issue of **access to and quality of primary, secondary and tertiary education, including indigenous peoples' participation in related processes**, brings to the fore the needs of Arctic indigenous learners, which should prevail over all other considerations. Their intellectual, spiritual and emotional safety is paramount for enabling them to achieve educational success. Education that requires indigenous learners to relinquish their own culture in order to succeed is deeply flawed and contributes to ongoing personal trauma. As indicated by Cote-Meek (2014), policymakers, administrators and even educators often do not perceive the difficulties faced by indigenous learners when negotiating systems in school that are governed by different paradigms.

On the home front, parents who are trying to encourage their children to be successful often do not have sufficient information on the long-term consequences for their children and grandchildren in this regard, or on the fate of the languages themselves. The intertwined loss of language and loss of culture is clearly a disrupter of the traditions of whole societies of indigenous peoples.

Expectations are high that the present education systems across the Arctic will reach their full potential. Indigenous peoples of the Arctic do perceive the great potential of systematic formal education as a valuable tool for sustaining their cultures and languages and for binding themselves securely to their lands.

Within the context of existing education programming at the post-secondary level, Kleinfeld and Andrews (2006) identify traditional gender roles as a determinant of increased attainment for women, and decreased involvement of men, since much of that programming is poorly adapted to the traditional cultural roles of indigenous men.

Access to education is an issue not just of enrolment. Indeed, it encompasses a range of social, economic and cultural issues which must be shaped in such a way as to accommodate success in learning. While the residential schools approach did assure access to education, that approach had a devastating impact on indigenous peoples because it was based on the eradication of cultural identity. The present challenge for Arctic indigenous peoples is to surmount the obstacles arising from the damage inflicted by choosing courses of action that will benefit them.

Focusing on the challenges of **establishing indigenous education systems and integrating indigenous perspectives into mainstream education** serves to extend our thinking beyond access to education, to what can be done to create better learning environments for Arctic indigenous learners. The process of moving from theory to practice – from the concept of integrated content to the creation of functional self-determined systems – is an essential process. Educators and indigenous community members can challenge the educational status quo by questioning the relationship between curriculum and indigenous value systems. Indigenous content in curriculum will not be valued in schools if the learner's progress in handling that curriculum is not subject to the same formal evaluation processes to which progress in mastering other content is subjected.

The critical review of education processes and the generation of improvements require an increase in the number of Arctic indigenous professionals working in the field of education. In particular, the development of education systems based on indigenous knowledge systems and indigenous languages will require even greater capacity-building to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of indigenous peoples who are prepared and available to spearhead a significant change in the paradigms governing indigenous education.

Efforts to transform existing education paradigms leave little choice at the outset but to build collaborative relationships. Education that privileges Arctic indigenous knowledge requires planning for systemic change in educational legislation and governance based on indigenous goals and aspirations.

Governance, policies and legislation as related to indigenous peoples and education have been improving over the past few decades. The effective leadership of indigenous community members and receptive education authorities has resulted in many positive changes across the Arctic. As regards the Sami (although this holds true for other Arctic indigenous peoples as well), several researchers have concluded that indigenous leadership for educational autonomy is necessary for self-determination and for planning



a holistic Sami educational paradigm — a paradigm that will sustain Sami culture and values.

Changes in governance, policies and legislation occur when indigenous leaders press vehemently for what, culturally speaking, is in the best interests of their communities. In Alaska, the granting of official status to multiple indigenous languages and regulations that allow for indigenous teachers to be evaluated on the basis of indigenous cultural standards as set by that State are good examples of formalization of the recognition of indigenous languages and cultures.

Curriculum is a manifestation of the strength of education governance, policies and legislation in supporting indigenous peoples. If curriculum is weak in its representation of Arctic cultures, outcomes will be ineffective in terms of contributing to the retention and intergenerational transmission of culture and language, which is why Sami and other Arctic peoples whose curriculum still subsists as a derivative of the national curriculum believe that their curriculum should be grounded in their own cultural knowledge systems. Achievement of this level of decolonization demands that indigenous communities harness the professional capacity to make the necessary changes to the curriculum and ensure that it is aligned with the intentions of supporting policy and legislation.

Institutional and structural support for indigenous education, including intercultural bilingual education, has resulted in the development and application of some forms of traditional indigenous cultural knowledge. The development of a culturally appropriate curriculum is dependent on high-level policy and legislation, as well as adequate funding.

Vuntut Gwitchin, Dene and Inuit primary and secondary school curricula have been developed in collaboration with indigenous peoples and to some extent have been implemented in Canada. In some cases, classroom teachers and elders design assessment rubrics for formal evaluation and both groups assess student progress. Alaska requires that all teachers receive some training in cross-cultural communication and that districts with a majority of aboriginal students have an aboriginal language advisory curriculum committee.

Although curriculum is designed to be holistic, in many cases, the authority for its application still resides with individual classroom teachers. Reliance on the pedagogic skills of classroom teachers in transmitting traditional knowledge is not, however, an effective strategy in education. While some individuals may possess the required competencies, others may not, and still others may resist teaching an indigenous curriculum. The education programmes for indigenous teachers in Canada and Norway support cultural competence with a view to ensuring that educators are better equipped to work in mainstream or indigenous-controlled schools.

In higher education, there are insufficient numbers of indigenous faculty members working in the field of Arctic education, which signals a lack in the training needed to ensure community capacity-building of professionals in higher education. Collaboration among colleges and universities, such as the University of the Arctic, has enabled increased programming delivery which contributes to skills and employment opportunities for Arctic residents.

Indigenous peoples have the right to pursue traditional occupations if they so choose and this right should be supported by institutions of higher education, such as those in Norway where the Sami language is available up to the doctorate level and where a number of courses in Sami cultural traditions are offered. Within this context, it should be noted that the difficulties experienced both by indigenous educators and by learners in taking up indigenous histories, traumas and issues should not be underestimated, as this can generate new traumas and conflict among individuals and groups.

The academic world can play an instrumental role in assisting indigenous learners in developing qualities of leadership and acquiring land-based skills, in much the same way as interactions with elders and in cultural camps and indigenous communities in general enable younger learners to acquire skills. Organizations such as the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium provide an international forum and support for indigenous peoples in their pursuit of common goals through higher education. The University of the Arctic recognizes that entry into the world of modernity is best served by the involvement of indigenous peoples in crafting the transition so that they can “preserve the best of the old and promote the best of the new”.

Recommendations

Challenges for indigenous peoples with regard to education, as related inter alia, to discrimination and lack of recognition of indigenous peoples and their traditional knowledge systems and practices, mirror the need for improvement in certain areas. While establishing academic evidence can assist indigenous peoples in moving forward, it requires robust scholarship produced by researchers well versed in indigenous issues, including the principle of self-determination and how this translates into educational aspirations. In many cases, if not most, the subject of Arctic indigenous education remains relegated to the margins of scholarship.

Protection against inappropriate uses of traditional knowledges will be an ongoing challenge but increased involvement of indigenous peoples in curriculum development and educational transformation will help overcome the fears experienced by many educators in this regard.



Teachers may not be well versed in all aspects of subject matter or may display attitudes of superiority; and there may be high teacher turnover in many regions of the Arctic. These are ongoing challenges, to be addressed by necessary planning for human resource security through careful recruitment, retention, development and support.

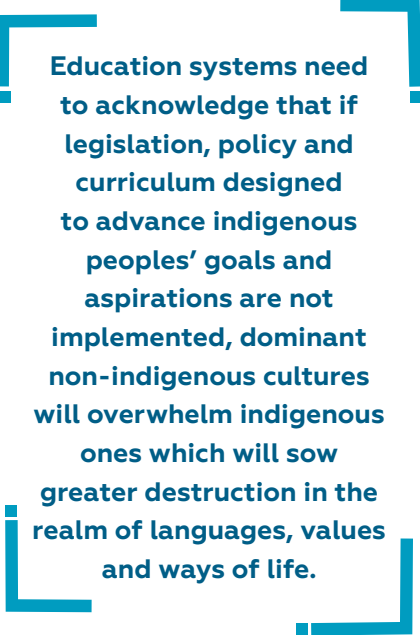
Schools must undertake a critical examination of power relations and how this affects school structures, policy, decision-making, curriculum and pedagogy. This would encompass teacher-student-community relationships and assessment of student successes. The challenge of engaging youth effectively may be surmounted through place-based education and mentorship strategies.

Although residential schools have left generations of indigenous individuals, families and communities with a legacy of deep wounds, involvement of indigenous peoples in bringing change to education and fostering greater dialogue and solidarity among themselves will help overcome existing challenges.

There are several issues related to indigenous children and education that are all related to Arctic indigenous education in general. Children need to be exposed to the traditional stories of their cultures. The imaginations of indigenous children are lifted to new heights as they listen to stories that pay homage to the natural wonders of the Arctic and to which they can relate.

In areas of the Arctic where poverty and low scholastic achievement are linked to a lack of parental involvement, overcoming these challenges signals the need for programming that fosters an environment of reconciliation and healing for all.

Efforts by existing formal education systems to be more inclusive are a step in the right direction. Education systems need to acknowledge that if legislation, policy and curriculum designed to advance indigenous peoples' goals and aspirations are not implemented, dominant non-indigenous cultures will overwhelm indigenous ones which will sow greater destruction in the realm of languages, values and ways of life.



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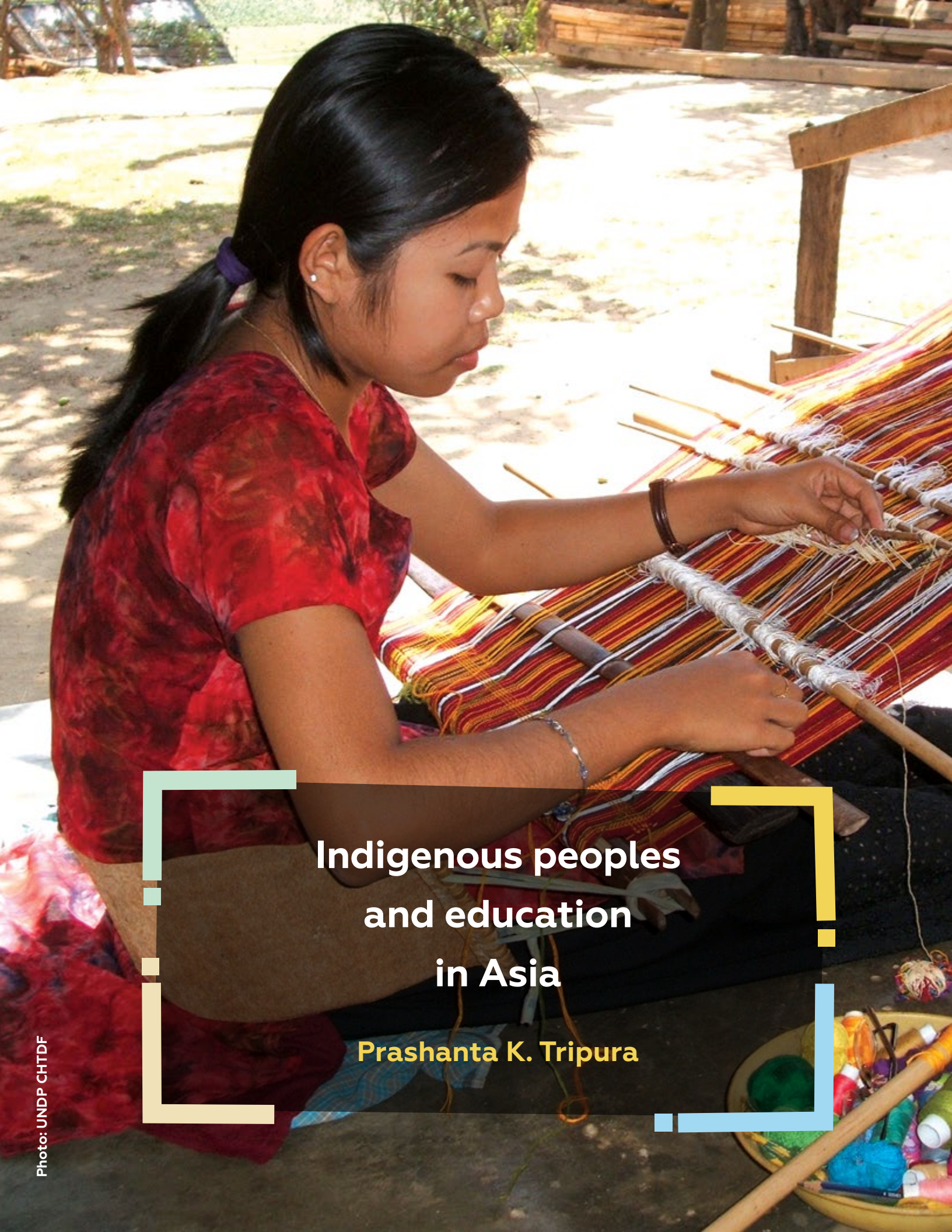
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**Indigenous peoples
and education
in Asia**

Prashanta K. Tripura



Chapter III

Indigenous peoples and education in Asia

Prashanta K. Tripura

Introduction

Asia is arguably the world's most diverse region culturally as well as socioeconomically. It includes some of the world's most populous nations, such as Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan, and is home to at least 60 per cent of the global population. Economically, Asia covers a wide spectrum ranging from some of the world's poorest countries to one of the world's most developed economies, Japan, and new economic giants like China and India.⁶³ While the region has some of the fastest growing economies, it still has high levels of poverty. Rapid economic growth has been associated with large-scale unplanned urbanization in many parts of the region (United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2014, p. 2) as well as increased pressure on the environment and natural resources.

Apart from being home, culturally, to several great traditions encompassing major world religions and languages, Asia also accounts for approximately two thirds of the world's 370 million indigenous peoples. In Asia, the groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples are referred to by dominant groups and Governments as tribal peoples,

⁶³ The present chapter focuses primarily on the following: Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka in South Asia; Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam on mainland South-East Asia; Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Timor-Leste in insular South-East Asia; and, to a lesser extent, China and Japan in East Asia.

hill tribes, scheduled tribes,⁶⁴ *adivasi*,⁶⁵ *janajati*,⁶⁶ *orang asli*,⁶⁷ *masyarakat adat*,⁶⁸ ethnic minorities or ethnic nationalities. Regardless of their original or intended meanings, many of these terms have acquired the connotation of “primitiveness” or “backwardness” and, hence, are widely rejected by representatives of indigenous peoples today.

While many indigenous peoples of Asia experience non-recognition of their identities or exclusion and marginalization, there have nevertheless been some encouraging developments. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), signed into law by the President of the Philippines on 22 October 1997, is one of the first laws in Asia to recognize indigenous peoples’ rights to their ancestral domains and to cultural integrity, including the right to self-governance and self-determination. In 1997, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord was signed by the Government of Bangladesh and the indigenous peoples’ political party in partial recognition of the political and cultural aspirations of the indigenous, or “tribal”, peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts region. On 14 September 2007, Nepal became the first and to date remains the only Asian country to ratify the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization (ILO)⁶⁹. The Government of Nepal recognizes a total of 59 indigenous nationalities which have their own languages, distinct identities, cultures and histories. In 2008, Japan recognized the Ainu people as indigenous to Hokkaido (The Japan Times, 2008). In 2010, for the first time, the existence of indigenous groups in Bangladesh was recognized by the Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institute Act (albeit only about 27 of the more than 50 and through the use of inconsistent formulations). The groups, which were recognized by name, would have preferred to be identified as “indigenous peoples”.

Indigenous peoples in Asia, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, increasingly experience loss of control over their lands and natural resources. Their territories have frequently been expropriated to accommodate state-sponsored development and corporate projects whose implementation led, in many cases, to wide-scale violations of their collective rights, disregarding the recognition of those rights by pre-existing

⁶⁴ The term *scheduled tribe* derives from a provision in the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India, pursuant to which an official list of all the castes and tribes that are seen as “backward” has been prepared, hence in need of special measures enacted by the State to raise their status. Many of those tribes currently self-identify as indigenous peoples.

⁶⁵ The Sanskrit term *Adivasi* which literally means “original inhabitant” or “aboriginal”, is widely used as a synonym for indigenous peoples in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. The word “Adivasi” forms part of “the central vocabulary of English in the modern world”, as reflected by its inclusion in the Oxford English Dictionary.

⁶⁶ The term *janajati*, which means roughly “nationality”, is applied to indigenous peoples in Nepal and, to a lesser extent, it is used in the literature of the Bangla language of Bangladesh and India, often to signify “ethnic group”.

⁶⁷ The term *orang asli*, which literally means “(ab)original people” in Malay, is used to refer to some of the groups of indigenous peoples in Malaysia.

⁶⁸ In Indonesia, the Bahasa term *masyarakat adat*, which literally means “customary or traditional community”, is commonly translated into English as “indigenous peoples”.

⁶⁹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1650, No. 28383.



national laws and policies, or under international legal instruments. While indigenous peoples have protested against and resisted the encroachment upon their territories by various means, this was often met with military responses, which has led to further loss of control over their lands and serious human rights violations.

Almost all Asian States voted for the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁷⁰ No Asian State voted against its adoption and only three (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh and Bhutan) abstained. In practice, many Asian States have yet to express support for and promote indigenous peoples' collective rights, especially their right to their lands and self-determination; indeed, indigenous peoples' exercise of these rights is viewed with suspicion by many of those in power throughout the region. There are signs, however, that state laws and policies are starting to become aligned with the provisions of the Declaration, albeit to varying degrees in different countries. In a study prepared in conjunction with and published by the Asian Development Bank (Plant, 2002), which focused on four countries in South-East Asia, considerable variation was observed in this regard. In the Philippines, favourable legislation (e.g., the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act) was found to be in place, although implementation of existing laws and policies was not as strong as desired. In Indonesia, while there is no law or policy dealing specifically with indigenous peoples, the topic was part of an intense and broader policy debate. In Viet Nam, an active non-governmental organization movement has experienced some success in incorporating references to indigenous peoples' rights within the relevant legal and policy framework. In Cambodia, where there is a longer tradition of enacting laws and policies on official recognition of ethnic minorities, policy discussions and debates are held regularly (Plant, 2002, p. 20).

For their part, the indigenous peoples in Asia have become increasingly more organized at local, national, regional and international levels and continue to press their demands for full recognition of their rights, but with varying degrees of success. Besides the positive trends in countries such as Nepal and the Philippines, there have been concrete gains elsewhere. For example, in Indonesia, the National Alliance of Indigenous Peoples in the Archipelago won a case in the Constitutional Court which affirmed indigenous peoples' customary rights over local forests. Organizations and networks representing indigenous peoples in Asia, such as the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact and its members and partners in various countries, have also stepped up their engagement and participation in the work of regional and international bodies, such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and various United Nations organizations and processes. As a result of the sustained efforts of various organizations and networks, the voices of indigenous peoples are beginning to be heard at the regional and international levels, as well as at the national level in various countries in Asia (Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, 2014).

⁷⁰ General Assembly resolution 61/295 of 13 September 2007, annex. 144 states in favour, 4 votes against (Australia, New Zealand, United States) and 11 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa and Ukraine).

Indigenous peoples and education in the Asian region

The availability of the statistical data needed for an accurate depiction of the education situation of indigenous peoples in the region is limited. Census data focusing on indigenous peoples are not available for all countries (Education International, 2008). While United Nations organizations such as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) maintain regional statistical information, specific or disaggregated data on indigenous peoples are hard to find in their publications. Country-specific data and information found in secondary sources regarding indigenous peoples of Asia are generally not systematized either.

Despite the limited availability of statistics, data from Governments, indigenous organizations, international organizations and civil society suggests that global trends observed for indigenous peoples also apply in most countries of Asia. Such trends operate in different combinations and are manifested to varying degrees within a diversity of contexts ranging from the Ainus of Japan to the Zou people, a scheduled tribe, of Manipur, India.⁷¹ The main trends include:

- (a) Limited access to formal education, due to geographical as well as political marginalization;
- (b) Absence of recognition of, or respectful reference to, the identities and cultures of indigenous peoples in national education systems and curricula;
- (c) Inadequate provision of supplies in schools in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples; and
- (d) Absence of sufficient numbers of teachers who speak indigenous languages.

As a result, indigenous students tend to have lower enrolment rates, higher dropout rates and poorer educational outcomes than non-indigenous students across Asia, as in other parts of the world (United Nations, 2009, p. 130; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005, p. 21; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2009, p. 10).

In most Asian countries, children belonging to indigenous groups tend to enter school with poorer prospects of success and emerge with fewer years of education and lower levels of achievement. This is a common pattern, regardless of the overall socio-economic development of each country. A regional report on functional literacy which focused on seven Asian countries, namely, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, the Lao People's


⁷¹ These two ethnic groups in particular are meant to represent the diversity of Asia's indigenous peoples not in a statistical or typological sense but metaphorically--by virtue of the fact that the entire alphabet lies between the first letters of their names.



Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, found that the literacy rates for indigenous peoples were lower than national rates in all of the countries under consideration (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2001). A study published by the International Labour Organization (2006, p. 3) indicated that in both Cambodia and Nepal, indigenous peoples had fewer years of schooling and higher illiteracy rates as compared with national trends. Across Asia, generally, access to and quality of education remain below desired levels for the majority of indigenous peoples. The disparities between indigenous peoples and dominant groups become even more obvious at the upper levels of education. In India, for example, where the gaps between scheduled tribes and other groups have narrowed in terms of enrolment at the primary level, at higher levels, high drop out rates continue to be of major concern (India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013, pp. 16-18). In Hokkaido, Japan, the college enrolment rate for the Ainu continues to be very low, below half of that for non-Ainu of the province, which in turn is lower than the national rate (as of 2006, the rates were 17.3 per cent for Ainu, 38.5 per cent for the non-Ainu of Hokkaido and 53.8 per cent for Japan as a whole) (Okada, 2012, p. 10).

While physical barriers e.g., rugged geographical terrain and underdeveloped road infrastructure, contribute to the lower levels of education for indigenous peoples in many parts of Asia, cultural barriers constitute a bigger challenge. In most cases, stigmatization functions as a potent source of marginalization, with indigenous peoples often treated as “primitive or culturally inferior”. Their languages are rarely used as the medium of instruction in formal education – a pattern that has often been part of a wider process of cultural subordination and social discrimination, with indigenous children’s school experience reinforcing and perpetuating such marginalization (cf. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2009, p. 25). In this regard within the context of countries such as Cambodia and Nepal, it has been observed that national efforts to reach Millennium Development Goal targets did not necessarily entail addressing specific needs of their indigenous peoples, particularly for delivery of intercultural bilingual education, an important strategy for maintaining their cultural identity (International Labour Organization, 2006, p. 3).

Across Asia, there is now a growing realization that the issues of poorer access to and lower quality of education for indigenous peoples need to be addressed within a broader policy framework which facilitates (a) a greater say for indigenous peoples as regards drawing on their own traditional systems of education and (b) a more direct integration of indigenous peoples’ languages, cultures and perspectives into the formal education system. These objectives have been embraced to varying degrees through



Asia accounts for approximately two thirds of the world’s 370 million indigenous peoples and are known as tribal peoples, hill tribes, and scheduled tribes.

corresponding changes in policies, legislation or governance arrangements by several countries in Asia such as Bangladesh, Nepal and the Philippines. However, major challenges still remain, including the need for many countries in Asia to recognize the identities of indigenous peoples in line with international instruments.

Within any given country in Asia, there are differences in the experiences of various groups and classes of indigenous peoples, with some lagging far behind in comparison with others. For example, the Zou people of India, who achieved a literacy rate of 78.2 per cent in 2011 compared with a rate of 61.6 per cent in 2001, are relatively better off than many other scheduled tribes of Manipur and other parts of India.⁷² In Nepal, where “indigenous nationalities”, or *janajatis*, generally have lower rates of literacy,

Access to education has generally improved. However, in many countries, indigenous peoples, especially indigenous girls, still have poorer rates of access compared with the general population, with some groups faring worse than others, and a few exceeding national trends.

there are also exceptions such as the Thakali and the Newar, who have literacy rates of 76 per cent and 71 per cent, respectively, which are far higher than those of the Magars, the Tamang and the Tharu, who live far from the city of Kathmandu (Nepal, Ministry of Education and Sports, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2007, p. 82).

It is also worth noting that within indigenous communities, the educational status of indigenous women is generally far lower than that of their male counterparts, a trend that has been noted in various reports (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2001, p. 40; 2005, p. 21; International Labour Organization, 2006, p. 3). The intersection of gender and ethnicity presents a contrasting trend at another level. On a global scale, at the secondary level of education, there are larger disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous populations than between males and females or between residents in urban and

rural areas (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2007, p. 48). Thus, when the disparities are considered on a whole, it can be seen that indigenous girls and women are among the most disadvantaged in terms of access to quality education, a problem that is only beginning to be recognized by organizations that represent or work with indigenous peoples in Asia. In this regard, the importance for policymakers to collect informed evidence through disaggregated data must be emphasized.

⁷² See Government of India, Office of the Registrar General, “Census of India 2001: data highlights – the Scheduled Tribes, Manipur”, p. 154. Available at http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_manipur.pdf.



Major issues relating to indigenous peoples and education in Asia

Access to and quality of education

Despite overall gains in terms of improved access to and, to a lesser extent, quality of education in most countries in Asia, some disadvantaged groups continue to lag behind the national population for various reasons. The *Statistical Year Book for Asia and the Pacific 2011* (United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2011), highlighted that while there has been quantitative improvement in access to formal education, in many countries of the region, some population subgroups lag behind and, have been marginalized. Indigenous peoples, who constitute a special category among such marginalized groups, require diverse approaches, including attention to mother-tongue-first literacy and culturally relevant curricula as a means of improving both access to and quality of basic education (*ibid.*, p. 49).

In terms of literacy rates, which may be viewed as a good indicator of the level of access to education, indigenous peoples in most countries of Asia lag behind the national average. In the final report of a 2001 Regional Workshop on Functional Literacy for Indigenous Peoples (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2001), which was attended by the representatives of seven Member States of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam), it was noted that in all of the countries represented, literacy rates for indigenous peoples were lower than the corresponding national literacy rates, although the disparity between the two rates varied from country to country (UNESCO, 2001, p. 40). China had the smallest disparity, with a 67 per cent national illiteracy rate and a 61 per cent illiteracy rate for ethnic minorities, while Viet Nam had a national literacy rate of 87 per cent compared with a literacy rate of only 4 per cent for some ethnic minorities such as the Lolo people. Further, among the Hmong of Viet Nam, 83 per cent of men and 97 per cent of women were found to be illiterate (United Nations, 2009, p. 132). The literacy rates in indigenous communities were also found to vary among different ethnic groups. In Cambodia, among some indigenous communities in the Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri provinces, the literacy rate was as low as 20 per cent for men and 2 per cent for women. In the province of Yunnan in China, the Lahu people had a literacy rate of 28 per cent against the national literacy rate of 61 per cent for ethnic minorities and a rate of 67 per cent for China.

Considerable variation in literacy rates was also found among indigenous peoples, i.e., the scheduled tribes of India. While the rates are generally lower than that of dominant groups in most States, there are notable exceptions, mainly in the north-eastern States. In Mizoram, where the population is made up predominantly of indigenous peoples or

scheduled tribes (the proportion is over 94 per cent) while the literacy rate of the total population of the province, as determined by 2011 census data, is 91.3 per cent – the second highest literacy rate of all States and considerably higher than the national average of 73 per cent (table III.1) (India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Statistics Division, 2013, pp. 7 and 166). Indigenous peoples also have noticeably high literacy rates in other States such as Nagaland and Meghalaya.⁷³ However, because of lower rates in most other States, the aggregate trends for scheduled tribes as a whole continue to lag behind the national average. Over the years, the scheduled tribes of India have been making steady improvements in terms of educational achievements, in keeping with the general upward trends in the country. While the gross enrolment ratio increased from 80.4 in 1990-1991 to 119.7 in 2010-2011 for scheduled tribes, compared with corresponding figures of 78.6 and 104.3 for the total population, dropout rates still continue to be higher than the national average and have been found to increase from primary to secondary level (India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Statistics Division, 2013, p. 171).

TABLE III.1
Literacy rate of all social groups and of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes populations, India, 1961-2011 (Percentage)

Year	All Social Groups			ST (scheduled tribes)			ST		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	40.4	15.35	28.3	16.96	3.29	10.27	13.83	3.16	8.53
1971	45.96	21.97	34.45	22.36	6.44	14.67	17.63	4.85	11.30
1981	56.38	29.76	43.57	31.12	10.93	21.38	24.52	8.04	16.35
1991	64.13	39.29	52.21	49.91	23.76	37.41	40.65	18.19	29.60
2001	75.26	53.67	64.84	66.64	41.90	54.69	59.17	34.76	47.10
2011	80.89	64.64	72.99	75.17	56.46	66.07	68.53	49.35	58.96

Source: India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Statistics Division (2013), p. 164.

Improvements in enrolment rates have yet to be matched by corresponding changes in retention rates. For example, while in 2010-2011, the gross enrolment ratio for children from scheduled tribes at the primary level (classes I-VIII) was at 119.7 which compared favourably with the All India figure of 104.3, the figure fell drastically at the secondary level (IX-X) to 53.3 for children from scheduled tribes compared with the All India figure of 65. The ratio was even lower at the higher secondary level (classes XI-XII) at 28.8, compared with a figure of 39.3 for the All India level (*ibid.*, p. 17). Similarly, dropout rates for children among scheduled tribes shows that out of every 100 students who entered class I, almost 67 completed class V (versus the All India rate of 79), while only 41.9 completed class VIII (versus the All India rate of 64) and 13.9 studied up to class XII

⁷³ Historically, Christian missionaries played an important role in the spread of literacy among many “tribal” groups in north-east India (see, e.g., Dubey and Pala (2009)).



(versus the All India rate of 30.9). Thus, in India, variations in the gross enrolment ratio for scheduled tribes notwithstanding, high dropout rates for tribal children after class VIII, and then again after class X, remain an area of concern in India (ibid., pp. 16-18 and 179-182).

The trends of lower literacy rates and lower school enrolment, as well as increasingly higher rates of dropping out, are commonly observed in other Asian countries as well. For example, in Nepal, at the time of the mid-decade assessment of the Education for All movement (2007), the enrolment of Dalit and *janajati* children was reportedly still very low. For *janajati* children, against a 43.7 per cent population share at the national level, the school enrolment shares were 38.8 per cent, 38.6 per cent and 29.9 per cent in primary, lower secondary and secondary levels, respectively (Nepal, Ministry of Education and Sports, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2007, pp. 50 and 90). In Cambodia, provinces with a significant presence of indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities lag considerably behind other parts of the country in terms of literacy rates. The literacy rates of young school-age children in the provinces of Kratie, Mondulkiri, Preah Vihear, Ratanakiri and Stung Treng, where numerous ethnic minority peoples live, are still low, and remain far behind national trends.

TABLE III.2
Literacy by age group in provinces inhabited by ethnic minorities,
Cambodia, 2004 (Percentage)

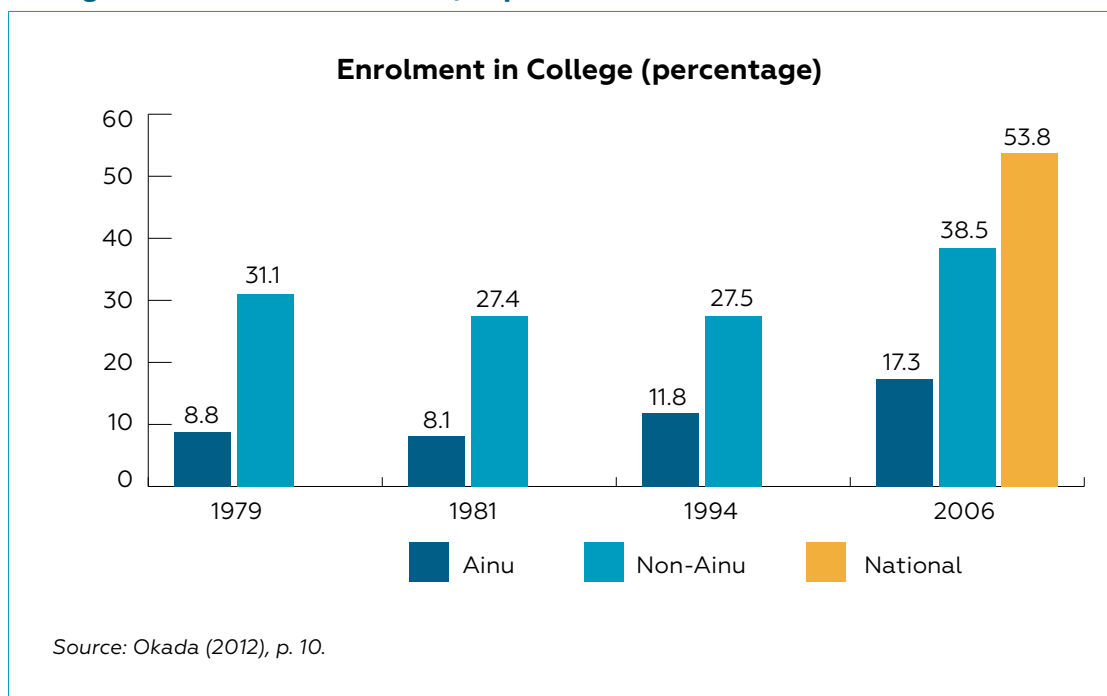
Area	Ages 7-14	Ages 15+
Kratie, Mondulkiri, Preah Vihear, Ratanakiri and Stung Treng	56.9	61.2
All Cambodia	76.4	73.6

Source: Cambodia, National Education for All Committee (2007), p. 126.

Ethnic-minority areas of Cambodia also lag behind in terms of retention at different grade levels. For example, in 2004-2005, during the Education for All mid-decade assessment, the lowest survival rates to grade 5 were those of Ratanakiri (29.7 per cent) and Mondulkiri (34.6 per cent), both ethnic-minority areas in the remote north-east part of the country. The two provinces had retention rates that were less than half, or dropout rates that were more than double, the rates of the best performing provinces situated around the capital (Cambodia, National Education for All Committee, 2007, p. 80).

While the Ainu of Japan have physical access to education, for centuries policy and cultural barriers have prevented them from achieving academic success at the level of members of mainstream Japanese society. This can be explained partly by the fact that the goal of the education system was more assimilation of the Ainu rather than promotion and protection of their right to cultural self-determination (figure III.1).

FIGURE III.1
College enrolment in Hokkaido, Japan



One reason why access to education remains limited for a large number of indigenous communities is that many of these communities are located in terrain that is hard to reach and geographically difficult to master. For some groups, such as nomadic peoples, fragile political environments and mobility issues introduce extra dimensions to the challenges that they face in terms of access to education, including the challenges associated with the question of their “origins” and “indigeneity” (Frantzman, Yahel and Kark, 2012).

While dropout rates are particularly alarming in many South Asian countries, the problem is most acute for indigenous communities where the children face additional language and cultural barriers. Much remains to be done by education authorities to raise the efficiency of school systems through improvement of the quality of school and classroom instruction, in particular in areas inhabited by those communities (United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2014, p. 11).

The importance of education that is culturally and linguistically relevant has been emphasized repeatedly. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2008 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2007), in the subsection entitled “Reducing ethnic discrimination in schools” (ibid., chap. 3, p. 120), highlighted the fact that children of indigenous peoples globally, including in a number of Asian countries such as Bangladesh, China, India, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan and Viet Nam, were less likely to enrol in primary education and



more likely to repeat than non-indigenous children. It was also noted that in order for indigenous children to have access to good-quality education, there was a need for appropriate and accessible schooling opportunities, adequate resources in schools and cultural relevance of the education offered. The importance of language of instruction and bilingual education was also stressed (*ibid.*).

Indigenous education systems and integration of indigenous perspectives into mainstream education

The present section examines the issues of indigenous education systems and integration of indigenous perspectives into mainstream education. In this regard, it is useful to examine the term “indigenous education” as employed in literature in general and in this publication in particular. In some cases, it refers to “a traditional system of learning and intergenerational transmission of knowledge among indigenous peoples”. However, more generally, the intention in using the term is to focus attention on the specific needs, concerns and perspectives of indigenous peoples as related to education (King and Schielmann, eds., 2004).

Indigenous education was one of the first issues discussed in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. At the second session of the Forum, held in May 2003, it was emphasized that indigenous peoples continue to face discrimination in the education system, including various manifestations of non-recognition and devaluation of indigenous languages, cultures and identities. The loss of indigenous languages, the exclusion of indigenous cultures and knowledge in the school curricula, and the need to promote the participation and contribution of indigenous peoples in the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate educational programmes, were also underscored (United Nations, 2003; King and Schielmann, eds., 2004). In Asia, there has been a growing recognition of these issues, including the need to promote policies, strategies and programmes that take into account activities such as the following (King and Schielmann, eds., pp. 24-25; cf. United Nations, 2009, pp. 143-144):

- ≡ Reinforcing community-based practices of early childhood care;
- ≡ Using local languages for initial literacy;
- ≡ Creating culturally responsive programmes in bi- and multilingual education for children and adults;
- ≡ Providing skills specific to indigenous cultures, such as hunting and weaving, as well as more general skills, in the context of knowledge, attitudes, values and beliefs;
- ≡ Developing appropriate learning material;

- ≡ Linking education to other dimensions of the learner's life, such as health and the natural environment; and
- ≡ Using and integrating formal and non-formal learning styles and teaching methods as a means of recognizing indigenous ways of generating and transmitting knowledge and of giving value to the oral wisdom of indigenous peoples and non-verbal communication in education.

Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination is often associated with issues of access to and control over land and other natural resources in specified territories. This is also highly relevant from an education perspective that goes beyond the historical experience of an education system imposed upon indigenous peoples, without their prior knowledge and consent. Indigenous peoples have had very little outside influence over formal education systems, including over boarding and missionary schools and state-run education centres. Against this backdrop, indigenous peoples have become increasingly vocal in their demands to participate more effectively in the administration of their schools through developing education policies and creating curricula; and States and other authorities are beginning to take notice and appreciate the seriousness of the demands of indigenous peoples and communities to assume greater management of and responsibility for their children's education (United Nations, 2009, p. 145).

One example of these developing trends includes the formal transfer in Bangladesh of the management of primary education to Hill district councils, local bodies which consist of a majority of "tribal" councillors who take responsibility for ensuring that education is delivered in the mother-tongue language, in accordance with the provisions agreed under the Peace Accord of 1997 and subsequent legislation (Prashanta Tripura, 2014). In Nepal, similar accommodations have been made under the 2015 Constitution which confers on all mother-tongue language the status of a national language, thereby enabling their use in the Governmental sector. Under the Constitution, each community is also accorded the right to preserve and promote its language and cultural heritage, and receive basic education in the mother-tongue language (article 17) (United Nations, General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 2009b). In the Philippines, where the Constitution had to some extent already allowed for multilingual education, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8371) reinforced and expanded existing provisions. It is worth noting that the provisions related to "Educational systems" (sect. 30) appear in chapter VI, entitled "Cultural integrity" of the Act, which suggests that proper implementation of those provisions could reverse the erosion of indigenous peoples' cultures brought about by education systems imposed from above and from outside.

However, compared with the scope of the above-mentioned policy provisions, concrete initiatives and achievements on the ground seem to be more limited. In the Chittagong



Hill Tracts, for example, the lack of progress towards full implementation of the Peace Accord of 1997 has hindered the full functioning of Hill Tracts institutions such as the district councils (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2010). These institutions have therefore not been in a position to address issues such as the promotion of appropriate systems of indigenous education. In Nepal, while some studies have been undertaken on bilingual education, selected *janajati* languages and development of textbooks in mother tongues, such initiatives appear have not had a large-scale impact in the classrooms of indigenous children (Nepal, Ministry of Education and Sports, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2007, pp. 120-121). In the Philippines, it is difficult to observe any direct impact of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act on indigenous education systems. However, the initiative within a few indigenous communities e.g., that of the Talaandig, known as the School of Living Traditions,⁷⁴ which predates the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, could become a specific area for further investigation and the basis for developing models of indigenous education in a more traditional sense.

In general, in different parts of Asia, attempts to promote culturally relevant education systems, which are aligned with the needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples and in accordance with existing legal and policy provisions, have usually taken the form of projects supported by non-governmental and other organizations. For example, in Cambodia, CARE International implemented the Highland Children's Education Project (HCEP) in Ratankiri Province from 2002 to 2004. This three-year project, which was the first to introduce bilingual schooling in Cambodia, sought to promote multilingual and multicultural primary education combined with pre- and in-service teacher training, along with local community management of important matters (CARE International in Cambodia, 2004, part III, pp. 113-122). In Sabah, Malaysia, the non-governmental organization-led Snake and Ladder Project, which started as a small pilot in 1993, entailed early childcare and development for preschoolers aged 4-6 from four indigenous target groups (Lasimbang, 2004).

In Mizoram State in India, a non-governmental organization implemented a project with the more restricted objective of introducing an indigenous language (Chakma) as a subject in formal primary schools run by the Chakma Autonomous District Council (Chakma, 2004). The emphasis was on the preservation of a traditional script along with the development of the language, rather than on using the indigenous language as a medium of instruction in the initial years of schooling. In Bangladesh, Chittagong Hill Tracts projects included one whose focus on indigenous children entailed use of a multilingual approach and a CARE project entitled "Chittagong Hill Tracts Children's Opportunities for Learning Enhanced (CHOLEN)", which utilized indigenous languages as a means of oral communication (Chowdhury, 2003). A much more ambitious project, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Chittagong

⁷⁴ See <http://ncca.gov.ph/school-of-living-traditions/>.

Hill Tracts Development Facility, introduced a full-fledged multilingual education programme for all or at least most of the 11 indigenous ethnic groups of the Hill Tracts as a major project component.

The above examples offer a small indication of the wide varieties of initiatives that address indigenous peoples' education in different parts of Asia. However, most of those initiatives are relatively recent and remain limited in scope. Much more remains to be done by public authorities at all levels to address the core issues associated with indigenous education in a way that is holistic, comprehensive, inclusive and tailored to the diverse contexts of indigenous peoples in Asia. In this regard, a fundamental challenge which remains to be addressed more systematically is that of crafting practical means of reconciling indigenous education, as encompassing "traditional" systems of culturally transmitted learning, with "modern" systems of formal education. Although such a reconciliation is not impossible in theory, the process is bound to involve several practical challenges as well as – and more importantly – "cultural negotiation" on how to achieve it.

Governance, policies and legislation related to indigenous peoples and education

As Member States of the United Nations, countries in Asia, as in other parts of the world, are generally committed to upholding and promoting the rights set out in international instruments, which serve as a key template for the formulation of laws and national policies in various sectors including education. However, as indicated earlier, the Governments of many Asian countries tend to treat the term "indigenous peoples" as inapplicable or irrelevant within their own contexts. The fact that Nepal is the only Asian country to date to have ratified the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) indicates the difficulty of enlisting the full support of Asian States for the promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples. Moreover, the growing interest of the private sector in indigenous peoples' lands, territories and resources introduces an obstacle to achieving the full recognition of indigenous peoples' rights. However, in the context of education, there seems to be greater readiness by Governments to agree to specific measures in support of those peoples. At the same time, common stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards indigenous peoples, coupled with nationalist tendencies which promote the cultures, histories and languages of dominant groups, as well as the lack of disaggregated statistical information, often hinder the formulation of policies and laws that guarantee indigenous peoples' educational rights.

In India, the second National Policy on Education of 1986, further modified in 1992, placed special emphasis on the removal of disparities for scheduled tribes, i.e., groups that self-identify or may be regarded as indigenous peoples. Special measures identified "to bring the Scheduled Tribes on par with others" included prioritization of primary



schools in tribal areas and development of culturally relevant curricula and instructional materials in tribal languages at the initial stages, with arrangements for switching over to the regional language later. Further, the policy included training of qualified tribal youth as teachers in tribal areas, establishment on a large scale of residential schools for children from scheduled tribes, incentive schemes including scholarships for higher education and special remedial courses, and revision of the curriculum at all stages of education “to create an awareness of the rich cultural identity of the tribal people as also of their enormous creative talent” (India, 1992, pp. 9-10, sect. 4.6). While well intentioned, the policy formulations in their language and tone could still be viewed as extending a colonial legacy, through the reference, for example, to the constitutionally sanctioned “tribal” category, which is subsumed under the broader “backward” category, and espousing top-down approaches to development (as reflected by the list of measures to be taken for the tribes, with no indication of whether those measures are to be taken by them as well).

BOX III.1

Case study: Kokborok-speaking indigenous peoples in Tripura, India

India is characterized by enormous linguistic and ethnic diversity, ensuring that the formulation and implementation of laws and policies that take this diversity into account become a significant challenge. In the State of Tripura, where Kokborok-speaking indigenous peoples were once the majority both demographically and politically, migration has changed the ethnic makeup of the State and has made it more difficult for the Kokborok-speaking and other “tribal” groups to articulate and realize their vision for regaining political and cultural autonomy.

Despite official recognition of their language on 19 January 1979, and legal and policy provisions for education in “mother tongue”, the educational experiences of the Kokborok-speaking indigenous peoples of Tripura have been impacted by factors such as politicization of script choice (while Bangla is the officially sanctioned script, there is a growing demand for Roman), political influence over the curriculum (textbooks have been changed frequently after change of Government) and lack of inclusion of the aspirations and perspectives of Kokborok-speaking indigenous peoples in the design of the curriculum and management of the education system. This has negatively affected the educational outcomes of indigenous peoples in Tripura, where low-quality basic education and low academic performance remain a problem.

Source: Biswaranjan Tripura (2014).

There has been considerable progress in the Philippines as regards legislation that recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples, including their right to receive education in

their own languages. However, effective implementation of existing provisions has yet to be achieved on the ground. One of the areas in which various efforts are under way is that of mother tongue based multilingual education (Nolasco, Datar and Azurin, eds., 2010). This entails initiating children's education through utilization of their mother tongue or first language (L1) as a language of instruction and basis for literacy in the first years, followed by a move to phased introductions of the national language (L2) and, where applicable, a third language such as English (L3) (Kosonen, Young and Malone, 2007). Historically, there have been fluctuations in language policy in the Philippines, where the complexity of language-in-education issues has unfolded for over a century. The most recent shift in language policy towards mother tongue based multilingual education has enabled the country to explore the implementation of language

Special ethnic minority boarding schools were established in many mountainous regions, but it was observed that only a small number of ethnic minority students, from the better-connected families, had access to them.

reform in a contemporary setting. As in other parts of the world, language policies in the Philippines have changed because of political, economic and cultural challenges at the national and community levels, with various initiatives supported by the authorities indicating top-down conceptualization and implementation. However, mother tongue based multilingual education can produce positive, sustained results on the ground only when teachers and parents are fully on board with a shared understanding of, and support for, this effort (Burton, 2013).

In Viet Nam, many of the 53 officially recognized ethnic minorities⁷⁵ have much lower literacy rates and poorer access to education than the majority Kinh population (Asian Development Bank, 2002). For example, ethnic groups such as the Lolos and Hmong had literacy rates

that were as low as 4 per cent (Lolos) and 3 per cent (Hmong women), as compared with the national literacy rate of 87 per cent (United Nations, 2009, p. 132). National education policies have sought to address existing inequalities, through the major objectives of (a) eradicating illiteracy among ethnic minorities and (b) developing a cadre of trained ethnic minority officials. A study published by the Asian Development Bank (Plant, 2002, p. 27) indicates concerns regarding the education policies for ethnic minorities living in the mountainous regions. While Vietnamese is the main language used in the schooling system, some attempts have been made to include ethnic minority languages for teaching purposes. Special ethnic minority boarding schools were established in many mountainous regions, but it was observed that only a small number of ethnic minority students, from the better-connected families, had access to them. The Asian Development Bank study identified the need to improve children's access to

⁷⁵ Ethnic minorities constitute 13 per cent of the total population, while the majority Kinh population constitutes the remaining 87 per cent.



schools and provide teachers belonging to the same ethnic group; to devise a suitable curriculum closely linked to ethnic minority cultures; and to maintain traditional forms of education through family, clan and traditional village structures.

From the perspective of the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh, one of the gains in the quest for full recognition of their identity was the incorporation of provisions in that regard in the National Education Policy, which explicitly mentions indigenous peoples (*adibashi/Adivasi* in Bangla) and acknowledges the importance of their languages in the initial years of education. Important issues such as the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the formulation of textbooks for indigenous children, recruitment of teachers from areas that are home to indigenous communities and the need for other specific provisions are also noted in the policy. However, a major setback occurred in 2011 after the term *adibashi* was omitted from a constitutional amendment, in which a new clause was introduced that recognized, for the first time, the existence of “tribes, minor races and ethnic sects and communities” in Bangladesh and called for the State to take special measures to protect and promote their “culture and tradition”. Since then, the education ministry has started using the newly sanctioned terms in place of *adibashi*, which is the term preferred by indigenous peoples. The National Education Policy 2010 has assumed different forms since 2006 when, within the context of the second phase of the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II), the Ministry of Mass and Primary Education issued a Primary Education Situational Analysis, Strategies and Action Plan for Mainstreaming Tribal Children, which contained all the provisions that were then reiterated in the 2010 National Education Policy (Plant and Chakma, 2011, pp. 16-17). The only difference was the substitution of the word “tribal” for *adibashi*, which has in turn been replaced by other terms such as “small ethnic sect”. Moreover, the National Education Policy 2010 has been criticized for focusing on “learning mother tongue” rather than “learning *in* mother tongue” with no mention of multilingual education per se (Tripura, 2014a, pp. 25-26).

Within other countries of Asia, there are also noticeable policy moves towards greater accommodation of indigenous peoples’ right to education. In Nepal, the new Constitution of September 2015 ensures equal status to all mother-tongue languages that are spoken in Nepal besides Nepali, as well as the right to primary education through mother-tongue languages. In Indonesia, through the reference to *adat* communities (indigenous peoples) in a 1999 presidential decree and the formation of AMAN, a national alliance of indigenous peoples, formulation and implementation of policies addressing the needs of the indigenous peoples have gained greater momentum (Plant, 2002, pp. 10-11). However, within the context of the enormous diversity of Indonesia’s hundreds of ethnic groups, whose spoken languages number over one thousand, elaboration of specific policies and initiatives related to indigenous peoples’ education must be regarded as still very much in the process of unfolding. Other countries of South-East Asia, such as Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand, have substantial ethnic diversity within their borders and, as signatories to various international instruments, have been

making some progress towards accommodating the needs and rights of indigenous peoples' education.⁷⁶

Institutional and structural support for indigenous education, including inter-cultural bilingual education

While education can help indigenous peoples overcome poverty and marginalization, it may also result in their children's devaluation or loss of their own languages and cultures unless those languages and cultures are integrated into the education system. Moving into multilingual mode after having been schooled in one's own language is any learner's fundamental right and is also widely recognized as the most effective basis for teaching and learning. Given the immense diversity and varied contexts on the ground, designing and implementing appropriate models of multilingual education in Asia remain a challenge. While much work remains to be done in terms of promoting bilingual and multilingual education for indigenous peoples in Asia, various ongoing initiatives do exist (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2007, pp. 131-133). In Cambodia, where Khmer is the medium of instruction at all levels of mainstream education, several indigenous languages have been introduced as the medium of instruction in pilot projects in the eastern highlands. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, local languages are widely used in oral form in schools in ethnic minority areas. In eastern Malaysia, many indigenous languages have been taught as school subjects since the 1990s, although they are not necessarily the medium of instruction. India's National Curriculum Framework for School Education, published in 2005, has reinforced the principle of mother-tongue based multilingual education and in this regard, various projects targeting "tribal" communities have been in progress around the country.

Most of these initiatives are recent and have been carried out with technical and financial assistance from bilateral or multilateral development partners. Preliminary assessments indicate progress. For example, in the highlands of Cambodia, use of local mother tongue based methods in the early years of schooling, together with deployment of local teachers, is reported to have improved school enrolment and retention rates for indigenous children.⁷⁷ Activities in other countries in the region have given rise to similar observations.

Organizations that have been active in supporting multilingual education (MLE) for indigenous peoples in Asia include the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other United Nations bodies, the Asian Development Bank and several local, national and international non-governmental organizations. In Bangladesh, a recent mapping study reported that there are 102

⁷⁶ A relevant discussion of ongoing developments is available in Kosonen and Young, eds. (2009).

⁷⁷ See the country case study on Cambodia in Kosonen and Young, eds. (2009).



organizations (mostly non-governmental) administering multilingual education programmes in different parts of the country, which serve 73,150 learners belonging to 78 different ethnic (mostly indigenous) groups and employ 3,496 teachers (93 per cent of whom belong to different indigenous groups) (Kamal and others, 2014). These impressive figures do not, however, necessarily indicate high-quality programming and quality remains a prime concern. More than half of the teachers participating in the multilingual education projects that were mapped were deemed to have poor academic qualifications as measured against established norms and standards. Further, organizations were found to be following different methods for conceptualizing and implementing MLE, which was often taken to refer to mother-language education as opposed to (mother-tongue based) multilingual education.

In contrast, the Vedda (“forest people”) of Sri Lanka, an extremely marginalized group, do not seem to have recourse to multilingual education-type interventions. While Government authorities have allocated funds to projects focused on needs such as housing, there have been no initiatives designed to integrate the traditional knowledge system of the Veddas into the mainstream educational or development system. On the other hand, Vedda community teachers have made efforts on an individual level to address the dwindling cultural heritage and the diminishing body of associated knowledge of sustainable traditional forest-based ways of life (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2012, pp. 364-366).

In Nepal, despite the Government’s efforts to improve the quality of instruction in the early grades, classes are often taught by the least qualified teachers or by those who do not speak the local languages. Despite policy and programmatic support for mother-tongue instruction in the lower grades, textbooks in the mother-tongue language are rarely used, partly because of parental resistance but mostly owing to a lack of capacity and willingness on the part of teachers. Generally speaking, the numbers of *janajati* teachers in the primary and secondary teaching forces are still small – less than 29.4 per cent and 17.3 per cent, respectively (Nepal, National Planning Commission, and United Nations Country Team of Nepal, 2013, pp. 27-28 and 33).

Challenges for indigenous peoples’ education

The present section offers a brief examination of specific problems and challenges related to indigenous peoples’ education in Asia.

Proper recognition of the identities, languages and cultures of indigenous peoples

As noted above, the lack of official recognition of indigenous peoples is common in many Asian countries, and this presents indigenous peoples with a major barrier to achieving their right to education. While many Governments regard the concept of indigenous peoples as relevant only in the western hemisphere but not in Asia, they

nevertheless retain the categories of colonialism, using “tribal” and comparable terms in an official context. Deeply entrenched notions of the cultural superiority of the dominant ethnic groups based on those Governments’ own understanding of the meaning of national identity and national history often lie at the root of their inability to recognize indigenous identity. The resolution of the various problems and challenges encountered in the area of indigenous peoples’ education – challenges ranging from formulation of appropriate education policies and adequate resource allocation for indigenous peoples, to assuring them a greater voice and involvement in managing the education systems and curricula that affect their lives – requires that such attitudes and official views be changed.

Need for holistic frameworks of analysis, understanding and action

As pointed out by many observers, education cannot be separated from economic, social, political and environmental realities. It is therefore necessary to adopt a holistic approach to the educational and other issues faced by indigenous peoples (United Nations, 2009, pp. 148-149). For indigenous peoples, poverty, cultural marginalization, land dispossession, issues of resilience to climate change and disasters and lack of access to quality education are all inextricably linked.

While the global order is changing everywhere, the rapid rise of new economic powerhouses in Asia poses special challenges for the indigenous peoples of the region, putting enormous pressure on their resources, cultures and identities. Even if education-related initiatives do not necessarily respond to the challenges directly, they need to be informed by holistic analyses and long-term perspectives which take those challenges into account.

Scripting successful multilingual education programmes

For most of the new and ongoing initiatives within the field of education relating to indigenous peoples, mother-tongue based multilingual education is probably the most recurrent focus. However, based on the understanding of multilingual education, it is frequently assumed that the languages of indigenous peoples currently need to be represented in written form, and that teaching materials must also take written form. Hence, each ethnic group is often in a rush to develop its own unique script, with different interest groups pushing their particular choice of existing, adapted or newly invented scripts, which thus turns script choice into a political issue with little direct relevance to education per se. Political controversies over choice of script are particularly common in Asia, where the insistence on the use of rare or newly invented scripts imposes an extra burden on learners as well as supporters of multilingual education programmes, without any demonstrated long-term benefits or sustainability (Kosonen, Young and Malone, 2006, pp. 3-4). Instead, debates over script may lead to a loss of



momentum in developing new education initiatives, as demonstrated in the case of the Kokborok-speaking people of Tripura, India mentioned earlier. In Bangladesh, an ongoing initiative aimed towards introducing multilingual education teaching and learning at the pre-primary level in six indigenous languages has had to exclude the Santali language for the time being owing to debates over choice of script. Given the ubiquity of such problems in Asia, there is a need to develop a new common framework of understanding and action for multilingual education initiatives.

Changing the measures of academic qualifications and performance for indigenous peoples

The literature on indigenous peoples' education reveals that the discussion often focuses on indigenous peoples' lack of various necessities such as expertise, funds, qualified teachers, learning materials, scripts and orthographies. In such cases, however, the yardsticks by which qualifications, competencies and expertise are measured are standards imposed from outside. Those standards are often set based implicitly on the misperception that the task of indigenous peoples in this regard is to acquire what they need but do not possess, rather than to build on their existing strengths and assets, which include their own cultural and linguistic knowledge, their values of reciprocity and sharing, and their ability to act as custodians of natural resources. Indigenous peoples can serve as teachers not just for their own communities, but for the rest of society in presenting alternative models of or even alternatives to development. This is particularly relevant considering the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁷⁸ to which indigenous knowledge can contribute positively.

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Issues particular to indigenous children and education

Many of the issues discussed above have special relevance for children. Children belonging to poor indigenous communities, particularly girls, suffer from the worst forms of vulnerability, marginalization and exploitation and their point of view about the issue of choice of script may therefore be different from that of adults for whom preservation of script may be of greater concern than literacy per se.

⁷⁸ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

For indigenous groups to whom formal schooling is a relatively new challenge or for those who reside in difficult terrain, where education of children begins with learning subsistence and survival skills from their elders, it may often be difficult to identify education interventions that are both appropriate and not excessively disruptive. Fine distinctions may need to be made between “working” and “learning and playing” as perceived by children (Lasimbang, 2004, p. 154), which requires an analytical approach to understanding within the local cultural context.

In situations of extreme poverty and marginalization, children may actually suffer from multiple forms of deprivation which need be addressed more holistically. This being the case, interventions designed for indigenous children should therefore be as comprehensive as possible. For example, although education is free and compulsory in Sri Lanka, an investigation conducted about the Vedda people found their children’s school attendance to be minimal and the facilities in primary schools to be inadequate. Some children suffered from learning disorders because of nutritional deficiencies which persisted despite a Government incentive to remedy the situation by providing nutritional meals in the rural sector (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2012, p. 365). Such findings underscore the need to develop and implement integrated programmes in close collaboration with Government agencies and local indigenous communities.

Main findings

The main findings of a review of the situation of indigenous peoples in Asia in relation to education are summarized below:

- ≡ Access to education has generally improved. However, in many countries, indigenous peoples, especially indigenous girls, still have poorer rates of access compared with the general population, with some groups faring worse than others, and a few exceeding national trends. There is thus a need to identify the specific communities among indigenous peoples that are the most underserved.
- ≡ While enrolment rates may have gone up in Asia, retention and completion remain a major challenge for indigenous communities, with high dropout rates a common problem.
- ≡ Quality remains a concern for education interventions on behalf of indigenous peoples in Asia. Taking the languages and cultures of the indigenous peoples into account in adapting education systems to their needs and rights is key to successful interventions and support.



- ≡ Efforts to develop appropriate curricula and teaching and learning materials, select media of instruction and design multilingual education programmes with clear transition strategies need to be improved and tailored to specific contexts, given that the majority of indigenous communities in Asia have yet to secure access to multilingual education programming. While multilingual education may be a logical development, other programmes may exist where different experimental methods have been tested and refined. There is also the risk that debates over script choice, which are particularly prevalent in Asia, may serve to impede the implementation of well-conceived initiatives.
- ≡ There is a need to develop education programmes for indigenous communities holistically, thereby enabling them to articulate their own visions of development, keeping in mind the economic, political and cultural trends at local as well as national, regional and global levels. Economic growth, which is a dominant phenomenon in Asia, is in fact transforming the whole region. This factor will therefore need to be taken into full account within the context of efforts to help indigenous communities adapt to the changes in the region.
- ≡ In many indigenous communities, the situation of girls and women is often found to be worse than that of their male counterparts. They therefore need to be more involved, and have a greater voice in all interventions and programmes.
- ≡ The process of enacting legal and policy provisions on indigenous education has progressed in Asia, but much work remains to be done to ensure the proper implementation of existing provisions and to make them more robust, more holistic and better aligned with international instruments and best practices.
- ≡ Non-governmental organizations and international organizations need to work together more closely, particularly in alignment with Governments. There should be a much greater focus on knowledge management and the generation of disaggregated data.
- ≡ Public awareness of the value of indigenous languages and cultures as a means of addressing social discrimination and stereotypes, among other issues, needs to be raised. Mainstream education should itself reflect the

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values of diversity and inclusiveness, regardless of whether there are indigenous children present in a particular school.

- ≡ Mobilization of greater levels of resources is needed as a means of helping indigenous communities fulfil their educational needs and exercise their rights. The notion of “resources” needs to be modified to include recognition of the wealth of traditional knowledge and special values possessed by many indigenous communities, which could enrich not just nations but the entire region.

Recommendations

The recommendations set out below complement the recommendations contained in other chapters, as well as the recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues related to education (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2013, pp. 9-13).

For indigenous peoples

- ≡ The indigenous peoples of Asia are the custodians of a highly diverse mix of cultures and languages numbering in the thousands. To articulate their visions of education and future development, they need to tap collectively into a wealth of experiences, resources and potential. Indigenous peoples should seek to not only influence but also orient educational processes and systems towards greater recognition of their identities and cultures and greater responsiveness to their priorities for education.

For non-governmental organizations, including those established by indigenous peoples

- ≡ Maintain engagement, build alliances and learn from each other: Non-governmental organizations and organizations of indigenous peoples could seek to pursue a more strategic engagement at various levels, e.g., through linking their grass-roots experiences in such a way as to influence the policy process at national and other levels, and by building alliances and learning from one another within their own countries and across the region.



- ≡ Focus on girls' education: For many indigenous peoples, there is significant gender disparity, particularly at higher levels of education. Non-Governmental organizations and organizations of indigenous peoples could in that regard make the area of girls' education a central focus of larger interventions.

For Member States

- ≡ Fully implement positive provisions: Across Asia, there are numerous examples of provisions designed to support indigenous people's education, which have not yet been fully implemented. The reasons for non-implementation need to be addressed and analysed, with the support of renewed efforts to obtain disaggregated statistical evidence and promote inclusiveness for more responsive policymaking.
- ≡ Refine and strengthen policies: In situations where policies are either weak or inconsistent, or problematic in other ways, changes need to be made. This process should be carried out in an open, consultative and participatory manner so that there is broad support and shared understanding, and should go hand in hand with strengthened participatory monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation as well as public accountability mechanisms.
- ≡ Allocate more resources: This includes financial as well as human resources, i.e., dedicated personnel with expertise and commitment to be put in place to support indigenous education.
- ≡ Educate the public: To ensure that policies and programmes are sustainable in the long term and that indigenous peoples' education is not viewed as an obscure technical issue, it is important that the support of the public be enlisted and that it be kept informed.
- ≡ Empower indigenous peoples: This goal should be at the core of all initiatives aimed at promoting education for indigenous peoples, who need the support of broad enabling environments within which they can exercise a greater say in designing, implementing and improving education systems which work for them and their children.

For the international community

- ≡ Harmonization and alignment: This becomes particularly important given the enormous diversity of contexts within which indigenous peoples live. While a multiplicity of initiatives designed to respond to realities on the ground are

required, there is also a need to establish, inter alia, overarching principles and goals and common platforms for knowledge generation and knowledge sharing to guide the efforts of all concerned.

- ≡ Work coherently across the United Nations system on initiatives related to indigenous education, including sensitization of agencies to the urgency of gathering disaggregated data on this subject. Support knowledge exchange: knowledge sharing on best practices as they apply to indigenous education is essential, in particular in the search for models that can successfully bridge the gap separating indigenous peoples from culturally appropriate education.

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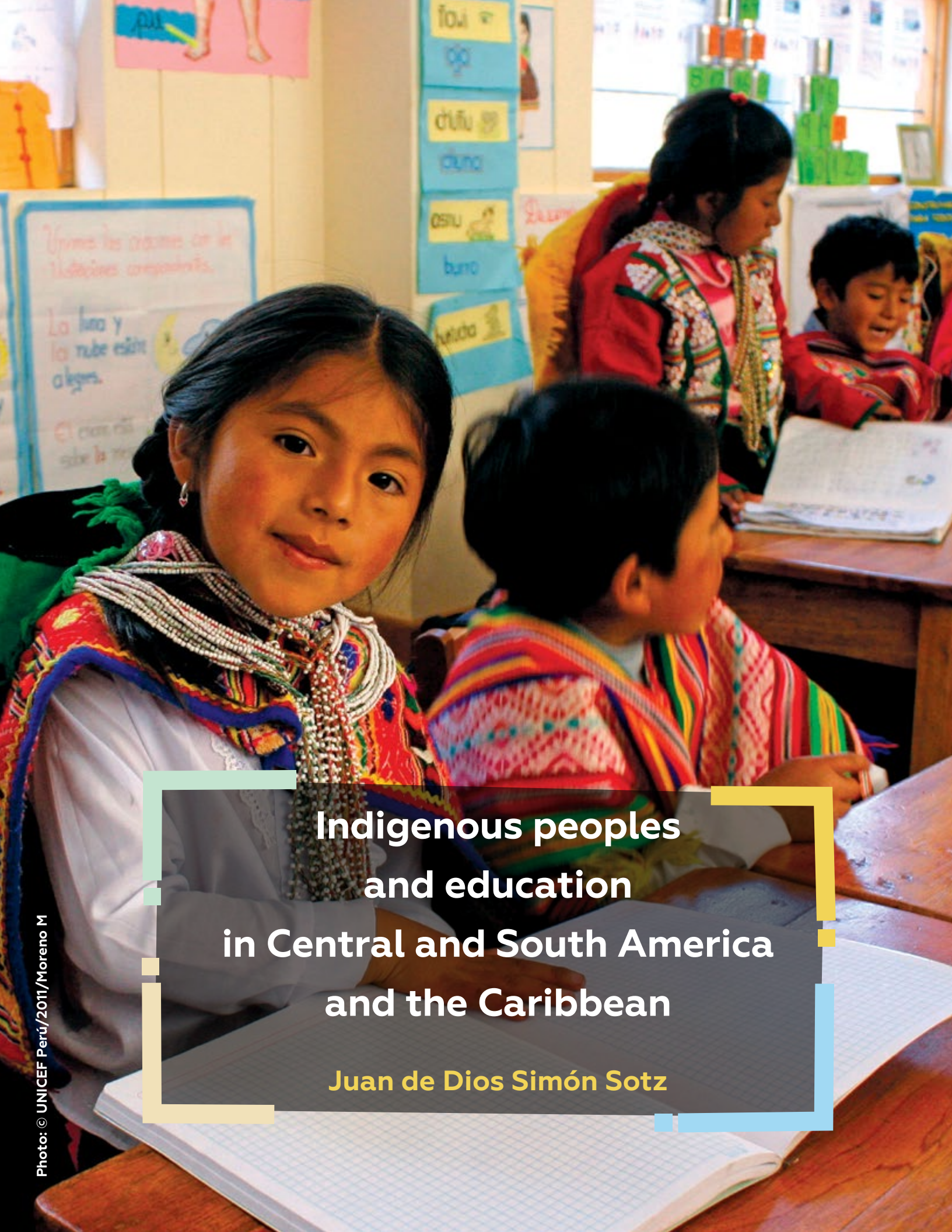
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**Indigenous peoples
and education
in Central and South America
and the Caribbean**

Juan de Dios Simón Sotz



Chapter IV

Indigenous peoples and education in Central and South America and the Caribbean

Juan de Dios Simón Sotz

Introduction

According to the 2014 report on the objectives of Education for All (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014), universal primary education has been partially achieved. However, the situation is different with respect to preschool and lower high school education. Indigenous children and youth have not met universal standards and they have encountered significant difficulties in accessing quality education. The lack of quality education results in higher grade repetition, desertion and dropout rates among indigenous children, especially among girls. In response, the region's educational systems have partially incorporated indigenous peoples' perspectives into the education system. There are two options in this regard: bilingual intercultural education offered by States and education from the indigenous perspective.

Based on 2010 census data, it is estimated that the indigenous population in the Latin American region was nearly 45 million (United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin

America and the Caribbean, 2014a, p. 42), including 826 different indigenous peoples (ibid., p. 44).⁷⁹

Officially, Mexico is the country that has the largest indigenous population (17 million, constituting 15 per cent of its total population), followed by Peru (7 million, constituting 24 per cent of its total population) (ibid., p. 43, table II.1). However, the countries with the largest proportion of indigenous peoples at the national level are Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (62.2 per cent, or 6.2 million), Guatemala (41 per cent, or 5.9 million people) and Peru (24 per cent) (ibid.). The proportion of the indigenous population in the total population of Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama ranges from 7 to 12 per cent (in Ecuador and Honduras, and Panama, respectively) (ibid.).

The majority of Latin American countries have high rates of student transitioning from primary to high school education. However, there is almost no data regarding the number of indigenous children who complete primary school and enter high school education.

There is a greater recognition of indigenous rights in political discourse, laws and policies. However, despite progress made in the last two decades, the impact of five centuries of exclusion and discrimination has not been reversed. Hence, the human development levels of indigenous peoples still lag behind when considering the tridimensional measurements of (a) a long and healthy life, (b) education and (c) financial resources.

Generally, indigenous peoples continue to be subjected to racism, to have minimal access to health care and to endure disproportionate levels of poverty.⁸⁰ Most rural indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica (e.g., the Garifuna, Lenca, Matagalpa, Miskito, Q'eqchi', Tojolabal and Tzotzil peoples), Amazonia (e.g., the Cofan, Shipibo, Siona and Záparo peoples), the Andes (e.g., the Aimara and Quechua peoples) and Chaco (e.g., the Chorotes, Mataco-Guaicuru and Tobas peoples) have neither a long and healthy life nor access to adequate education and financial resources. Indigenous exclusion in the region is related to ethnicity and gender; these factors reinforce each other with the result that indigenous peoples suffer from double exclusion and, in the case of women, even triple exclusion (United

⁷⁹ Not all countries have incorporated self-identification as a criterion for determining whether a person is to be regarded as indigenous. Mexico, for example, uses language, as reflected in its 2000 census; others use a combination of language and geographical location. However, Ecuador (as reflected in its 2010 census) and Colombia and Paraguay (as reflected in their 2002 censuses) do utilize self-identification as such a criterion. Furthermore, some education reports are general in nature and do not refer to indigenous peoples or ethnic groups. This being the case, the present chapter is based on processed data derived from agencies specializing in the study of indigenous peoples that have been cross-checked with (a) official data and (b) verifiable data from indigenous organizations. The concept of *indigenous peoples* is based on that formulated in the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (Convention No. 169) of the International Labour Organization.

⁸⁰ Secretary-General's remarks to ceremony marking the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, New York, 9 August 2010. Available at <http://www.un.org/sg/STATEMENTS/index.asp?nid=4718>.



Nations Development Programme, 2005a). Indigenous women experience multiple forms of discrimination: not only do they often lack access to education, health care and ancestral lands, but they also face disproportionately high rates of poverty and are subjected to gender-based violence and sexual abuse, including within the contexts of trafficking and armed conflict (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009).

In most Latin American and Caribbean countries, there has been an improvement in the educational levels of women which are now equal to or higher than those of men (Inter-American Development Bank, 2010). For example, in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean countries with the largest indigenous populations, the high school registration rates for women were higher than for men in 2009 (4 per cent and 7 per cent higher, respectively).⁸¹ Nevertheless, in many indigenous communities, girls have higher dropout rates, as they are tasked, inter alia, with caring for younger siblings, providing help at home and fetching water and firewood. Some indigenous parents are of the view that it is sufficient for indigenous girls to know how to read and write (United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2005). Moreover, indigenous girls face problems of discrimination, violence in schools and, sometimes, sexual assault, which also contribute to the high rate of dropping out of school (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009).

Although there has been some progress over the last 20 years, the vast majority of indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women, are among the poorest and most discriminated against in the region.

Indigenous peoples and education in Central and South America and the Caribbean

Latin American and Caribbean countries have made significant progress in providing universal primary education and approximately 95 per cent of indigenous children are registered in primary education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). Indigenous children and youth of the twenty-first century have greater opportunities to access the educational system and complete their studies. While the Millennium Development Goals process and various regional processes have contributed to education expansion, some countries are still far from achieving the goal of universal primary education for all. These countries include Bolivia (Plurinational

⁸¹ See <http://uis.unesco.org/>.

State of), Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay and Suriname (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014).

Only when educational policies respect cultural and linguistic rights, does indigenous children's access to education contribute to social inclusion. Intercultural bilingual education and indigenous education have enabled indigenous peoples to have greater access to schools and have made education policies more relevant from a linguistic and cultural point of view. This has been key in the fight against the racism and discrimination directed against the use of indigenous languages and traditional costumes.

There are several intercultural bilingual centres and teachers who use bilingual and contextualized materials, but they are far from reaching all indigenous peoples. Furthermore, despite some positive indicators (higher promotion and lower dropout and repetition rates), most educational establishments classified as providing intercultural bilingual education have poor results in terms of bilingual competency. This is due to a lack of well-trained bilingual teachers and relevant intercultural educational materials. For example, in the southern Andean region of Peru, only 6 per cent of students attending intercultural bilingual education establishments develop reading skills in their native language (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2013b). In the Peruvian Amazon, 59.5 per cent of teachers in indigenous communities speak Spanish or an indigenous language that is different from the language spoken in the area; and in Awajún and Shipibo schools, only 2.2-3.1 per cent of students develop reading skills in Spanish (Save the Children, 2010). Accomplishments in the development of linguistic and intercultural competencies are also few in countries like Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico.

Factors that impact on the education of indigenous children

Several factors have an impact on the education of indigenous children, including:

Distance: The fact that indigenous peoples who live in rural areas are often geographically isolated and far from the main education areas makes it difficult for them to attend school (United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008a).

Textbook content: Despite improvements in curricula regarding development of intercultural bilingual relations and competencies, there remains a need for a more thorough analysis of the content of textbooks. The topics of conquest and colonization are covered in such a way as to reinforce images and stereotypes that denigrate indigenous peoples.⁸²

⁸² See Declaración de Lima: La Calidad Educativa y la Cosmovisión de los Pueblos Indígenas y Originarios, Lima, 17 October 2008, Available at http://www.unicef.org/peru/spanish/2009_declaracionlima_espanol.pdf.



Malnutrition: The situation remains critical in the indigenous areas of Ecuador and some regions of Peru and Guatemala as a result of child malnutrition and poor maternal health. Furthermore, infant mortality remains an issue and monolingual indigenous mothers continue to have problems in accessing health care because of long distances to health centres. The underlying causes of malnutrition are food insecurity, inadequate maternal and child health services, and lack of water and sanitation, and/or health services (United Nations Children's Fund, 2011a).

Violence: There is evidence documenting child abuse, rape and physical violence towards indigenous girls. Schoolteachers perpetrate some of these actions, and family members are also responsible. All types of violence, whether within the nuclear family as witnessed by the child or as directed towards the child, have psychological and physical consequences which affect learning and education retention.

Early pregnancy: The factor of indigenous teenage pregnancy hinders completion of primary school and continuation through high school. Pregnant teenagers face the reality of becoming parents and having to work to support their family, which impacts the continuity of their studies.

Non-participation of the community: Indigenous peoples have been marginalized from full participation and from engagement in the development of educational policies as a result of technicalities and the workings of Government bureaucracy; and consultation with indigenous peoples has been limited. While indigenous peoples are clear about the type of education they want within the context of their identity, values, worldview and development, their input is not taken into account because they do not have a formal academic background. Some indigenous peoples are recognized as legitimate leaders in their communities but because they are not familiar with financial and curricular management, they have been marginalized by the educational system.

Early childhood education (initial education and preschool)

Difficulties remain with respect to attaining the goal of expanding and improving early childhood education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, including indigenous children. There has been some progress, but not enough. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the average coverage of early childhood education is 73 per cent (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014).

Across Latin America, intercultural differences in childhood education are respected at programmatic and curricular levels. In practice, however, data on indigenous early education is hard to find. The sociocultural context within which indigenous children learn – a complex context that at the same time fosters spontaneity – makes research difficult. There are few studies on child-rearing practices among indigenous populations, and generalizations cannot be made based on studies on indigenous peoples in a given area. In Ecuador, in the last decade, progress was seen over several years on the

implementation of a proposal for provision of family and community child education (FCCE) in the Amazon and Andean areas inhabited by Kichwa indigenous peoples.

Despite progress with respect to coverage in Latin American and Caribbean countries, concerns remain regarding access to preschool education, since most of the education centres are located in urban and monolingual areas. Children who are from low-income families or live in rural areas do not have easy access to education (United Nations Children's Fund, 2012). Because of insufficient coverage in indigenous areas and a lack of family and community childhood education, it has been found that children from rural areas and from poor indigenous families are half as likely as children from urban areas to gain access to early education centres (United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008a).

Universal primary education (the first six years of schooling)

In Latin America and the Caribbean, 90 per cent of indigenous children have access to primary school. There is no longer any disparity between indigenous children's educational access and that of non-indigenous children, with universal access having become available in the last 15 years. However, there is a lack of current data regarding ethnicity in the education system.⁸³

Studies exist indicating that indigenous children have delayed or late access to education. A 2014 UNICEF study of Latin America found that 2.9 million children and teenagers either experienced a late entry into primary education, dropped out or were excluded from the system entirely (United Nations Children's Fund, 2012). Delays, repetition and lower levels of learning tend to be highest among those living in rural areas or in households living below the poverty level and among those who do not place a high value on education (United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2011a, as cited in United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and United Nations Children's Fund, 2014). This is more pronounced among indigenous children and teenagers as well as Afrodescendant and migrant children (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, 2012, *ibid*).

According to a study of 11 countries (see table IV.1 below) conducted by the Sistema de Información de Tendencias Educativas en América Latina (SITEAL), with the exception of El Salvador, indigenous boys and girls have greater difficulties in advancing through the course of their studies in primary education without falling behind.

⁸³ Most of the studies completed in the 1990s that examined indigenous and non-indigenous access to educational centres are no longer up to date and few statistical systems collect studies that include an indigenous variable.



TABLE IV.1
Proportion of children aged 6-11 at the primary school level,
falling two or more years behind their classmates, by ethnic group
and country, circa 2009

Country	Indigenous peoples (%)	Mestizo and white (non-indigenous population, %)
Brazil	3.1	2.8
Chile	7.6	5.7
Ecuador	11.2	6.7
El Salvador	5.4	7.3
Guatemala	16.2	9.3
Nicaragua	23.4	12.7
Panama	13.2	4.7
Paraguay	16.6	6.5
Peru	8.9	3.8
Uruguay	4.9	4.8

Source: Sistema de Información de Tendencias Educativas en América Latina (SITEAL) (2011), table 19.

Table IV.1 indicates that in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama and Paraguay, the proportion of indigenous children who experience delays in access to education are significantly higher than the proportion of non-indigenous children who experience such delays. Indigenous peoples also face barriers related to conditions of poverty, which often force them to choose between education and work (United Nations, General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 2012). For example, in Mexico many indigenous boys and girls drop out of school because they start working at a very young age. According to a study by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI)) regarding child labour, 36 per cent of indigenous children between the ages of 6 and 14 years work, a figure that is twice as high as the national average, calculated at 15.7 per cent.⁸⁴ The choice between education and work is related to the cost of education: families have to choose between paying the expenses related to sending a child to school and keeping that child at home to carry out domestic tasks or take part in activities that generate household income.

In 2010, at a regional level, the dropout rate was 8.31 per cent. Regarding the situation of indigenous children in the northern province of Chaco in Argentina, UNICEF reports that “school repetition and dropout figures are triple compared to the national mean” (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2011c). In Mexico each year, an average of 19,500 students abandon the indigenous lower-tier system of basic education (Poy Solano, 2013).

⁸⁴ See UNICEF México, “Niñez indígena en México”. Available at https://www.unicef.org/mexico/spanish/ninos_6904.htm.

In Paraguay, indigenous children have an average of three years of studies, five years below that for the non-indigenous population (eight years of studies); and less than 3 per cent of the indigenous population reach middle school (Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en America Latina y el Caribe (PREAL) and Instituto Desarrollo, 2013).

Factors that account for the dropout rates among indigenous schoolchildren

The following are some of the factors that contribute to the high school dropout rates among indigenous children:

- (a) **Factors related to school life:** delays or repeated failures, absenteeism, lack of trained bilingual teachers and disrespect for indigenous languages and cultures;
- (b) **Factors related to personal life:** crime, early pregnancy, early marriage and child labour;
- (c) **Factors related to family life:** insufficient family support and an unstable nuclear family, and illiteracy or limited schooling of parents;
- (d) **Factors related to social life:** isolation, inadequate housing, insufficient food, diseases, discrimination and racism, and changes in living conditions;
- (e) **Factors related to financial situation:** parents who have low incomes and/or are unemployed, youth with part-time jobs, and children looking after their younger siblings and/or working in agricultural activities (Confederación Parlamentaria de las Americas, Comisión de Educación, Cultura, Ciencia y Tecnología, 2011).

The issue of abandonment of education as related to school and life factors becomes more complex in situations where variations exist in teachers' training and experience, in their expectations about students and in the time they spend teaching. Although there is no consensus among international organizations regarding the attributes of a good teacher, it is understood that a bad teacher is one who (a) is not knowledgeable concerning subject matter, (b) is impatient, (c) does not speak a child's language, (d) is uninformed about the indigenous culture, (e) is generally domineering and autocratic; and (f) lacks commitment to teaching. Another consideration is the number of school days associated with the education received by indigenous children. For example, in Guatemala, the law requires that students receive 180 days of instruction during a school year. However, in 2014, because of conflicts between teachers' unions and the Ministry of Education, together with assemblies for permanent teaching staff, holidays, earthquakes and cold days, children attended school for an average of 136 school days.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Guatemala — Noticias On Line, "Expertos prevén 30 días de clases perdidos en 2014" (Experts anticipate loss of 30 school days in 2014), 1 September 2014. Available at <http://gt.noticiasol.com/siglo-21/expertos-prevn-30-das-de-clases-perdidos-e-n-2014.html>.

**BOX IV.1****The education gap in Mexico**

The educational gap between indigenous peoples and the general population in Mexico is stark. Hall and Patrinos, eds. (2006) estimated that the 2002 primary school dropout rates for indigenous and non-indigenous populations were 61.8 per cent versus 47.5 per cent in rural communities and 24.4 per cent versus 19.2 per cent in urban communities. The gender gap was even wider; the primary school dropout rate for indigenous males was estimated at 51.8 per cent compared with 25 per cent among non-indigenous males; the rate for indigenous females was 56.6 per cent compared with 29.7 per cent for non-indigenous females (ibid.). Overall, the proportion of indigenous youth between the ages of 15 and 19 years who completed primary school in 2000 in Mexico was 68.7 per cent, compared with a figure of 90 per cent for non-indigenous youth (United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2007b).

The rate of illiteracy among non-indigenous persons was 7.5 per cent according to data, from the 2000 National Census on People and Households of Mexico, compared with 31.3 per cent among indigenous peoples. Learners in indigenous schools generally underperform in reading and mathematics compared with those in other types of schools (Ramírez, 2005) and exhibit a lower level of improvement in their test scores than students in other schools (Muñoz-Izquierdo and Villarreal, 2005). Indigenous students perform less well on high school entrance exams than non-indigenous students and those who continue their education generally chose training colleges and technological institutions, rather than universities (Ahuja and Schmelkes, 2004). As many as 30 per cent of the teachers in indigenous primary schools do not speak the local language (Schmelkes, 2011) and are often unprepared for teaching in rural locations, with few resources and poor accommodations (Vargas-Cetina, 1998).

Source: Octaviana Trujillo.

At the twentieth Ibero-American Summit, held in 2010, Member States of the Ibero-American Community signed the Mar del Plata Declaration and Action Plan, which has the motto "Education for social inclusion" (see Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI), 2010). Member States committed to taking affirmative actions for the Afrodescendant population and indigenous peoples along with placing a special focus on quality (United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010; Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI), 2010). Under target 3, countries committed to "Provide special support to ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and

Afrodescendants, to female students and students that live in urban marginal areas and rural areas, to achieve equality in education” and under target 4, they committed to “Guarantee quality intercultural bilingual education to students belonging to ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples”.

Table IV.2 below shows that there are no major gaps among countries or between indigenous peoples and the non-indigenous population regarding primary school access and attendance. However, regarding primary education completion, Guatemala and Nicaragua continued to have significant gaps, with primary education completion rates for indigenous children at 49 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively. This gap was even greater in rural areas, where completion rates were 40 per cent and 46 per cent, respectively. In contrast, completion rates for indigenous children in Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador were higher than 85 per cent.

TABLE IV.2
Primary education attendance and completion rates
for nine Latin American countries, various years

Country	Net rate of primary education attendance		Rate of primary education completion			
	National total		National total		Rural areas	
	Indigenous or Afrodescendant population	Non-indigenous, non-Afrodescendant population	Indigenous or Afrodescendant population	Non-indigenous, non-Afrodescendant population	Indigenous or Afrodescendant population	Non-indigenous, non-Afrodescendant population
Bolivia (2007)	–	–	90	95	86	90
Brazil (2008)	98	99	93	95	83	89
Chile (2006)	98	99	98	99	97	98
Ecuador (2008)	97	98	89	95	89	93
El Salvador (2004)	92	92	74	78	63	65
Guatemala (2006)	86	91	49	71	40	58
Nicaragua (2005)	85	81	58	71	46	54

continues



Table IV.2 continued

Panama (2008)	98	99	73	97	73	93
Paraguay (2008)	96	98	83	94	82	87
Average	93	97	82	93	70	84

Source: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI) (2010), p. 58, table 2.4a, derived from ECLAC, based on special tabulations from household surveys for the nine countries covered in table IV.2.

Note: ECLAC and Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI) have tracked records starting with the 2021 Education Goals. No recent studies regarding completion for indigenous primary education were found.

High school education

Intercultural bilingual high school education has not developed in an integral manner. Priorities have not been set and most study programmes prioritize international languages such as English and French. Indigenous languages are not included. In Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama, efforts have been made to teach first, second and third languages, but the emphasis has been put on the primary level. Intercultural bilingual schools and some pedagogic institutes are the only institutions that provide this type of training for teachers, and only for primary education. In Guatemala, for example, most of the efforts within the tutorial learning system, the Mayan educational centres, and most of the bilingual and intercultural institutes are made by non-Governmental organizations, semi-autonomous organizations and private initiatives and through international cooperation. Thus, States need to strengthen their work in intercultural bilingual high school education.

According to *The State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2013b), in general terms, primary education coverage in the region no longer constitutes a limitation on expansion of high school education and there is a smooth transition between these two cycles (p. 76). It is important to highlight this fact because the expansion of high school education is conditioned by the completion of primary education.

The majority of Latin American countries have high rates of student transitioning from primary to high school education. However, there is almost no data regarding the number of indigenous children who complete primary school and enter high school education. A study of nine Latin American countries undertaken by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Organization of Ibero-American

States (OEI) (Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI), 2010), within the framework of the 2021 Educational Goals, shows that, on average, 85 per cent of indigenous children access high school education and attend high school (p. 58, table 2.4a) but only 20 per cent complete their high school education (p. 59, table 2.4b).⁸⁶

TABLE IV.3
Net rates of high school education attendance and completion in nine Latin American countries

Country	Net rate of high school education attendance		Rate of high school education completion			
	National total		National total		Rural areas	
	Indigenous or Afrodescendant population	Non-indigenous, non-Afro-descendant population	Indigenous or Afrodescendant population	Non-indigenous, non-Afrodescendant population	Indigenous or Afrodescendant population	Non-indigenous, non-Afro-descendant population
Bolivia (2007)	90	94	38	44	55	71
Brazil (2008)	91	93	24	27	47	56
Chile (2006)	94	95	50	63	65	81
Ecuador (2008)	76	86	23	33	31	59
El Salvador (2004)	83	79	17	17	37	36
Guatemala (2006)	61	75	7	12	13	33
Nicaragua (2005)	86	84	5	13	21	32
Panama (2008)	74	89	12	40	12	60
Paraguay (2008)	71	92	21	36	25	62
Total	85	92	20	28	40	56

Source: Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI), 2010), pp. 58 and 59, tables 2.4a and 2.4b, from ECLAC, based on special tabulations from the household surveys of the nine countries covered in table IV.3.

⁸⁶ No recent studies or statistics were found that report the number of indigenous children who, after completing primary school, continue their education in high school.



Table IV.3 shows the gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous students and between the whole country and the rural areas in terms of high school attendance and completion. The proportion of students who start and attend high school is significantly greater than the proportion of those who complete high school.

In Nicaragua, only 5 per cent of indigenous children complete high school. The challenges faced by Afrodescendant and indigenous peoples are related not only to social discrimination as manifested by rejection and denial, but also to a lower level of well-being and fewer educational opportunities.

BOX IV.2

The higher education gap in Latin America and the international cooperation aimed at narrowing the gap

According to a report of the Sistema de Tendencias Educativas en América Latina (SITEAL) (2012), the probability that a high school graduate will enrol in higher education in Latin America is persistently lower among indigenous peoples and the Afrodescendant population. In one group of countries studied, the proportion of indigenous peoples who go on to university after having completed their secondary studies is very small compared with the corresponding proportions of the white and mestizo population. This group comprises countries such as Paraguay, where the ethnic gap in access to higher education measures 46 percentage points (table 13), and Chile, Ecuador and Peru, with ethnic gaps ranging from 16 to 19 percentage points. The second group comprises countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama where the gap is smaller, but where indigenous peoples still lag behind in terms of access to higher education. Guatemala represents a third situation, where there is no gap between the indigenous and non-indigenous populations in access to higher education.

As regards international cooperation to narrow the gap, there are several scholarship programmes available to indigenous students including those provided by Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) (the German Technical Cooperation Agency) and the United Nations Children's Fund for intercultural bilingual education; and the Hanns Seidel Foundation, in cooperation with Instituto para el Desarrollo Social y de las Investigaciones Científicas (INDESIC) for law, business and engineering (Weaver, 2008). The Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y El Caribe (FILAC) has established an indigenous intercultural university programme (Didou-Aupetit, 2013); and El Programa de Formación en Educación Intercultural Bilingüe para los Países Andinos (PROEIB Andes) has created a master's programme in bilingual intercultural education for indigenous students (Hornberger, 2010).

BOX IV.3**Conditional transfer programmes and indigenous peoples**

In Latin America, Governments have chosen to implement conditional transfer programmes. These programmes utilize money (cash) as a principal means of incentivizing poor families to make use of publicly offered educational and health-care services which foster “human capital” growth and skills development, and of addressing the factors that contribute to the cycle of poverty. In general, the objective of educational conditional transfers has been to increase child and youth attendance in primary and high school and to prevent child labour. Although these programmes do not include an approach aimed specifically at indigenous peoples, they do have rural and poverty components, which are relevant to indigenous children.

At the educational level, evaluations have shown that the programmes have positive effects in the areas of school access and advancement and the reduction of child labour (United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Brazil, Instituto de Investigación Económica Aplicada (IPEA), 2007).

In Mexico, one of the most relevant outcomes of the Oportunidades (Opportunities) programme was an increase in registration of students who were transitioning from primary school to high school, especially in rural areas (de Janvry, Finan and Sadoulet, 2004). In Ecuador, the Bono de Desarrollo Humano” (Human Development Bond) programme (2003) had positive attendance outcomes among children and youth aged 6-7 years. The programme included provinces with a large presence of indigenous peoples (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). In Guatemala, part of the increase in high school education and primary school completion is explained by the introduction in 2008 of the programme entitled “Mi familia progresa” (My family is making progress), which quickly expanded to cover 23 per cent of the population within a two-year period (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014, p. 68). In Nicaragua, the implementation of the programme entitled “Red de protección social” (Social protection network) has resulted in higher school graduation levels with even higher graduation levels among older children.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the main objective of conditional transfer programmes is not to improve the quality of education, but rather to enable poverty reduction, prevent child labour and increase school attendance.



Deficient educational quality

The best way to encourage students to stay, continue and complete school cycles is by providing them with quality education and equal opportunities. In the case of indigenous children who live in rural areas and speak their own indigenous language, the selection of the language or languages to be used in school significantly affects the quality of teaching and learning. There is evidence to indicate that from a psychological and pedagogic point of view, children learn better and faster when using their first language. Furthermore, this nourishes their cultural self-esteem. Starting the teaching process in the student's first language has not only improved learning results but also proved to be more effective than other methods because it reduces course repetition and school dropout rates.⁸⁷

BOX IV.4

Quality of education and the worldview of indigenous peoples

The Western perspective on quality of education differs from that of indigenous peoples. A regional congress on "Quality of education and worldview of indigenous and native peoples" was held in Lima on 16 and 17 October 2008. Indigenous peoples and Government specialists representing Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru and Paraguay participated in the congress. The outcome document of the congress, widely known as the Declaration of Lima,^a was signed by the participants on 17 October 2008. The Declaration provided a conceptual basis for establishing the meaning of the term "quality of education". It was declared that:

[T]he quality of education from the indigenous peoples' view implies the achievement of "good living/buen vivir", which comprises, inter alia, the development of their own epistemology, their approach to knowledge and skills, the usefulness of their own medicine, the application of ancestral wisdom and ethics, respect for cultural, linguistic and environmental diversity, equal opportunities, respect for the collective rights to the territory, Mother Nature, language, culture, values, art, science and technology, all of which become an intrinsic value and a contribution to the integral development of humanity.

^a *Declaración de Lima: La Calidad Educativa y la Cosmovisión de los Pueblos Indígenas y Originarios, Lima, 17 October 2008. English translation available at http://www.unicef.org/peru/spanish/2009_declaracionlima_ingles.pdf.*

⁸⁷ See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2004). See also Inter-American Development Bank document entitled "Best Practice Case (case study): TC Project number TC9905059: Ticuna Education Project". Available at <https://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/5074>.

Causes of the poor quality of education

The Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education, in its Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study of Quality of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (implemented in 2006), emphasizes several factors related to low educational performance with the most significant findings being that:

- (a) The economic situation of a country (specifically, with respect to income generation and distribution) is related to the learning process of primary education students;
- (b) School location influences results achieved by students and generates differences in the performance of students in the region. Children attending rural schools in Latin America and the Caribbean have lower performance rates than those attending schools located in urban areas;
- (c) The school environment is the variable that has the greatest impact on the performance of students. Creating a respectful, welcoming and positive environment is essential to promoting learning among students.

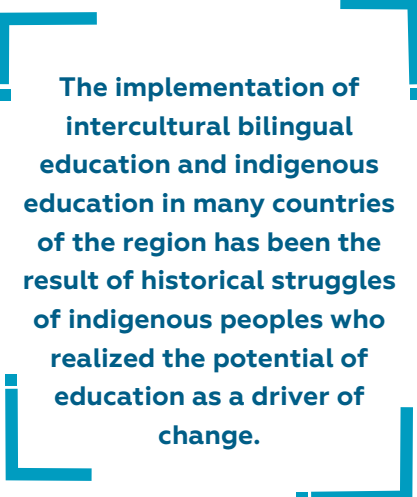
Moreover, indigenous organizations often highlight that curricula do not provide content that is relevant and useful for students, and that there are no long-term educational policies. Many education officials are not specialists in education matters and are not aware of cultural and linguistic diversity; and there exists a lack of investment in preliminary teacher training and intercultural bilingual services. Further, there are also monolingual Spanish-speaking teachers with high school diplomas who insist on memorization without focusing on whether the students have achieved a full understanding. In Nicaragua, in primary schools and high schools in autonomous regions, there is a lack of basic equipment and supplies (Renshaw, 2007). It is also common in that country to find schools with no desks and schools to which children must bring their own chairs because there are none; schools that do not have enough textbooks, notebooks and pencils and that must therefore rely on the teachers themselves to provide newspapers and magazines as alternative materials; and schools with few computers and no laboratories within which to teach science (*ibid.*). In Ecuador, there are many coastal schools that have no appropriate bathrooms for boys and girls; primary school classrooms with as many as 60 children; and many teachers who also hold other jobs.

Quality teaching

Most of the educational reforms and changes proposed by Latin American countries exhibit a recognition of the fundamental role of teachers. Every child is capable of learning as long as he or she is in an appropriate environment, which includes well-prepared teachers, enough time and space, and traditional and/or technological resources (Namo de Mello, 2005). However, the learning process will not be effective if the teacher focuses on rote learning and memorization and disregards critical thinking. The situation predictably worsens when the teacher reiterates the discourse of colonialism.



This line of reasoning has induced several countries (Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and, more recently, Paraguay) to create bilingual and intercultural pedagogic institutes or schools. The goals are to encourage indigenous teachers and students to uphold their rights through the application of appropriate teaching methods and to build self-esteem in their culture and identity among indigenous children. Securing enough teachers is a necessary condition; quantity, however, is not the only requirement for improving the quality of education. There will not be any significant changes in the schools attended by indigenous children without technical support, culturally relevant education materials, advice on how to manage linguistic and cultural diversity, counselling in the field, processes of reflection on social responsibilities, and monitoring, evaluation and feedback. Aspirations to deliver intercultural bilingual education have a long history. As far back as September 1989, in the declaration of the Congreso Educativo de la Central Obrera Boliviana (COB) (Education Congress of the Bolivian Labour Union), the Proyecto Educativo Popular (Popular Education Project), rejecting colonialist education which neglected the identity and values of the country's nationalities and ethnic groups, put forward intercultural bilingual education as a means of rescuing, revitalizing and developing native languages and cultures, consolidating ethnic identity and developing awareness of the country's national identity.



The implementation of intercultural bilingual education in many countries of the region has been the result of historical struggles of indigenous peoples who realized the potential of education as a driver of change.

Indigenous participation in the political processes of education

The implementation of intercultural bilingual education and indigenous education in many countries of the region has been the result of historical struggles of indigenous peoples who realized the potential of education as a driver of change. Nevertheless, in most countries where intercultural bilingual education has been implemented, indigenous movements utilized a policy approach that was more ideological, cultural and rights-based in nature than technical, pedagogic or teaching-oriented. The slow transformation of Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru from integrationist colonial States into multicultural or plurinational ones was in direct response to indigenous peoples' demands.

The struggle for better education for indigenous children and youth includes the following milestones:

- ≡ In 1988, the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE) (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), mobilized the demand

of indigenous peoples for greater recognition of their rights, which resulted in the establishment of the Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (DINEIB) (National Department for Intercultural Bilingual Education).

- ≡ In Guatemala, the demands of the Consejo de Organizaciones Mayas de Guatemala (COMG) (Council of Mayan Organizations of Guatemala) and the Consejo Nacional de Educación Maya (CNEM) (National Council of Mayan Education) for educational reforms were reflected in the peace agreements, particularly the 31 March 1995 Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples (*Acuerdo sobre identidad y derechos de los pueblos indígenas*)⁸⁸.
- ≡ In 1988, the indigenous peoples of the Peruvian Amazon under the leadership of the *Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana* (AIDSESP) (Inter-ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest), created the Programa de Formación de Maestros Bilingües de la Amazonía Peruana (FORMABIAP), an indigenous teachers training institution located in Iquitos.
- ≡ Since 1994, the Consejos Educativos de Pueblos Originarios (CEPOs) (Education Councils of the Indigenous Peoples of the Plurinational State of Bolivia) have participated in the improvement of indigenous education in cooperation with indigenous peoples⁸⁹.
- ≡ On Nicaragua's Atlantic coast, indigenous members of the Sistema Educativo Autonómico Regional (SEAR) (Regional Autonomous Educational System) have contributed to making the curriculum more indigenous-oriented.
- ≡ In Paraguay, in 2013, indigenous peoples created their own national council in order to take part in the development and assessments of the Dirección de Educación Indígena del Paraguay (Indigenous Education Department of Paraguay).
- ≡ In Colombia, since the 1990s, the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC) (Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca) has been fighting for education and territory.

⁸⁸ Document A/49/882-S/1995/256 of 10 April 1995, annex.

⁸⁹ The Educational Councils of the Indigenous Peoples of the Plurinational State of Bolivia are social organizations that participate in the oversight and control of education of the nations and indigenous peoples of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, which have enjoyed legal recognition by the State since 1994. Since 2004, they have developed and coordinated their work across the entire country. Further information is available at <http://www.cepos.bo/cnc-cepos/>.



Indigenous participation in educational processes is essential for empowerment. Without such participation, there can be no social control over education and no value placed on the diversity of intracultural assets and achievements as a positive resource, as opposed to an obstacle to development. A swing towards a monocultural approach as well as globalization could set back progress along the communitarian and territorial dimensions of educational management and could entail the risk of a loss of indigenous languages and culture. To ensure participation, States are also required to make relationships with indigenous peoples more equal and to create opportunities for their participation, through their own organizations, in the decision-making process with respect to education issues that affect their children.

The development of educational projects and programmes for indigenous peoples should entail their participation in that process. Indigenous peoples have the desire to exercise their right to participate in decision-making in accordance with the basic principle of free, prior and informed consent and within the framework of own worldview. The main indicator of participation is involvement in decision-making processes.

Indigenous education systems and the integration of the indigenous perspective in national education

Epistemologically speaking, a distinction should be made between indigenous education and national education systems where indigenous education is provided in schools. In indigenous education systems, teaching is more holistic. This means that it is structured around the workings of the universe itself; focuses on strengthening the relationships both between human beings and between humankind and nature (e.g., Pachamama and *loq'olej ulew*); and incorporates intuition, dreaming and spirituality as part of the process that generates wisdom.

Indigenous education and scientific and formal education

Research carried out in Ecuador by the University of Cuenca, in Peru by the National University of San Marcos and in the Plurinational State of Bolivia by the University of San Simón, shows that the knowledge, wisdom and practices that support intercultural and bilingual – and even trilingual – curricula are still very much a part of indigenous communities (United Nations Children's Fund, 2008). However, appropriating whatever is indigenous and enclosing it within four walls can be a mistake since the dimensions of indigenous learning are as vast as life itself. In the Ecuadorian Amazon, hunting, fishing and identification of medicinal herbs can be taught in the classroom but only "theoretically": practice requires a learning platform comprising rivers, lakes and forests. An important question is whether schools should promote indigenous spirituality. It is a question, however, on which there is no consensus since States are secular, while many indigenous peoples consider spirituality to be part of education.

Indigenous dimensions of school curricula

Over the last two decades, some facets of indigenous culture and some indigenous perspectives have been integrated into the national curricula of 17 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.⁹⁰ In Bolivia (Plurinational State of) and Guatemala, “Living well” and “Mayan plentitude” have been incorporated as a philosophical basis for education. “Experiential” pedagogic principles, models for teaching mother tongues and second languages, constructive approaches and even popular education all exist. However, neither the quality of nor improvements in indigenous human development have been fully achieved.

A study conducted by the Sistema de Información de Tendencias Educativas en America Latina (2011) indicated that Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and El

Whether to focus attention on diversity and indigenous issues is a matter left to the discretion of teachers. Clearly, once indigenous wisdom and knowledge are systematized, the most important challenge is to bring them into the classroom and the community.

Salvador are the only countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that do not explicitly mention changes made in their educational laws regarding diversity (chap. 3). The study also demonstrates that challenges are no longer associated with curriculum-related conceptualizations or educational goals, but rather with implementation in classrooms and communities. For example, there are not enough school textbooks adapted to the new curricular framework: the language and images in most textbooks continue to reflect an urban context or textbooks may focus on just one indigenous group while ignoring all others. Further, there are not enough teachers with bilingual and intercultural competencies (which is the case for Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru). In Guatemala, a bonus for bilingualism was introduced, which recognized the work of teachers who had promoted bilingual competency in the classroom; however, there were no assessments.

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Governance, policies and laws related to education and indigenous peoples

There is a growing trend among Latin American countries towards including recognition of the identity and rights of indigenous peoples in their constitution. Reforms

⁹⁰ Argentina, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).



entail mainly recognition of the multicultural and plurinational character of the State; recognition of indigenous peoples and the expansion of their rights, through, for example, making indigenous languages official, providing bilingual education and protecting indigenous peoples' environment; and recognition of indigenous law (Sistema de Informacion de Tendencias Educativas en América Latina (SITEAL), 2011, chap. 3). In Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Uruguay, however, there is no explicit recognition of indigenous peoples at the constitutional level despite progress related to laws and policies (Yrigoyen Fajardo, 2010).

Incorporation of intercultural bilingual education in countries of Latin American and the Caribbean

Provision of intercultural bilingual education or indigenous education is a goal that has already been incorporated in the plans and strategies of Government ministries of education in the 17 Latin American countries mentioned above.⁹¹ This represents a success on the institutional level, given that those plans and strategies are not projects or pilot programmes. However, intercultural bilingual education has neither sufficient support nor resources to meet the current demand.

Discriminatory practices continue despite an official discourse that favours diversity and human rights. For example, there are urban, monolingual and non-indigenous teachers who believe, for example, that "we are all Guatemalans" or "we are all Peruvians". This negates – and renders invisible – students' cultural identity and the population's diverse, multicultural and multilingual reality. Arguments against the teaching of indigenous languages continue to be heard. It is believed that, for example, such teaching represents a return to the past, that indigenous languages have no future, that one must learn English; that fostering the teaching of indigenous languages threatens national unity and leads to fragmentation; and that the costs of new textbooks and teacher training are too high (Abram, 2004).

Indigenous scholars in Mexico and Peru agree that the incorporation in educational systems of the intercultural bilingual education model and its underlying philosophy constitutes a positive development. Indeed, the education of indigenous children has yielded achievements despite limited investments. In Guatemala and Honduras, for example, intercultural bilingual education has been supported mainly through international cooperation.⁹² Intercultural bilingual education, despite its benefits in

⁹¹ Argentina, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Uruguay has recently started a pilot process.

⁹² Intercultural bilingual education programmes have been supported technically and financially by the Governments of Denmark, Finland, France and the Netherlands and organizations including the African Climate and Development Initiative (ACDI), the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura, UNESCO, UNICEF and USAID.

terms of relatively low costs, the retention of students in school and some children's achievements in learning, has its limitations. Even if an indigenous language is taught as the mother language (L1), in practice, a shift can occur. Indigenous children may learn Spanish and their indigenous language at the same time, but once Spanish is learned, it becomes the language of teaching and learning.⁹³

Analysis of several evaluations made for two languages (L1 and L2) conducted in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Guatemala and Peru show that coordinated bilingualism, i.e., competency in both languages, has not been attained in regular schools that are identified as "intercultural and bilingual".⁹⁴

Main findings

There are many challenges associated with indigenous peoples' education as related to discrimination against and lack of recognition of their system of ancestral knowledge and practices. Incorporating that system in educational systems also poses a challenge.

Guatemala

The Currículo Nacional Base (CNB) (Core National Curriculum) provides a framework relevant for a multicultural intercultural approach to education. Nevertheless, there are issues regarding the availability of educational materials in the 24 indigenous languages (22 Mayan, 1 Garifuna and 1 Xinta). Intercultural bilingual education in Guatemala is available only up until the third grade in primary school, although nine years of bilingualism (extending up to the third year of high school) are required under the Constitution.⁹⁵

Argentina

There is a significantly high level of legal recognition by Argentina on the right to intercultural bilingual education. However, in the areas where indigenous peoples still use

⁹³ While the legislation on education of several countries indicates that linguistics-related policies in educational centres have been enacted for the purpose of maintaining and developing cultural diversity, Spanish remains dominant.

⁹⁴ Based on analysis of school textbooks of Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru.

⁹⁵ Intercultural bilingual education in Guatemala should take advantage of the participatory work reflected in the proposals of the Asociación de Centros Educativos Mayas (ACEM) (Association of Mayan Education Centres), the Consejo Nacional de Educación Maya (CNEM) (National Council of Mayan Education), and other indigenous organizations.



their own languages and speak little Spanish, such as the communities of Mbya Guarani in Misiones, and Wichí in Chaco, Formosa and Salta, intercultural bilingual education is not fully provided (United Nations Children's Fund, 2008). There are neither specialized teachers nor, particularly, teachers of indigenous groups and educational materials that adequately reflect the reality experienced by indigenous peoples. Indeed, some textbooks still present an unfavourable or inaccurate image of indigenous peoples. For example, Mapuches are described as indigenous peoples living only in Chile (United Nations, General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 2012).

Peru

Peru has been a pioneer in the area of regulations on intercultural bilingual education. Nevertheless, as in other countries, those regulations are not fully enforced. Not only does the country lack teachers but there is a high level of rotation among teachers assigned to schools offering intercultural bilingual education. It is estimated that 25,000 more intercultural bilingual education teachers should be added to the roster of the 32,000 who are currently active (United Nations Children's Fund, 2014). In the Ucayali region alone, there are some 45,000 children who speak more than 14 different languages, but only 450 assigned bilingual teachers. Aimara and Quechua teachers are migrating to the region but despite their indigenous background, they lack the linguistic and cultural competencies required in the Amazon region. The content of Peruvian educational materials is still informed by a perspective that reinforces stigmatization and stereotyping of indigenous peoples and depicts them as extinct or as existing historically but not as present members of society.

Ecuador

Until 2009, Ecuador was the only country where indigenous peoples and nationalities, through their organizations, managed their own intercultural bilingual education system (Sistema de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe/SEIB), which was implemented autonomously by the Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe/DINEIB (National Department for Intercultural Bilingual Education). The system was highly advanced in comparison with that of the other Latin American countries. Nevertheless, by the end of 2009, the Government of Ecuador decided to place intercultural bilingual education under the authority of the Ministry of Education, thereby decreasing the autonomy of the indigenous organizations.

Without the support of indigenous peoples, Indigenous or intercultural bilingual education will not be effective. Governments and indigenous peoples must engage in a dialogue and agreements must be reached because it is the education of indigenous children that is at stake. The main challenge in Ecuador continues to be quality of

education. Community educational centres in the Amazon region must have the necessary equipment and teachers' schedules must respect the agrarian calendars of the region.

Mexico

Intercultural bilingual education in Mexico has yet to become a priority. The ability to speak an indigenous language or self-identification as indigenous is not always a matter of pride (Muñoz-García and Rodríguez-Gómez, 2012; Abram, 2004). It is estimated that approximately 1.4 million children in Mexico do not attend school; and 8 out of 10 indigenous children do not receive a basic education. Although the country has recognized the rights of indigenous peoples, both formally and constitutionally, the effectiveness remains substandard. In Mexico, intercultural bilingual education is "poor education for the poor" (Muñoz-García and Rodríguez-Gómez, 2012). Within this context, the year 2016 was marked by the conflict between the Government and the teachers' union, the Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE), regarding the implementation of the educational reform approved in 2013. The protest movement has been particularly strong among the education community within the States of Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán and Oaxaca, all with large indigenous populations. Protests intensified after eight people were killed in Nochixtlán, Oaxaca, on 19 June 2016. The National Commission on Human Rights called for dialogue and opened an investigation (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, 2016).

Challenges ahead

Intercultural bilingual education has focused traditionally on linguistics and the treatment of cultural diversity. However, the emphasis should not be on the intercultural and bilingual dimensions but rather on education itself. Intercultural bilingual education in Latin America and the Caribbean has been in the hands not of education specialists, intellectuals or indigenous peoples but rather of anthropologists and linguists who do not necessarily have the know-how to situate it within plurinational contexts. Intercultural bilingual education is meant to be a system envisioned by and for indigenous peoples; however, only a few countries have engaged indigenous peoples in the discussions on indigenous pedagogy to ascertain this is the education to which indigenous peoples aspire.

Indigenous peoples are affected by gaps in their economic and social development and continue to struggle to retain their lands and worldviews. There has been a significant increase in access to primary education and the opportunities available to indigenous children to access educational centres are greater than ever before. While achieving access to quality education remains a challenging issue for indigenous and non-indigenous peoples alike, surmounting the challenge is particularly difficult for indigenous



children owing to factors such as remoteness, poverty and marginalization as well as the other factors mentioned earlier. Furthermore, there are still unresolved issues related to educational textbooks and the lack of teachers with the necessary intercultural and linguistic competencies.

Early childhood and high school education in rural areas remains limited and of poor quality. As mentioned previously, children have provided their own chairs and books in some schools. In addition, neither boys nor girls have access to sanitation facilities. Efforts to promote affirmative measures, such as provision of scholarships for education and training and expansion of intercultural bilingual education, continue to be insufficient. Intercultural bilingual education is generally still not available across the board, despite increases in registration based on conditional transfers.

The knowledge and practices of indigenous elders, leaders and authorities are undervalued. Further, some monolingual teachers or teachers trained in homogenization still insist that there are superior and inferior cultures, a perspective that hinders the recognition, preservation and transmission of indigenous languages and values.

There is a gap in assuring indigenous management and capacity within the context of the implementation of intercultural bilingual education. Factors having a significant impact on such capacity include the transformation of plurinational States and the fostering of an enabling environment through enactment of laws and regulations.

International law has exerted an influence over States with respect to their recognition of indigenous rights at the national level. References to the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization,⁹⁶ the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁹⁷ and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples⁹⁸ are contained in numerous regulations. These advances can be applied to the formulation of appropriate epistemologies and utilized to ensure respect for collective rights, especially regarding worldviews, lands, territories and resources, and political rights.

Intercultural bilingual education is still reserved only for indigenous children. The intercultural approach has not made progress among mestizo and urban populations.

Poverty continues to cause children to drop out of school and/or fail to complete their school cycles. Nevertheless, improvements have been made in these areas during the last 15 years.

⁹⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1650, No. 28383.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

⁹⁸ General Assembly resolution 61/295, annex.

Possession of personal identification documents remains an issue. The fact that some indigenous peoples living in remote areas lack those documents hinders their rights to access education and health care, among other services.

There has been an increased awareness within indigenous societies of their identity. Self-identification and self-esteem within the context of cultural identity, which have increased as well, serve as a means of eliminating racism and discrimination. However, an intercultural society among equals can be achieved only when indigenous peoples have equal access and rights.

Technology has reached rural and indigenous areas, with cable TV, cellular phones and the Internet currently available within different indigenous communities. National educational systems can make use of such technology to break down barriers and thereby provide access to education, especially at the high school level.

The relationship between migration of indigenous peoples to urban centres and their education is an issue that requires deeper analysis. There have been few conclusive studies on this issue, nor have alternative methods of distance learning been evaluated.

Recommendations

1. In Central and South America and the Caribbean, most of the technical and financial resources invested in intercultural bilingual education are provided through international cooperation, which jeopardizes their long-term sustainability. This is an issue that should be addressed.
2. There is an urgent need to adopt an integral and comprehensive approach to addressing the links between indigenous education and indigenous infant malnutrition. That approach should be multisectoral, encompassing health, education and social protection systems. It will be key for enabling children to achieve a successful transition to the initial entry into education.
3. It is necessary to increase the coverage of initial and high school education, which entails allocating state budgetary resources consistent with the share of the target population. More indigenous teachers and proper infrastructures are needed.
4. An examination of the relationship between the economic hardship and social marginalization experienced by indigenous peoples and their geographical location clearly attests to the systemic and structural discrimination and exclusion that they suffer. Support for the implementation of affirmative action and a focus on indigenous education are therefore



recommended as a means of facilitating the achievement of equality of opportunities.

5. There is a need to develop, produce and/or improve educational statistics to take into account indigenous peoples' identity and gender.
6. It is also necessary for education to be developed in accordance to life cycles. The first 1,000 days should focus on the care, protection and proper nutrition of the indigenous child. Thereafter, until age 5, the focus should be on guidance and preparation of the child for school.
7. Three types of programmes for indigenous youth who are not in school or who could not continue on towards receiving a high school education should be developed, focusing on (a) sexual and reproductive education, (b) citizenship and (c) skills for employment and self-employment.
8. Indigenous urban migration and the life plans of indigenous migrants must be thoroughly analysed. Irregular and unaccompanied migration of children to the United States of America, especially from Central and South America and the Caribbean, has become an emergency issue.
9. It is necessary to establish mechanisms for protecting schoolchildren and local protection systems designed to prevent violence and abuse directed towards indigenous girls.

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**Indigenous peoples
and education
in Northern American region**

Dr. Octaviana Valenzuela Trujillo



Chapter V

Indigenous peoples and education in the Northern American region

Dr. Octaviana Valenzuela Trujillo

Introduction

The present chapter focuses on indigenous peoples' education in the Northern American region. For the purposes of this chapter, the region of Northern America is understood to include the United States of America and Canada. Both countries are also mentioned in the chapter of this publication, entitled "Indigenous peoples and education in the Arctic region".

Indigenous peoples of the Northern American region face significant challenges in protecting their traditional cultures and languages in the face of environmental, social and economic pressures. While there has been an improvement in terms of acknowledging the role of traditional cultures within education in some areas, many challenges still exist. This chapter outlines the relevant issues and assesses achievements that may be determinants of whether indigenous peoples fulfil their aspirations going forward.

Education is, according to several international instruments, a fundamental human right and one that is of particular concern for indigenous peoples around the world.

Indigenous peoples in Northern America experience disparities in education. In Canada and the United States, it is culturally and linguistically unresponsive curricula and systems, poverty, high dropout rates and limited access to educational opportunities that constitute the most urgent challenges faced by indigenous peoples. While in both countries, the groups of indigenous peoples are diverse and dynamic, they are not represented in the majority of education initiatives. An additional concern in Northern America is the legacy of colonialism and assimilationist policies. Many programmes are working, however, to close the disparity gap and mitigate the effects of the past for students in early childhood, primary, secondary and post-secondary education. Effective methods for improving indigenous education include the introduction in the curriculum of cultural and linguistic competencies, training of trainers, increasing the number of indigenous peoples in positions of influence within education initiatives, embracement of alternative methods of education, and incorporation of community-based values and goals. Analysis of indigenous education systems and data for Canada and the United States demonstrates immense improvement and the capacity for further growth in meeting indigenous peoples' needs as well as the need for further improvement.

The education gap

Canada

In 2012, 72 per cent of indigenous peoples in Canada aged 18 to 44 had a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to 89 percent of the non-indigenous population⁹⁹, which speaks to the need for continued progress within the area of indigenous education. For each of the three indigenous categories in Canada (Metis, Inuit and First Nations), adults aged 18-44 who had finished high school were more likely to be employed than those who had not, by a margin of almost 30 per cent.¹⁰⁰ The members of Canada's general population graduate from high school at a rate of 65 per cent, compared with a rate of 37 per cent among indigenous students (Stewart, 2005). In Nunavut, the northernmost territory in Canada, high school graduation rates are well below average and over half of adults do not have a high school diploma. The Inuit population falls farther behind than any other population in Canada, in part because indigenous education in Nunavut is controlled by the territorial rather than by the federal Government (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, 2004).

In 2012 census data from the Government of Canada, 4 out of 10 indigenous peoples have post-secondary certification, which includes trades certification, non-university

⁹⁹ See Aboriginal People's Survey 2012, Highlights, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-653-x/2013001/hl-fs-eng.htm>

¹⁰⁰ See Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012. Available at <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/olc-cel/olc.action?objId=89-653-X&objType=2&lang=en&limit=0>.



certification and university-level bachelor's degrees. In rural communities, however, only 35 per cent of the population receive post-secondary certification, and the proportion is even lower in reserve communities (26 per cent). It appears that attainment of post-secondary certification is rising in Canada across succeeding generations for indigenous peoples and non-indigenous population alike, but progress is slower within the aboriginal population.

The National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2011), which uses a voluntary self-reporting method, provides some statistics on indigenous peoples in Canada. According to this survey, almost half of indigenous adults aged 25-64 had post-secondary qualification: most achieved certification through trade schools and college, while smaller proportions received university degrees. The survey also exhibited differences between indigenous and non-indigenous populations. Among those aged 25-64, 28.9 per cent of indigenous peoples did not have any certification, compared with only 12.1 per cent among the non-indigenous population. According to Universities Canada, universities offer 233 undergraduate programmes and 62 graduate programmes on indigenous issues or for indigenous students¹⁰¹.

United States of America

In the United States in 2007, American Indians and Alaska Natives had the highest absentee rate in the eighth grade among the general population, and the dropout rate in 2006 was at 15 per cent, second only to that of the Hispanic population (21 per cent) (Devoe and Darling-Churchill, 2008, p. iv). While rates for American Indians and Alaska Natives who performed well on advanced placement (AP) exams doubled in the period from 2001 to 2010, the rates are still lower than those for Asian American and Pacific Islanders, as well as for the rest of the population,¹⁰² which may be related to indigenous students' lack of access to AP courses. Indigenous student scores in 2007 on standardized tests for the fourth and eighth grades showed that those scores had not improved since 2005; and for Alaska Natives, fourth grade proficiency levels in 2007 were lower than in 2005 (Devoe and Darling-Churchill, 2008).

Higher education for indigenous peoples shows promise. Early College High Schools (ECHS), which allow students to earn an associate degree while completing high school, appear to be successful. At many colleges, of which there were a total of 15 covering

In Canada and the United States, it is culturally and linguistically unresponsive curricula and systems, poverty, high dropout rates and limited access to educational opportunities that constitute the most urgent challenges faced by indigenous peoples.

¹⁰¹ See <https://www.univcan.ca/universities/facts-and-stats/>.

¹⁰² See <https://www.collegeboard.org/>.

seven different States in 2012: the graduation rate had reached 100 per cent, reading proficiency had increased, attendance was up to 92 per cent and enrolment rates were 400 per cent higher than those for other types of schooling. Despite the availability of the significant ECHS option, in 2010, American Indians and Alaska Natives had the lowest college graduation rate of all minority groups, with only 4 per cent of the indigenous population obtaining college degrees as compared with 27 per cent of the non-indigenous population. Improvement of men's enrolment rates has not been as great as the corresponding improvement in the rates for women. Between 1976 and 1994, the proportion of indigenous males with a bachelor's degree increased 51 per cent, while the proportion with doctoral degrees decreased 0.1 per cent; in the same period, the proportion of indigenous females with a bachelor's degree increased 135 per cent and the proportion with a doctoral degree increased 143 per cent (Brayboy and others, 2012).

Policies and educational systems

Canada

Canada began to undertake the education and assimilation of indigenous peoples in earnest in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1846, the Government started to collaborate with Christian denominations in establishing residential schools, which lasted until 1984. Following the creation in 1880 of the Department of Indian Affairs, agents were sent to indigenous communities to force families to send their children to those schools. By 1931, Canada had over 80 residential schools, whose primary objective was to assimilate aboriginal learners into Euro-Canadian Christian society. Very little tolerance was accorded to aboriginal traditions. For example, children's hair was cut short, in disregard of the spiritual significance of long hair among indigenous peoples; and traditional clothes were replaced by uniforms. Further, the use of aboriginal languages was strictly forbidden. Aboriginal names were deliberately changed to Euro-Christian names, while others were simply replaced by a number. Like other boarding schools around the world, residential schools in Canada prepared indigenous children for life within the lowest classes of society (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009).

The schools were notorious for perpetrating student abuse: physical punishment and humiliation were inflicted to enforce compliance (Troniak, 2011). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples noted that abuses included whippings, beatings and the rubbing of children's faces in excrement and urine (Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The Special Advisor to the Minister of National Health and Welfare on Child Sexual Abuse has pointed out that in some schools sexual abuse was widespread (Milloy, 1999). Over 12,000 legal claims have been filed against the Government of Canada, as well as claims against religious denominations (United Nations, Economic



and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, 2004). Those claims went unsupported or unrecognized officially for years. Recently, however, some progress has been made towards reconciliation. In 1998, the Government of Canada established a fund of 350 million Canadian dollars to support community healing and reconciliation hearings through the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. In 2006, the Government signed the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The settlement process included representatives of churches, survivors and the Assembly of First Nations and other aboriginal organizations. The Agreement provided for financial compensation and formal apologies to aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Almost 70 per cent of indigenous children are taught in provincial or territorial schools and efforts to improve the curriculum for those children have not progressed significantly (Neegan, 2005). While schooling on reserves is the responsibility of the Government of Canada, provincial and territorial Governments hold control in communities that are not located on reserves. Teaching in off-reserve schools is conducted in English or French, with Quebec being the only area where native languages are generally taught. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (approved in 1975 and modified in 1978) provides for greater input and control by the Cree and Inuit of northern Quebec over aboriginal schools and teacher training. On the whole, however, indigenous peoples exercise little control over indigenous education.

Provincial or territorial programmes under early childhood education usually start at kindergarten level. Care for children under age 5 is usually assumed to be the responsibility of the family. However, as more than 70 per cent of children between the ages of three and five have mothers who work, care is left to relatives or alternative options are exercised or those children simply do not receive sufficient care. Many of the educational resources for indigenous children below school age are provided through programmes such as:

- (a) The Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve Program which is part of the federal network of programmes that directly address early learning and healthy development for First Nations children who live on reserve. These programmes include the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)-funded day care in Alberta and Ontario;
- (b) The Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities Program, a Public Health Agency of Canada-funded early childhood development programme for First Nations, Inuit and Metis children and their families living in urban and northern communities.

Both Aboriginal Head Start programmes share similar mandates and objectives, as well as six programme components. Funding for these programmes has been inadequate, although in 2002, the Government announced that an additional 320 million Canadian

dollars would be spent through 2007 to improve early childhood development for indigenous peoples, including the expansion of programmes like Head Start. However, the success achieved through the increase in funding has yet to be determined (Friendly, Beach and Turiano, 2002).

It is important to note that educational opportunities for indigenous peoples in Canada, as well as the United States, largely exclude groups that are not officially recognized and thus do not enjoy the same political status as indigenous peoples that are recognized. As a result, those groups that are unrecognized, which include historical tribes, urban Indians, migrant indigenous peoples and descendants, may confront additional barriers to educational achievement in both countries.

During the period of treaty making with native peoples in the United States, tribes signed over 350 treaties with the United States, through which access, inter alia, to education was effectively negotiated and granted in exchange for 1 billion acres of land.

United States of America

The history of the indigenous peoples' experience in the United States, as in Canada, includes the operation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of boarding schools for children. During the period of treaty making with native peoples in the United States, tribes signed over 350 treaties with the United States, through which access, inter alia, to education was effectively negotiated and granted in exchange for 1 billion acres of land. The first attempts to educate indigenous peoples in what is now the United States of America, which began under British rule in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, included programmes at the College of William and Mary and Dartmouth College (Brayboy and others, 2012).¹⁰³ Implementation of the official policy on boarding schools did not begin in earnest until the 1800s, with the help of Christian denominations. Under that policy, children were often forcibly abducted from their communities. The first boarding schools began on reservations,

but soon, in the late nineteenth century, off-reservation schools were established, primarily in order to ensure complete assimilation through removal from home life (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009). In 1909, the country had 25 off-reservation schools, 157 on-reservation schools and 307 day schools (Adams, 1995). Indigenous students were taught trade-related skills, the intention being to prepare them for service-oriented work which relegated them to a low economic status. Through the Boarding School Healing Project, it has been noted that emotional, sexual and physical abuse were common issues, and that high numbers

¹⁰³ Association for the Study of Higher Education (2012).



of children died from neglect or disease.¹⁰⁴ On 19 December 2009, the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, signed into law the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010,¹⁰⁵ whereby the United States, acting through the Congress, apologized, on behalf of the people of the United States for, inter alia, the boarding school policy. This marked the first official Government acknowledgement of the repercussions of that policy's implementation.

While the Bureau of Indian Affairs, churches and some native tribes continue to run boarding schools, many of them include a focus on indigenous cultures and languages and are situated in rural localities which offer a more comfortable environment for students. Further, attendance is no longer compulsory. Lack of funding and resources appears to be the largest challenge faced by boarding schools today (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009), one that is wrestled with by Native American education as a whole. It was in the Meriam Report of 1928¹⁰⁶ that the serious issues posed by indigenous education were first noted. The report advocated for more indigenous instructors, early childhood programmes and bilingual and multicultural education. Little came of the recommendations until the 1960s and 1970s during which further reports were published on the abysmal situation of education for Native Americans and the Native empowerment movement was inaugurated. In 1972, the Indian Education Act, whose enactment was preceded by a Congressional investigation, provided for funding and resources aimed at supporting native cultures, languages, teachers and programmes (Castagno and Brayboy, 2008). This was succeeded by the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, which provided for tribes to run schools controlled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to create programmes specifically designed to address the unique needs of native students.¹⁰⁷

Executive Order 13096-American Indian and Alaska Native Education (6 August 1998), signed by the President of the United States, William J. Clinton, further strengthened the responsibility of the United States Government for improving educational performance, reducing dropout rates and working with tribes as self-determining entities in creating culturally relevant and effective education for indigenous children. However, the No Child Left Behind Act, passed in 2001 and signed into law by President George W. Bush on 8 January 2002, and Executive Order 13336-American Indian and Alaska Native Education (30 April 2004) changed the focus of indigenous education which was now on meeting standards that had been set forth in 2001, such as scores on

¹⁰⁴ See <http://www.boardingschoolhealing.org/>.

¹⁰⁵ United States Senate, Department of Defense Appropriations Act, December 19, 2009, H. R. 3326 (111th), Sec. 8113.

¹⁰⁶ Official title: *The Problem of Indian Administration*. This was the report of a survey made at the request of the Secretary of the Interior.

¹⁰⁷ See www.bia.gov.

assessment tests (Castagno and Brayboy, 2008). Since the early 2000s, the call for more culturally responsive education for indigenous children has grown louder. Pursuant to the Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies on Tribal Consultation, signed by President Barack Obama on 5 November 2009, federal agencies were required to consult and collaborate with Native peoples of the United States in policy decisions having tribal implications. Universities and colleges now offer bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and PhD programmes which seek to generate changes that are meaningful for Native communities and peoples. The growing field of American Indian studies may also contribute to the dialogue on best practices in education. Though indigenous education continues to face many challenges, the trend appears to be positive.

Culture, community, language, and alternative education

Canada

The Supreme Court of Canada recognizes that culture is passed on intergenerationally and that education plays an important role in the transmission process (Battiste, 1998, as cited in Johnston and Claypool, 2010). In this regard, provincial schools include units on indigenous cultures. Yet, the legacy of the residential schools period remains an issue. During that period, indigenous children were punished for giving expression to any connection with their cultures and languages and were taught Western-centred subject matter, such as arithmetic, British history and geography, reading and writing. Little has changed, despite the new thematic units on indigenous peoples (Neegan, 2005). Bilingual education is still rare and the impact of the internal colonialism imposed by Canada, under which indigenous survivors and children of survivors still struggle to effect the reintroduction of indigenous culture and languages, is common. The Government has established the Aboriginal Languages and Cultures Centre to revive and protect indigenous languages. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has stated that indigenous knowledge was extremely important in the 1990s, and that indigenous higher education has also improved, with the creation of First Nations University of Canada, Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit, and Nisga'a House of Wisdom (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, 2004, para. 65).

The official languages of Canada are French and English. As in most countries, however, the linguistic map of residents reveals far greater diversity. While the Canadian Government and Constitution protect indigenous traditions, practices and customs, including language, education remains inadequate culturally and linguistically. One area in which a number of educators are seeking to close cultural and linguistic gaps for indigenous students is that of cross-cultural science education. The Rekindling Traditions project was established to evaluate the efficacy of alternative science



education in Saskatchewan. Elders, educators, researcher, and members of the local community developed six technology and science units for grades 6 to 12. Among the educators, two were indigenous.

A primary goal of this project has been to gather community perspectives on what should be included in science teaching. Community members have provided educators with indigenous knowledge to prepare them to work with indigenous students in a cross-cultural environment. Themes important to the community, which included "snow", "night", "nature" and "survival", were highlighted, with attention focused on the area's multiplicity of indigenous languages. The units teach science from both indigenous and Western perspectives and implement alternative teaching methods entailing, for example, the presentations of guest speakers, analysis of traditional knowledge and field trips. The goal is to support indigenous identity and knowledge, while also transmitting Western scientific knowledge, all within a multicultural, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary context (Aikenhead, 2001).

In a 2003 report (Doherty, Friendly and Beach, 2003), it was found that, in Canada, five primary methods of improvement in early childhood education had been introduced by provinces and territories, although only Quebec and Manitoba had examined all five. The main policy approaches were:

- (a) Strengthening regulations, which includes ensuring that educator-training requirements are sufficient;
- (b) Encouraging training, which includes offering incentives to staff to undertake additional training in education;
- (c) Raising wages, which was introduced as a means of ensuring the presence of qualified individuals in the workforce;
- (d) Undertaking or funding specific projects or initiatives including initiatives aimed at assessing strengths and weaknesses in various areas and at facilitating improvements, where possible; and
- (e) Federal and some provincial and territorial funding of community-based institutions with the capacity to support initiatives focused on aid in establishing a network of resources for early childhood education and care.

While these methods may aid in improving the quality of indigenous education for young children, their application to issues specific to indigenous peoples has been lacking. Existing education programmes could adapt the methods to the education needs of indigenous peoples by ensuring that they are responsive to community issues and community goals.

The changing status of alternative education for indigenous peoples in Canada is also attested by the establishment of community-based education partnerships between

First Nations communities and post-secondary institutions. First Nations Partnership Programs aid in surmounting educational challenges on two fronts, i.e., through (a) training of indigenous educators at the post-secondary education level and (b) education of indigenous youth by those educators once they have been trained. In 1989, representatives of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council entered into a partnership with the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. The partners' goal was to work together to establish a programme that would honour community needs, offer a university education to indigenous peoples and prepare students for work in communities of indigenous youth and their families.

The programmes support multi-vocality, multiculturalism, culturally responsive curricula, and community-based education. In one such programme, which centres on early childhood care and development, students can first take courses in their community and upon graduation, become early-childhood educators. Graduates of these programmes are involved in delivery of important community services through their work, inter alia, in day care, parent support programmes, language enhancement programmes, youth services, women's safe houses and after-school programmes. While it is clear that in Canada, there is much room for growth in the domain of culturally and linguistically appropriate education, many indigenous and non-indigenous residents are working towards creating more inclusive and responsive educational systems (Ball, 2005).

United States of America

In the United States of America, delivery of a culturally appropriate education to indigenous children is increasingly being supported as a means of ensuring that their education is an adequate one. A culturally relevant curriculum provides a foundation for the immersion of indigenous children in their own cultures and languages and appears to aid in promoting an incentive to pursue higher education (Brayboy and others, 2012). In conducting a review of the literature on culturally responsive schooling (CRS), Castagno and Brayboy (2008) found that it was associated with decreased dropout rates, higher attendance and improvements in personal behaviour, sense of identity and self-esteem. The Alaska Native Knowledge Network developed CRS guidelines, noting that students who are knowledgeable culturally benefit not only in terms of performance, but emotionally as well. Culturally responsive schooling encompasses, among other things, understanding the culture, language, and values of the student, a curriculum that includes non-Western perspectives and histories, and teachers who exhibit flexibility, openness and a willingness to empower students. Proponents of CRS assert that minority as well as non-minority students can benefit from these opportunities (Castagno and Brayboy, 2008).

Multilingual and multicultural education programmes have been successful in many locations across the country. Puente de Hózhó Elementary School, for example, in



Flagstaff, Arizona, immerses students in Spanish, English and Diné (Navajo) and supports the active involvement in education of families and the community. Its Navajo students have outperformed students from schools where English is the only language used. At another school for Navajo students in Arizona, Tsehootsooi Dine Bi'Olta, on the reservation, children are instructed in Navajo up until the second grade, at which point the school introduces English, and transitions to instruction that is completely bilingual. This school's students are also more proficient in mathematics and writing and have greater literacy in English. Nawahiokalaniopu'u laboratory schools in Hawaii infuse the curriculum with Hawaiian culture and their use of bilingual instruction extends from early childhood to secondary education. Students in these schools exceed students at other types of schools in Hawaii on standardized tests. Creating Sacred Places for Children, a programme implemented by the Bureau of Indian Affairs at 14 schools in six States and supported through use of research on culturally responsive schooling, follows both national and culturally relevant standards to improve Bureau schools.

The Early College High Schools (ECHS) programme, implemented through the Center for Native Education at Antioch University in Seattle, Washington, is an effective model for enabling students to earn college-level credits while attending high school. The programme also offers courses for adults, an underrepresented population of indigenous peoples who have their own need for quality educational opportunities. Each school attempts to integrate local culture into the programme and works with tribes, families and communities. The Early College High Schools programme provides college courses at the community high school, thereby reducing the burden of commuting, and collaborates with colleges and universities to ensure that quality education and learning tools are offered. The programme, which is growing, has achieved some success in reducing dropout rates and increasing attendance and college enrolment. Tribal colleges and universities, which represent an expanding sector in education, focus on the specific needs of indigenous students, and may become an important component of Native American education in the future. Many reservations include institutions where students can acquire a variety of degrees in diverse fields, as well as workforce skills. Most of these indigenous institutions work towards creating partnerships with other universities and community colleges (Brayboy and others, 2012).



Tribal colleges and universities, which represent an expanding sector in education, focus on the specific needs of indigenous students, and may become an important component of Native American education in the future.

Barriers and challenges

Canada

Indigenous students in Canada face barriers similar to those confronted by American Indians in the United States. The fear and rejection of formal schools, which is one of the legacies of residential schools, spread throughout Canada (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, 2004). Other wounds inflicted by colonization and the residential schools system include broken linkages to the family, knowledge, and language and the erosion of the tradition of family- and community-based childcare and education. In these situations, many individuals take on the responsibility of caring for children and educating them informally.

Adaptation to structured education environments such as those found in formal schools can be difficult for both parents and children (Neegan, 2005). In the 1960s and 1970s, many children were removed from their families and placed in non-indigenous foster homes, and indigenous children continue to constitute a substantial proportion of all of the children in the foster system (Hare and Anderson, 2010). There is also very little data regarding the quality of kindergarten education in Canada. Those who may enrol in kindergartens, which are under the jurisdiction of territorial or provincial Governments, must be five years of age. Resources for those under age 5 are inadequate at best. Indeed, education for young children in general is not responsive overall to their cultural and linguistic needs (Doherty, Friendly and Beach, 2003). Clearly, then, indigenous students often face barriers even before adolescence.

Control of and funding for schools pose another challenge. While the federal Government provides for education on reserves, other communities receive support from provincial and territorial Governments. Communication, collaboration and accountability can become issues, and indigenous peoples remain largely powerless with regard to the education of their children. In the report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples on his mission to Canada (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, 2004), it is noted that various sectors of the Government need to work together, and that those involved in indigenous education should understand the legacy of residential schools and the importance of language and culture.

Understanding the challenges and barriers confronted by Native students also requires an examination of the areas of secondary education and higher education. Higher proportions of indigenous students who completed high school reported that they had felt happy, safe and supported; and had at least one parent who had completed school and/or close friends who valued education (Bougie, Kelly-Scott and Arriagada, 2013). Testing of students, which is one of the factors upon which college admission decisions are based, is standardized by provinces. Compared with



non-indigenous students, indigenous students do poorly on these tests. Johnston and Claypool (2010) note that understanding test scores means acknowledging the different experiences of indigenous students: Aboriginal students often learn based on experience, rather than memorization, and in open classroom-style environments. Furthermore, linguistic, cultural, economic and social barriers unique to indigenous students should be considered. In this regard, the authors suggest incorporating in schools a multi-method assessment which includes tests, as well as behavioural observations, informal assessment and interviews.

Aboriginal colleges began introducing culturally appropriate materials in the 1970s. Most institutions, however, face difficulties in securing Government support and funding is both irregular and inadequate. As these institutions lack the authority wielded by validated colleges, the credentials they provide are less valuable than those obtained from other institutions. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada manages the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) which helps students financially and supports programmes at colleges, while also providing funding for the First Nations University of Canada. This important programme helps many indigenous students achieve degrees in higher education. However, funding for the programme is provided on a yearly basis, through proposals, and is capped at a certain level (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2005). Overall, indigenous education in Canada would benefit from more attention paid to residential school legacies, the education barriers faced by indigenous students and provision of adequate funding and programmes for effective education.

United States of America

The Association for the Study of Higher Education identifies numerous challenges associated with indigenous education (see Brayboy and others (2012). Graduation and attendance rates for American Indians are extremely problematic, which suggests that the causes are bound up with discrimination, low teacher expectations and the lack of support for the enrolment of Native students in college. Since they provide few opportunities for accelerated learning, high schools do not prepare students for higher education. The factors of geographical location, insufficient resources, and lack of technology also contribute to the state of indigenous education. Other social barriers present a challenge. For example, many parents may not have attended high school or college, and may be products of the boarding school era. Moreover, values of native communities tend to be centred less on achievement and status. If students do attend college, some feel isolated, experience difficult transitions and find little support; and the fact that there are few Native faculty members in colleges and universities translates into a lack of role models and the encouragement that they can provide.

Currently, culturally responsive schooling methods have not been adopted by the majority of schools in the United States. Public schools often fail to demonstrate

sensitivity to the unique needs of indigenous students. The perspective of textbooks and education materials and their focus on histories are primarily Euro-centric and tribal, community and family involvement in indigenous education is consequently low. The Office of Indian Education within the United States Department of Education discovered through consultations with tribal leaders and indigenous educators that the primary challenges in Native American education were related to access to culturally responsive schooling, teachers without proper cultural training, organization, inadequate resources and facilities, and insufficient involvement of tribal members and Governments (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Indian Education, White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities, 2011). Improvements in these areas, as well as with respect to issues such as high unemployment, substance abuse, crime and general poverty, could lead to an alleviation of many of the difficulties inherent in efforts to deliver indigenous education in the United States. The continuing efforts of the federal Government, indigenous peoples and schools to improve education point to a positive trajectory for the future.

Main findings

There have been some improvements in respect of closing the education gap existing between indigenous and non-indigenous students in Northern America. Based on 2006 census data of the Government of Canada, 4 out of 10 indigenous persons in cities have post-secondary certification compared with 35 per cent of indigenous students in rural communities and 26 per cent of those belonging to on-reserve communities. In the United States of America, rates for American Indians and Alaska Natives who have taken advanced placement (AP) exams and performed well doubled in the period from 2001 to 2010. However, there is still room for improvement.

The boarding school system for indigenous children in both the United States and Canada during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was designed to assimilate indigenous learners into European and Christian society. Very little tolerance was accorded to indigenous traditions and the use of indigenous languages was strictly forbidden. The boarding schools in both countries prepared indigenous children for life within the lowest classes of society. Understandably, these experiences have had a major impact on indigenous peoples and their attitudes towards education.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ See the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's findings and final report, "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" at <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>



Provision of a culturally appropriate education is increasingly being supported as a method for ensuring that the education of indigenous students is an adequate one. Culturally appropriate education is associated with decreasing dropout rates, the maintaining of higher attendance, and improvements in personal behaviour, sense of identity and self-esteem. Good examples of education initiatives in Canada include partnerships between First Nations communities and post-secondary institutions. First Nations Partnership Programs aid in surmounting educational challenges on two fronts, i.e., through training of indigenous educators at the post-secondary education level, and the education of indigenous youth by those educators once they have been trained. The goal is working together towards establishing programmes that honour community needs and prepare students for work in their own communities. A programme implemented in a school in Arizona immerses students in the Spanish, English, and Diné (Navajo) languages, and supports the strong involvement in education of families and the community. Navajo students enrolled in that school have outperformed students from schools where English is the only language used.

Recommendations

Control and funding for schools can be a major challenge in education. For example, on indigenous reservations, funding is provided by the federal Government, while other indigenous communities receive support from provincial and territorial Governments. Communication, collaboration and accountability can become issues, with indigenous peoples remaining largely powerless as regards meeting challenges associated with the education of their children. Hence, the various sectors of Government need to work together to ensure that schools are adequately resourced to meet the needs of indigenous students.

More work is required to counter the negative experiences of indigenous peoples through, for example, developing sensitivity towards the unique needs of indigenous students. There is also a need for consultations with tribal leaders and indigenous educators on education issues as well as teacher training.

Bilingual education requires ongoing review to ensure that such education is not biased towards the dominant language which serves to assimilate students to the national culture. Further, bilingual education should not follow a Western model, but should consider the specific indigenous context. In this regard, the curriculum must be appropriate to students' learning styles and teachers must be able to speak the local language.

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**Indigenous peoples
and education
in the Pacific region**

Linda Tuhiwai Smith



Chapter VI

Indigenous peoples and education in the Pacific region

Linda Tuhiwai Smith

Introduction

Meeting the development needs and specific educational aspirations of indigenous peoples in the Pacific region remains a significant challenge. The disparities in the educational outcomes for indigenous peoples living in broadly heterogeneous contexts can be considered a legacy of decades of inadequate educational provisions. The present chapter focuses on cross-cutting educational issues common to most, if not all, Pacific indigenous peoples, while providing evidence of the stark contrasts existing among diverse indigenous backgrounds. While some progress continues to be made about access to and quality of education for indigenous peoples in the Pacific, resulting in an improvement of their overall well-being, a more extensive effort has yet to be launched. This chapter is divided into two distinct parts: the first part offers an overview of some of the key educational concerns for indigenous peoples in the Pacific region; the second presents specific case studies focused on areas of indigenous knowledge within the contexts of higher education, science and research. The importance of higher education lies in its potential to train indigenous professionals, educators and researchers, among

others, and in so doing prepare them for their roles as builders of leadership within their communities, while serving as models for indigenous youth. Higher education is a valid platform for triggering the production and reproduction of indigenous knowledge and worldviews in and beyond the educational field, which is especially important in economies that rely heavily on technological innovation and rapid communication flows.

Although building the educational research competence of indigenous peoples together with their technological capabilities is a complex process, the necessary momentum does exist: calls for language protection and cultural revitalization for indigenous peoples all over the world, which have drawn international support, are being answered. Two critical issues in this area which should be addressed involve curriculum content and the integration of indigenous knowledge in all scientific fields. The introduction of indigenous knowledge into higher education curricula is a first step towards implementing the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹⁰⁹ on indigenous educational and cultural rights. Certain organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), argue that greater knowledge (as measured by graduation rates) is the driving force in technology-based economies. Indigenous communities' active participation in the knowledge society calls for an improvement in their education, which will lead to a broadening and deepening of indigenous intellectual capacity and generate a so-called tipping point (Gladwell, 2002), which is required if indigenous peoples are to reach higher levels of social and economic well-being. It will also improve the possibilities for the positive transformation of indigenous communities, families and nations.

Major challenges need to be met if equitable and successful participation of indigenous students and their communities in the educational system – extending from early childhood to the years of compulsory primary and secondary schooling and on through to the undergraduate, graduate and PhD levels – is to be achieved.

Indigenous peoples and education in the Pacific region

In Australia, formal schooling is the responsibility of the six States and two territories that make up the Commonwealth of Australia. In 2011, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders was approximately 670,000, accounting for around three per cent of the Australian population; by 2013 it is estimated that this number will

¹⁰⁹ General Assembly resolution 61/295, annex.



increase to more than one million people¹¹⁰. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders remain subject to extreme ostracization; and the wide education-related gap between them and the rest of the Australian population is the product of their marginalization. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014,¹¹¹ less than half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under age 4 years who live in both remote and non-remote areas engage in preschool activities. In 2014, improvements were made in general retention rates in secondary education, and in the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in year 12, with completion rates of 35 per cent. Also in 2014, about 16 per cent of the indigenous youth aged 16-24 were enrolled in tertiary education. In the same year, there was a significant gap in respect of the achievement of literacy standards between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-indigenous students, with only 77 per cent of the former meeting or exceeding the literacy standards in year 7 compared with 96 per cent of non-indigenous students. Key obstacles include significant social disadvantages and exclusion as well as specific challenges faced by indigenous communities in remote areas in their efforts to access quality schooling for children.

In New Zealand, education is the responsibility of the national Government. In 2016, there was an estimated 723,500 Maori living in New Zealand, accounting for 15.4 per cent of the national population¹¹². While Maori have a history of strong educational engagement, they have engaged in many struggles to ensure that their rights as indigenous peoples are respected by the Government of New Zealand. There are still major disparities between the academic results of Maori and non-Maori students; and the Government has implemented an active policy designed to bridge the academic achievement gap in the coming years. There is a growing participation rate of Maori children in early childhood education which encompasses a range of different options including the language nest initiative (Kohanga Reo). While some disparities do exist at the secondary school level, there has been an increase in the number of Maori students who obtained the National Certificate in Educational Achievement Level 3. Nevertheless, as the access requirements have recently changed, a disproportionate number of Maori students failed to enter university owing, inter alia, to the lack of strong curriculum options in the smaller schools in rural areas attended by many

While some progress continues to be made about access to and quality of education for indigenous peoples in the Pacific, resulting in an improvement of their overall well-being, a more extensive effort has yet to be launched.

¹¹⁰ See <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/face-facts/face-facts-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples#fn1>

¹¹¹ See <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs>.

¹¹² See http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/MaoriPopulationEstimates_HOTPMYe31Dec16.aspx

Maori, and the failure to provide many students with the appropriate training needed to meet the new standards. The Maori language remains a core element in the education of Maori students in New Zealand. There are 17,500 students enrolled in Maori language immersion programmes and another 148,000 who have received some form of exposure to the Maori language in school. After completing their schooling in the language immersion system, Maori students can continue their bilingual education in tertiary institutions.

The Territories of Tahiti and New Caledonia in French Polynesia belong legally to France. Education is governed by the French education code with French being the official language of instruction. In Tahiti, many Polynesians still speak their own language at home and within community contexts. Adult literacy rates in French Polynesia are very high, at 98 per cent of the population.

In Hawaii, the State is the authority responsible for education. However, finding disaggregated data on Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islander in official statistics is still a problem today. There are several issues associated with United States census data, according to which Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander is defined a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or other Pacific Islands¹¹³. Available data suggest that the number of Native Hawaiians who live in the State of Hawaii is about 291,000, which might not be an accurate figure. Hawaiian educational language programmes began in 1984 with the first Punana Leo, or early childhood language initiative, which was followed by a pilot school immersion programme in 1987. The State of Hawaii currently administers a language revitalization programme which covers 20 public schools. The State Constitution requires that a Hawaiian studies programme be incorporated within compulsory schooling, entailing language immersion, curriculum components and the involvement of elders (*kupuna*). The Kamehameha Schools system is a private foundation, established in 1878 under the terms of the will of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, which funds a number of educational initiatives targeting Native Hawaiians. In recent years, the aim has been to provide Native Hawaiian students with educational alternatives extending from early childhood to secondary schools, including development of a new campus. Many Hawaiians have turned to the Kamehameha Schools for educational support, since the public school system did not satisfy their needs. In contrast, other Hawaiians, many of whom did not meet the blood quantum provision¹¹⁴ for entering those schools have struggled in the public educational system. Since the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893, Native Hawaiians have had to endure a negative impact on the nature of their identity.

The wider Pacific Ocean is home to some of the world's most endangered languages and cultures. The jurisdictions concerned are often small island States where a multiplicity

¹¹³ See <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-12.pdf>

¹¹⁴ See <https://apps.ksbe.edu/admissions/frequently-asked-questions/>



of language groups and cultures coexist. The effect of a rising ocean and the threat of climate change are felt most keenly in countries such as Tuvalu, in the mid-Pacific, where the lives of indigenous peoples are very much at risk. The Pacific is developing within the context of a global economy, with a shift in political alliances as a result, for example, of the increase in China's influence in the region. For centuries, indigenous knowledge systems and cultures have been resilient when confronted with Western influences in the Pacific but developed countries do not appear to be supporting the preservation of the biological, linguistic and cultural diversity of the Pacific. Educational systems in the Pacific islands have been independent of, but at the same time aligned to, those of Australia, the United States of America and New Zealand.

The higher education, research and training context

Higher education is critical for the promotion of indigenous peoples' rights and interests. The indigenous professionals trained at tertiary academic institutions go on to deliver services to indigenous peoples, set policy agendas and participate in decision-making processes or work for the Government. Research is conducted by academic and scientific organizations which validate knowledge and influence public opinion and worldviews. Indigenous peoples who work in higher education and research institutions in the Pacific are regarded as providing both an opportunity to protect indigenous cultures and a means of engaging indigenous communities in knowledge production.

Learning from the past

Certain specific forms of research and certain individual researchers have inflicted great harm on indigenous communities and tribal nations, generating concern – and even outrage – among Pacific indigenous communities. An indigenous critique of the research field was published in the 1970s, when indigenous political activism was reasserting itself (Eidheim, 1997; Humphery, 2002; Langton, 1981; Smith, 1999). Since 2015, Native Hawaiians (*kanaka maoli*) have protested against the plans of a set of institutions to build a 30-metre telescope on the sacred mountain of Mauna Kea, and have taken those associated with the project to court. There is also a feeling of unease among indigenous activists regarding the use of genetic resources to increase scientific knowledge and understanding or to develop commercial products in the food, agriculture and forestry fields. The secretive processes associated with the negotiation of free trade agreements, which have not entailed prior consultation of the indigenous communities affected, has also been a concern. Current academic research in the Pacific region is so deeply intertwined with postcolonial perspectives and Western worldviews that it has been viewed as yet another instrument for further assimilating indigenous peoples into mainstream society. Research is a powerful tool for re-establishing indigenous peoples' own academic engagement with, and scholarly authority over, their own knowledge systems, experiences, representations, imaginations and identities.

The issue of research is a contentious one, not simply at the level of epistemology or methodology but in the broadest sense, whereby research is considered an organized activity that is often controlled by an intellectual elite and is thus deeply connected to the maintenance of power structures. Indigenous peoples' suspicious attitude towards academic institutions, including their resistance to entering a research environment, is slowly changing. The increasing number of indigenous scholars who are working in

Research is a powerful tool for re-establishing indigenous peoples' own academic engagement with, and scholarly authority over, their own knowledge systems, experiences, representations, imaginations and identities.

academia have begun to alter it from within, through their contribution to research methodologies and their integration of indigenous communities into academic debates (Bishop, 1998; Humphery, 2002; Pidgeon and Hardy Cox, 2002; Worby and Rigney, 2002). Indeed, indigenous communities, having become mobilized internationally, are involved in issues related to globalization, education, sovereignty, sustainable development and technology.

Indigenous peoples have been studied — and their cultures “saved” — by academics who then became self-styled “authorities” on their world, their histories and their identities. Through this complex process, non-indigenous academics have crafted a narrative for indigenous communities in the Pacific and thus shaped the history and identity of the members of those communities. In this context, it can be argued that non-in-

indigenous scholars have marginalized indigenous knowledge systems, disregarding the authority exercised by indigenous peoples over their own knowledge and transmission systems.

More recently, however, significant changes have taken place, thanks to indigenous researchers, who are responsible for “not only disrupting hegemonic research forms and their power relations, but alleviating and reinventing new research methodologies and perspectives” (Rigney, 1999). The transformation of indigenous scholars' self-view, entailing the shift from a passive to a principal role as activists engaging in a counter-hegemonic struggle over research, is a noteworthy process. This kind of journey is not unique to indigenous peoples, as many other vulnerable groups have trod a similar path towards discovery of the critical importance of academic research in their quest for empowerment (Hill Collins, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Mies, 1983; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1983; Sedgwick, 1991). The epistemic basis of the dominant scientific research paradigm has been challenged, leading to development-based approaches which offer a greater promise of indigenous control over indigenous education and research. Indigenous researchers in the Pacific region have played an important role in exploring the intersections of colonialism, gender, race, class and difference, as viewed



from the perspective of indigenous peoples and within the framework of colonization and oppression (Hau'ofa, 1993; Helu Thaman, 2003; Te Awekotuku, 1991; Trask, 1993).

In its 2013 discussion on the role of indigenous peoples in science in Australia, the Expert Working Group on Indigenous Engagement with Science, led by Professor Jill Milroy, affirmed that the use of indigenous languages and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems in mainstream science are positive actions for both the scientific and the indigenous communities. The report of the Working Group (Australia, Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre, 2013) offers an excellent presentation of strategies for enabling indigenous peoples to engage with dominant knowledge systems such as those utilized in the scientific field. Indigenous peoples aspire to participation within a scientific context where indigenous knowledge is advanced rather than involvement in an exploitative process which diminishes indigenous knowledge and allows a dominant form of science to benefit those who already occupy a privileged place in society. The report encapsulates the history of the exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' from participation in science for over 200 years. It also identifies the valuable contributions that indigenous peoples can make to the efforts to grapple with current issues such as climate change, sustainability and global warming.

Indigenous peoples are not anti-science: what they wish to do is to take part in science in ways that fulfil their aspirations and needs. They are, however, anti-exploitation by science and hope to transform the means through which science systems identify issues of significance and those through which resources are prioritized and invested.

CASE STUDY ONE:

Building capacity – building people

Owing to systemic and disproportionately high levels of educational underachievement among indigenous students, indigenous peoples' research capability lacks the most fundamental ingredient, namely, a self-sustaining pool of researchers. Researchers need to be supported by an infrastructure encompassing research management, funding systems, incentives and reward systems, benefits distribution, curriculum enrichment and overall social change. Currently, however, scientific research systems in the Pacific generally do not support the production of indigenous knowledge.

Nonetheless, over the last few decades, indigenous participation in higher education has been slowly improving in Australia, Hawaii and New Zealand, although enrolment rates are still lower for indigenous than for non-indigenous young people. There are strong gender differences as well, with a greater participation of indigenous women in higher education. Arguably, this incremental improvement is attributable as much to the improved health and general education of

indigenous communities and the efforts made by indigenous communities inter-generationally, as to systemic changes in educational systems.

The proportion of indigenous Australians who were currently studying at university or at other higher-education institutions in 2012-2013 was lower than that of non-indigenous Australians (4 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively).¹¹⁵ Australia's policy imperative is to "close the gap" between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and all other Australians. An expert panel, chaired by Professor Larissa Behrendt, was charged with conducting a review of higher education access and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Australia, 2012), and to provide advice and make recommendations to the Government of Australia on ways to achieve parity for indigenous students, researchers, and academic and non-academic staff, as well as to identify best practices and opportunities for change. The review provided a platform for the development of responses by universities and in this regard, some individual institutions are working to provide leadership, strategic direction and capacity to improve educational outcomes for indigenous students.

Tertiary education of students in New Zealand encompasses a range of institutions such as universities, polytechnics, wānanga (tribal institutions of higher learning) and private providers that offer study programmes and apprenticeships. New Zealand's statistics show high levels of participation by Maori in post-secondary school education. The wānanga, which offer courses and confer degrees, including doctoral degrees, make a significant contribution to this improved participation. Despite the persisting disparities in educational achievement within compulsory schooling, Maori do participate in tertiary education as adults, with enrolment of a large number of students, many of whom are over age 40. In higher education, within the area of postgraduate studies, there are growing numbers of Maori students enrolled at the master's, honours and doctorate levels. In 2013, for example, 75 per cent of Maori's had bachelor's degrees, 13.2 per cent had post-graduate and honours degrees, 10 per cent had master's degrees and 1.8 per cent had doctorate degrees¹¹⁶.

One key educational initiative is the Maori and Indigenous (MAI) doctoral programme, which was designed in 2002 by a Maori academic, Professor Graham Hingangaroa Smith, and later adopted by the Maori Centre of Research Excellence (Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga). Since, at the time of its launching, only about 20 Maori had attained doctoral degrees in New Zealand, the programme sought to produce 500 Maori with PhD degrees through the delivery of enhanced support for Maori students across the country. The MAI programme strongly incentivized

¹¹⁵ See <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/indigenous/Health-Performance-Framework-2014/tier-2-determinants-health/206-educational-participation-and-attainment-adults.html>

¹¹⁶ See <https://www.stats.govt.nz/>



Maori leaders and students to enrol in higher education institutions and participate in the activities they offered, including academic supervision, cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional writing retreats, mentoring and exposure to key figures in Maori development. The MAI programme has inspired similar initiatives in Canada, including SAGE – Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement, and in Alaska.¹¹⁷ There are many lessons to be learned from the MAI support programme which are relevant to the building of indigenous capacity. As designed and delivered by senior indigenous academics who had experienced alienation and cultural isolation and had confronted racism and institutional barriers during their postgraduate studies, the programme aimed towards creating transformative leaders committed to indigenous development and providing indigenous communities with intellectual stimulation. The programme created national and international networks through which participants were linked with indigenous events, conferences and colleagues working internationally in similar areas. Through the attainment in 2006 of its goal of producing 500 students with doctorates, the MAI programme helped break the glass ceiling in many disciplines, since the PhD degree represents the most important means of entry into a career in research. At the same time, the research infrastructure requires respected leaders and investigators with a broad range of organizational skills and experience, who make it their goal to influence political agendas to promote indigenous peoples' inclusion in the research sector.

CASE STUDY TWO:

Revitalizing indigenous knowledge through negotiations

Another dimension of indigenous peoples' participation in science, technology and innovation encompasses a promising development: inclusion of their own indigenous knowledge systems in the scientific field. The aforementioned report of the expert working group on indigenous engagement with science, chaired by Professor Jill Milroy (Australia, Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre, 2013), advocates explicitly for the recognition of indigenous knowledge in higher education and research institutions. As an example of a project where two knowledge systems (traditional practices and modern medicine) are utilized in a complementary manner to facilitate the development of innovative outcomes, the report mentions the employment of Ngangkaris (traditional Aboriginal healers) by the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council in Central Australia (ibid., p. 6). The present case study draws on research conducted over a 10-year period (Hudson and others, 2012) which identifies the complexity of negotiating across knowledge systems in ways that do not exploit

¹¹⁷ Further information is available at the UBC Vancouver Aboriginal Portal (www.aboriginal.ubc.ca), The Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga website (www.maramatanga.ac.nz) and the University of Toronto Aboriginal Student Services website (www.fnh.utoronto.ca).

indigenous knowledge and that sustain relationships based on respect and reciprocity as core ethical values. The study identifies the stages of negotiation associated with the effort to strengthen indigenous knowledge systems in contexts where other systems such as science are dominant.

Negotiating recognition

Grasping the concept of recognition as particularized in the recognition sought by indigenous peoples, both as sovereign and self-determining nations and as agents of their own destinies, is key to understanding the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Recognizing, within the current context of education, (a) that indigenous peoples' knowledge of the world is reasoned, empirical and objective rather than "primitive" and instinctive and (b) that indigenous peoples are producers of knowledge and architects of a knowledge system which continues to develop beyond the encounter with colonialism represents an important conceptual advance whose ramifications require negotiation with scientists. Through colonization indigenous intellectual capacity was denied and the means through which indigenous experts transmitted their knowledge was obliterated. This denial was given expression using various means, ranging from racial stereotyping to enactment of legislation and even the systematic destruction of indigenous social, environmental, political and cultural institutions.

The recognition of indigenous knowledge which needs to be negotiated within the framework of a twenty-first century inter-epistemic dialogue encompasses four important dimensions: (a) recognition that indigenous knowledge existed prior to indigenous peoples' contact with Europeans, (b) recognition that indigenous knowledge was subjected to the ravages of colonization, (c) recognition that the substance of indigenous knowledge is very different from that of mainstream science and (d) recognition that indigenous knowledge may be transformed and may develop in unexpected ways. These four elements present challenges to indigenous experts, who may be driven by the need to protect their knowledge and keep it secret as well as wary of any possible changes. Scientists may also feel challenged and as a result, may ignore the historical legacy of the process of colonization and exhibit skepticism when confronted with the possibility of a radically different worldview being deemed as valid as their own. Negotiating recognition for indigenous knowledge requires an acknowledgement of all four dimensions, with the implications of the last being the most sensitive, as it invokes the indigenous identity and personality of individual researchers: the indigenous language they speak, their tribal roles and status, their gender, and the respect shown to them by their communities.



Negotiating subjectivities

One of the challenges posed by inter-epistemic dialogue stems from its capacity to transform knowledge and subjectivities. Such a dialogue alters the way in which its participants come to understand themselves symbolically by creating a new space for negotiation around what it means to be indigenous or to be a scientist. Scientists work in different disciplines, employ different methods and ask different questions, as do indigenous knowledge experts. The distinction, however, is that indigenous scholars have had to hide or suppress their expertise or they may have been ridiculed or even punished for utilizing a body of knowledge proclaimed to be illegal. Indigenous peoples are expected to know more about science than scientists are expected to know about indigenous peoples and their background. Collaboration, then, is not about individuals' goodwill or kindness but about a series of collective negotiations which can then be built upon to generate a solid cooperative process.

Indigenous individuals who are scientists, and indigenous knowledge experts, have had their expertise shaped by radically different educational experiences. For Maori knowledge holders, experiencing the suppression of indigenous knowledge by the forces of Christianity and legislation – which made it illegal to even call oneself a *tohunga* (a member of a diverse body of experts) – was often traumatic. For indigenous scientists, educational and workplace contexts in which their identity was suppressed have been a breeding ground for self-rejection and such suppression has hindered the multiplicity of approaches to understanding science from coexisting.

Scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge encompass their own conceptual, methodological and symbolic forms of understanding and problem-solving mechanisms. That scientists hold discussions both within their own disciplines and across other scientific domains does not prevent mainstream science generally from drawing from common conceptual, mathematical and philosophical source materials, which also inform school and undergraduate-level curricula. Similarly, indigenous knowledge experts find common ground within the long oral tradition comprising discovery, exploration, observation and insight (Cajete, 1994). Dialogue is thereby enriched through the interplay of diverse viewpoints which may reflect a common perspective while sometimes yielding dissimilar insights. Within this context, scientists are acknowledged on the basis of their institutionally accepted academic qualifications, whereas indigenous knowledge experts are acknowledged on the basis of the cultural integrity of their performance.

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Negotiating subject matter

A good reason for focusing on dialogue is to modify the sometimes conflictual relationship between indigenous knowledge and science as manifested on the level of discourse. The “screaming” approach is especially evident in politically contentious areas, such as environmental issues and genetic engineering. In cases where the stakes appear to be politically high for indigenous communities, many indigenous peoples tend to view science as simply the voice of state power. There is a failure to address the lack of genuine deliberative commitment to establishing respectful dialogue and the defaulting instead to governmental consultation processes, a dynamic that seems to limit the possibilities for inter-epistemic understanding and, subsequently, for innovation in education.

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While the time for dialogue on urgent, politically contentious topics appears to have passed, in fact, it is still possible to frame contemporary challenges skilfully and productively, i.e., in such a way as to mitigate antagonisms and foster opportunities for experts in all areas to engage with colleagues working within different knowledge systems in exploring a particular topic. Innovative birth technologies and sustainable social and environmental practices as related to food production and consumption are areas of research that provide experts from the worlds of science and indigenous knowledge with entry points into the realm of dialogue on significant issues concerning both the technologies themselves and their implications for society. More fundamentally, as both areas encompass basic human processes, participants should feel comfortable exploring those areas from a range of perspectives: philosophical, conceptual, ethical, scientific and technical.

It is possible to engage in an inter-epistemic dialogue within the framework of different knowledge systems. This case study suggests that the rules for engaging in such a dialogue must be negotiated in advance and that both initial conversations and further collaboration need to be underpinned by strong principles of reciprocity, subject to periodical evaluations which ensure benefits for all participants.

CASE STUDY THREE:

Building research communities — having conversations

The construction of an indigenous research community is an important stage in the process of building research capacity and promoting a culture of research among



indigenous peoples. The purpose of a research community is to fulfil the diverse range of needs experienced by indigenous scholars: the need to communicate and contest ideas, the need to operate in an environment where the basic values associated with indigenous knowledge and research are shared, the need for an informed audience, the need for leadership and mentorship, the need for acknowledgement and rewards, the need for reassurance that what their pursuit of knowledge entails is understood within a context wider than that of their own family, the need for nurturing in the emerging stages of their academic careers, and the need to assimilate a body of basic knowledge through an examination of the relevant literature.

As members of communities that still value oral traditions and have developed an acute sensitivity to the many facets of performance, indigenous researchers possess the potential to sustain exchanges on their research efforts that are dynamic, inspiring and intellectually challenging. Their real challenge, however, is to translate those conversational exchanges from the realm of speech into written form, as products of research which are suitable for inclusion in, for example, academic journals and publications, manuals, reports, university curricula and the work of peers, emergent researchers and even students. Yet, translating thought from oral to written form has traditionally been a struggle for indigenous researchers. Further, international academic standards are high, and the research community extends little real solicitude towards indigenous scholars who may seek inspiration and affirmation, encouragement and guidance, a constructive examination and critique of their work, feedback and a sense of collegiality.

The members of the scientific community are formally bound together by a system of ethical codes of conduct and regulations, which possesses institutionalized formal and informal mechanisms for conferring recognition and imposing sanctions. The function of a community, however, is to enable its members to value, understand and undertake research and to invest in the work of future researchers. A research community is basically a platform for dialogue, where some of the conversations may focus on possibilities for radical change while others may be viewed simply as fostering a preservation of the status quo. This chapter argues for the further evolution of the conversations conducted across disciplines and communities by indigenous researchers. The contribution of these debates to sustaining a worldwide indigenous research network will expand over time.

Main findings

Building a track record – building leadership

A specific research project is deemed to have reached its final stage upon publication. Quality is determined by acceptance within the academic community, rather than on the actual long-term outcomes the research might generate, such as the granting of patents and technology transfers. That publication is de facto the main mechanism for promotion of researchers accounts for the cautionary expression “publish or perish”.

Highlighting the research-related achievements of indigenous elders can, given their status in indigenous communities, be a means of demonstrating persuasively that glass ceilings can indeed be broken.

The task of indigenous research communities is to create spaces for the acquisition of the experience that researchers need to be able to publish. This often requires that indigenous senior researchers assume the role of mentors to apprentices, and that indigenous leaders already working at the education policy level prioritize the interventions that can assist indigenous researchers, which may include organizing conferences, symposiums and seminars and utilizing their networks to increase indigenous research opportunities. Such functions must be carried out by senior indigenous scholars, who at the same time cannot neglect their active role as researchers who, by serving as role models in that regard, inspire the emulation of younger indigenous researchers. Highlighting the research-related achievements of indigenous elders can, given their status in indigenous communities, be a means of demon-

strating persuasively that glass ceilings can indeed be broken. Indigenous researchers have been successful in exercising leaders over a new generation of indigenous published academics, since based on their performance, they have established solid track records, as attested by publications, grants and peer reviews. Track records indicate that indigenous researchers manage a budget, coordinate a research team and handle the logistics of a major research project; and they also validate their research experience as junior researchers, the academic relationships that they have established, the contributions that they have made to their field or discipline, and, ultimately, the body of knowledge that they have delivered to society. The track records of indigenous researchers exhibit what they have already accomplished, while indicating the direction in which their research career is heading.

**BOX VI.1.****Strategies for building indigenous research capacity and capability**

- ≡ Promoting the inclusion of indigenous peoples in higher educational institutions
- ≡ Training, mentoring and employing indigenous researchers in mainstream research institutions
- ≡ Endorsing the participation of indigenous peoples in a wide range of research projects, focusing on both indigenous- and non-indigenous-related topics, and adopting different approaches and methodologies
- ≡ Creating research communities and promoting a culture of research and indigenous leadership among indigenous scholars
- ≡ Developing strategic priorities for the advancement of indigenous scholars (e.g., rewarding indigenous researchers for excellence through conferring promotions and offering career opportunities)
- ≡ Building connections and institutional collaborations to support engagement and dialogue among indigenous and non-indigenous researchers and communities
- ≡ Establishing indigenous research organizations
- ≡ Fostering the formulation of research topics by indigenous communities
- ≡ Developing indigenous research methodologies and research protocols for working with indigenous communities
- ≡ Supporting indigenous individuals and communities with a view to familiarizing them with research-based decision-making
- ≡ Formulating operational processes for managing research
- ≡ Designing intellectual property protocols and indigenous knowledge transfer mechanisms
- ≡ Disseminating the benefits derived from research to multiple audiences and among the members of society]

Source: Smith (2004).

Building capability – building research infrastructures

Smith (1999) accounts for some of the issues related to the process of building a research unit for indigenous education within the context of universities. Currently, in the Pacific region, there are several indigenous-focused research entities within and outside research institutions including universities, Crown research institutes, polytechnics and wānanga. While indigenous research capacity has reached an acceptable

level in fields such as education and health, it is often fragile and scattered across different institutions. In education, for instance, indigenous research units possess diverse disciplinary strengths and often cover a wide range of topics, but they usually fail to find adequate replacements if primary researchers leave, become sick or retire. On the other hand, research infrastructure encompasses significantly more than the capacity to organize a team of researchers or develop a community of researchers: it includes institutional and management capacity.

BOX VI.2

Targets in the development of research infrastructure and support

- ≡ Fit-for-purpose indigenous research entities designed by and for indigenous communities
- ≡ Good research governance practices
- ≡ Project management capacity
- ≡ Strategic planning processes
- ≡ Administrative, legal and financial policies and procedures
- ≡ Ethically aware policies and processes
- ≡ Accountability and quality evaluation processes
- ≡ Career incentives designed to boost professional development, such as through performance and promotion policies
- ≡ Adequate physical spaces, such as offices and laboratories
- ≡ Access to knowledge and literature through libraries and online databases
- ≡ Technical support systems such as information technology and networks of laboratory technicians

Source: Smith (2004).

When we think about research capacity and research capability, we are considering two intertwined systems which together support and sustain research, encompassing both researchers and research infrastructure. At the state level, research infrastructure is a strategic facet of a nation's development and of its wealth creation process. Government research infrastructures are connected to social, economic and political goals, educational systems and national capacity. In New Zealand, for example, the Government is the major funder of research, through the tertiary education system and public investments in science and technology.



Recommendations

From a pragmatic perspective, the following requirements must underpin the process of building indigenous research capacity and capability: the construction of networks and the stimulation of synergies and collaborations, as well as the education of researchers and the establishment of research systems, within and across indigenous communities. This enormous challenge requires multi-governmental and international support and funding. Within the context of the Pacific region, it would also entail supporting the development of a wider community of indigenous researchers who interact and share a commitment with the indigenous world. In Australia, there are research clusters and networks that are pursuing specialization in the area of desert knowledge. In New Zealand, good examples of indigenous knowledge institutions include research centres adhering to a standard of excellence as well as other research entities. Still, cooperation in research among indigenous scholars may have to be facilitated within non-indigenous research institutions and agencies as a first step towards the building of indigenous research infrastructure and capability. The priority should be to educate a new generation of indigenous academics who are capable of standing behind a research agenda for the future that is more inclusive and more diverse. Indigenous peoples need to be builders of indigenous knowledge and author-contributors to its literature. Although the task may seem daunting, there is no choice but to make every effort to reach the goal.

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<http://www.maramatanga.co.nz/> (New Zealand Māori Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE))



**Indigenous peoples
and education
in the Russian Federation**

Konstantin Zamyatin



Chapter VII

Indigenous peoples and education in the Russian Federation

Konstantin Zamyatin

Introduction

As most self-identified indigenous peoples in the region live in the Russian Federation, the present chapter will focus mainly on them.

In the aftermath of the First World War, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR or more commonly known as the Soviet Union) became a federation. Its territorial units were named after “the peoples” who “exercised their right to national self-determination”. In addition to the 15 larger titular nations composing the Soviet Union, there were smaller nationalities which acquired their national territories. Federalization was conjoined with the early Soviet policy of ‘multiculturalism’ within the national entities, whereby the local languages and cultures were promoted in the public domain. For the first time, many languages in northern Russia acquired writing systems. The right to receive an education in one’s mother tongue was affirmed and implemented in combination with the policy of universal access to education, which was introduced in 1930.

In the late 1930s, the multiculturalism policy was put on hold and Russian, which was introduced as a compulsory subject for all, gradually became the medium of instruction. During the 1930s, the arrival of new settlers in the northern regions of the country led to dramatic changes in the lifestyle of indigenous peoples. By the mid-1950s, indigenous communities had witnessed a rapid shift from indigenous languages to Russian. In 1958, through school reform, parents were given the opportunity to choose the languages of instruction in schools. Many small national schools switched en masse to the respective languages of the republics of the Soviet Union and to Russian, with indigenous languages taught only as an optional subject. Boarding schools were introduced where children – including indigenous children – resided away from their parents for nine months of the year. As a result, indigenous peoples of the north experienced a disruption to the intergenerational transmission of their languages (Vakhtin, 2001, pp. 250-251; Zamyatin, 2012, pp. 19-20).

Owing to popular mobilization in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Soviet and autonomous republics implemented programmes of national revival, with one of the goals being to promote learning in one's mother tongue. Following the collapse of the communist bloc and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, indigenous peoples were not recognized by successor States, nor by many newly independent countries. At least 80 per cent of the population of the Russian Federation identifies themselves as ethnic Russian, whereas at least 130 ethnicities can claim to be indigenous peoples. Some of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation are ethnically defined republics and autonomous districts,¹¹⁸ which are situated in three large areas: the European region (European north, Volga and Ural areas), the northern Caucasus and Siberia.

Overview of indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation¹¹⁹

In the Russian Federation, legislation has accorded official recognition to indigenous groups that are smaller in number than 50,000, including those comprising just a few dozen persons, as "numerically small indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation" (hereinafter referred as "indigenous peoples", unless otherwise specified). Hence, only part of the legal and institutional framework for the larger- and small-numbered indigenous peoples is common to both groups. Currently, the unified list identifies 40 groups

¹¹⁸ Article 66 of the Constitution of 12 December 1993.

¹¹⁹ For relevant statistics on the ethnic composition and language proficiency of the population of the Russian Federation, see information materials on the final results of the 2010 All-Russian Population Census, appendices 5 and 6. Available at http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/perepis_itogi1612.htm (Excel files 5 and 6).



of indigenous peoples of the north, Siberia and the far east and 7 groups residing elsewhere in the Russian Federation. In addition, the Republic of Dagestan compiled its own list of indigenous peoples which included groups with more than 50,000 people.¹²⁰ Scholars question this definition of “indigeneity”, as there are also significant groups of larger-numbered peoples, such as the Komi, the Yakuts and the Tuvans, that lead an indigenous traditional life.

The reason for a restrictive interpretation is that larger-numbered autonomous groups are better protected, within their “titular” regions. However, the titular group is a numerical minority in more than half of the 21 republics as well as in all four autonomous districts. The lowest numbers are in the Khanty-Mansi autonomous district, where indigenous peoples constitute approximately 2 per cent of the total population. Nevertheless, a comprehensive analysis of population census data reveals that even in those republics and autonomous districts where the titular groups remain politically marginalized, there are usually better language retention rates owing to accessibility of national schools (see, e.g., Khairullin, 2010, pp. 979-980).

The number of individuals officially belonging to the indigenous peoples increased in the last decade. In 2010 there were 316,000 indigenous peoples of whom 258,000 live in 28 regions in the north.¹²¹ The numbers increased among the Evenki, Evens, Khanty, Mansi, and Nenets in the republics and autonomous districts. This increase was due to a birth rate higher than the national average as well as the preference for indigenous identity by youth in mixed-marriage families, which can be attributed to access to benefits associated with indigenous status. At the same time, however, there are higher levels of infant and child mortality, disease incidence, illiteracy and unemployment among indigenous peoples (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 90-94; United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2012, para. 294).

During the mid-1950s, most indigenous peoples were fluent in their own languages. By the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, there was a huge decline in native speakers. By 2010, the proportion of people with at least some knowledge

At least 80 per cent of the population of the Russian Federation identifies themselves as ethnic Russian, whereas at least 130 ethnicities can claim to be indigenous peoples. Some of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation are ethnically defined republics and autonomous districts, which are situated in three large areas: the European region (European north, Volga and Ural areas), the northern Caucasus and Siberia.

¹²⁰ See the unified list of the indigenous small-numbered peoples of the north, Siberia and the far east of the Russian Federation, as approved by decree No. 255 of the President of the Russian Federation of 24 March 2000. Also see Rohr (2014), pp. 14-16; and Sokolovskiy (2011).

¹²¹ Calculation based on data from the 2010 population census.

of an indigenous language had dropped to 22.7 per cent. Of those people, only 35.2 per cent indicated that they spoke the language of their group. Today, Russian is the first and main language for 90 per cent of indigenous peoples and many indigenous youths do not speak any indigenous language. On the other hand, a few indigenous languages, such as Nenets, are still used in those sectors of the traditional economy that benefit from the institutional support of the republics and autonomous districts (Vakhtin, 2001, pp. 224-225; Dikanskii and others, 2005, pp. 237-239). Overall, however, most indigenous languages are on the verge of extinction (Arefiev, 2014, p. 436; World Bank, 2014, p. viii).

Indigenous peoples and education in the Russian Federation

Access to and quality of education

Indigenous peoples typically reside in areas with low population density and in isolated locations. In some cases, indigenous peoples maintain their nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles. During the post-Soviet period, many people left the north, which led to a drop in living standards, a decrease in the number of schools, students and teachers, and a deterioration of infrastructure. In the 2010-2011 academic year, fewer than two thirds of schools in the north had all necessary amenities, including water and central heating. These circumstances predispose to difficulties in providing indigenous children with access to quality educational services (Arefiev, 2014, p. 83).

Preschool education

Participation in preschool education in the Russian Federation is optional and less than two thirds of all indigenous children have access to public nurseries and kindergartens. The capacity of kindergartens remains insufficient, especially in remote regions, and less than 50 per cent of indigenous children attend kindergarten, mainly because their families have low incomes. Several regions have introduced compensation programmes, under which cash transfers are paid to parents whose young children are on a waiting list (Nikolaev and Chugunov, 2012, p. 15).

The model of 'nomadic kindergarten-school' was developed specifically to serve the needs of children of nomadic families. The purpose of such a school is to prepare children between the ages of three and six for entry into primary school through the use of the basics of indigenous pedagogy and indigenous language (Council of Europe, 2010,



p. 50). The main goal is to enable children to attain fluency in communication skills in indigenous languages and to acquire skills and knowledge associated with traditional ways of life. Particular importance is placed on ensuring that children maintain daily contact with their parents. Among indigenous children between the ages of 1.5 and 7 years who attend kindergarten, only one sixth successfully learn their language, as there is an insufficient number of tutors who are fluent in the language and have a command of the necessary teaching methods (Arefiev, 2014, p. 444). The number of children learning indigenous languages in kindergarten is lower than in most non-nomadic schools, with most children in kindergarten instructed in Russian.

Attempts are being made to revitalize indigenous languages using new educational techniques within indigenous communities. The program utilizing the “language nest” technique, which is regarded as an effective language maintenance mechanism, is grounded in children’s immersion in indigenous language. While this has been tested in several countries, it has yet to be fully taken on board in the Russian Federation (Council of Europe, 2010, pp.102-103). Nevertheless, the technique has proved appealing in some regions and there are plans to disseminate it in the Khanty-Mansi and Taimyr autonomous regions (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 204-205 and 248-249). The level of effectiveness of this program remains low owing to the teaching methods required. Since 2012, the Russian language has become compulsory in preschool institutions.

Primary and secondary education

Indigenous parents view education as the key determinant of the future of their children. However, the level of education among the indigenous peoples in the post-Soviet period has decreased. At least 48 per cent of indigenous youth have completed, or partially completed, only primary or secondary education, while 17 per cent do not have even a primary education. There is a lack of disaggregated data but from the information available, 89 per cent of school-age indigenous children in the north are receiving some form of schooling. In 2010, 1 per cent of adolescents and youth remained illiterate. Illiteracy is the highest among Nenets, Khanty and Evenki youth, the largest groups in the region. Experts have emphasized, however, that the problem is not illiteracy, but low-quality education.¹²²

Authorities have suggested addressing the complex problem of low-quality education through utilization of small ungraded schools. These schools have less than the minimum of 14 pupils per class, which is a requirement according to federal educational standards. However, the regions can establish a lower minimum number of students if they wish to do so. The ungraded schools are situated in small indigenous communities and, typically, their classes include children of different age groups. They generally

¹²² Arefiev (2014), pp. 83-84 and 127-128. This author uses official regional data collected by the Ministry of Education.

provide primary and, on rare occasions, secondary education. It is envisaged that these schools will be turned into local cultural centres comprising kindergarten, school, study groups, library, first-aid posts and facilities for leisure activities, all under one roof.

Tertiary and vocational education

Higher education is provided only in the Russian language. This is not the case, however, with respect to the training of mother-tongue teachers in local universities of the republics and other regions. There is a higher proportion of individuals with higher education among the larger-numbered peoples than among the ethnic Russians (for example, Yakuts and Buryats). Among small-numbered indigenous peoples, the proportion of individuals with higher education remains lower than the country average (Dikanskii and others, 2005, pp. 115-124).

Almost 10,000 indigenous children attend primary vocational schools while a somewhat smaller number attend secondary vocational schools. Three quarters of those who obtain a secondary professional or higher education are indigenous women, a proportion which is higher than the overall national average. Indigenous women are also predominantly teachers. In contrast, since the Soviet period, young indigenous men have been induced to confine their activities to the traditional economy, which generally does not require higher education. At present, consequently, indigenous men often find themselves in a disadvantaged position (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 127 and 142; Dikanskii and others, 2005, pp. 124-129 and 195-212).

Recently, the patterns of professional guidance and the educational aspirations of indigenous youth have changed dramatically. While fewer young people have the desire to commit themselves to a traditional way of life and wish, instead, to pursue other lifestyles in the larger cities, most parents want their children to obtain further vocational education. Employment in the legal and economics professions, as well as jobs in the oil industry, tend to enjoy the greatest popularity. The difficulty of this situation lies in the fact that employment opportunities in these professions may be scarce. The combination of lack of interest in activities in the traditional economy and few work opportunities often leads to social problems (Dikanskii and others, 2005, pp. 130-132).

The low quality of secondary education often prevents many young people from improving their quality of life through further education. To ensure access to higher education, some regions have established guarantees, including provision of special preparatory courses for undergraduate applicants, and ethnic quotas for special admission, as well as state support for indigenous students in the form of scholarships, compensation for travel expenses, provision of student housing and other social benefits (Dikanskii and others, 2005, pp. 139-142; Kriazhkov, 2010, p. 402).

An education for those who wish to become, for example, lawyers, economists and managers is offered at the State Polar Academy in Saint Petersburg and other institutions,



in Khabarovsk, Krasnoyarsk and other cities, in accordance with agreements drawn up among educational institutions, the State and local authorities. The study programmes, however, rarely offer the type of education required for entry into the professions that are in demand in the north. The proportion of indigenous students who do not complete their course work is higher than average. For example, the proportion was three times higher than the national average in the former Koryak autonomous region, where less than one third of indigenous Shor students graduated from the Kuzbass State Pedagogical Academy (Dikanskii and others, 2005, pp. 136-142).

Indigenous education systems and mainstream education

Within the public education system, indigenous children attend boarding and nomadic schools. Indigenous non-governmental organizations have criticized boarding schools for breaking the link between children and their families and traditional ways of life, which often causes psychological damage.¹²³

Despite the criticism, there have been no further developments on proposals for alternative teaching methods and different curricula in accordance with relevant laws (Kriazhkov, 2010, p. 405). Some regions, such as the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), have passed their own legislation. For example, the nomadic school system which had been in operation during the 1930s was reintroduced in the early 1990s. Schools began to operate without separating children from their parents and reintroduced linkages to their traditional way of life. Parents requested the municipal authorities to create nomadic schools which would offer residential sessions in host schools with visiting teachers, with educational content and educational process were adapted to the traditional calendar. Other initiatives include parental teaching and distance learning through the Internet based on individual study plans in compliance with state educational standards.¹²⁴

In Sakha, where there are indigenous communities, nomadic schools have been created either as separate educational establishments or as branches of existing schools. The models for school branches include nomadic schools, primary nomadic kindergarten-schools, community schools, tutor schools, Taiga schools, Sunday schools and summer nomadic schools. Stationary nomadic schools and network nomadic schools are the models for separate institutions. Teachers must obtain a special professional

¹²³ See, for example, the non-Governmental organization alternative report containing parallel information, with reference to the combined fourth and fifth periodic report of the Russian Federation (CRC/C/RUS/4-5), on "Children belonging to the indigenous small-numbered peoples of the north, Siberia and the far east of the Russian Federation" (21 November 2013). Submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its sixty-fifth session (13-31 January 2014) on behalf of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and the Institute for Ecology and Action Anthropology (INFOE).

¹²⁴ Articles 1 and 13 of the law of 22 July 2008; Dikanskii and others, 2005, pp. 109-111; Robbek and other, 2009.

education, with training arranged through public contracts. Parents may perform as teachers in Taiga schools and network nomadic schools in the capacity of “consultant-tutors”. Educational establishments have recently allowed indigenous languages to be taught by teachers who may not necessarily be qualified as language teachers.¹²⁵ A 2012 federal law approved a form of family education and as a result, a new type of school – the family nomadic school – was introduced in Sakha.¹²⁶

The number of nomadic schools has grown (Funk, 2012, p. 60). In the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic, there were 4 nomadic schools in 1990-91, 10 in 2007-08 and 13 in 2011-12. In school year 2011-12, there were four nomadic kindergartens, and three Summer and six stationary nomadic schools. Most schools teach reindeer-herding and a few teach fishing or hunting. All of the schools offer primary education and some also provide preschool or secondary education.¹²⁷ Nomadic schools were also launched in the Yamalo-Nenets and Khanty-Mansi autonomous regions, the Taimyr and Evenk former autonomous regions and the Amur Oblast (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 189, 207, 249-255, 264-265 and 326-327). However, some parents perceive nomadic schools to be yet another novel administrative invention imposed “from above”. Parents are used to sending children to boarding schools as exemplifying a form of state paternalism, which leaves them with extra time and financial aid and frees them from responsibility. Administrations often prefer to maintain boarding schools because they require fewer funds per capita, which is an important efficiency indicator in the reformed system, while the maintenance of nomadic and small rural schools is costlier.

Non-formal education – or “additional education” as it is called in the Russian Federation – is considered an integral part of formal education, with the State playing a primary role. In order to become a teacher in an institution of additional education, a professional pedagogic education is required. This formal requirement results in the exclusion of elders and other members of indigenous communities, thereby disrupting the transmission of traditional knowledge. Russian legislation allows for the creation of private educational institutions, for example, by national-cultural autonomous districts or indigenous communities. However, the size of the private education sector is negligible, with less than 1 per cent of pupils in the country enrolled in private preschool institutions and schools in 2012.¹²⁸ Often lacking financial resources, indigenous peoples prefer to make use of all possible options available within the public education sphere.

¹²⁵ Article 2 and 10 of the law of 22 July 2008; article 19 of the law of 15 December 2014; Council of Europe, 2010, p. 50.

¹²⁶ Draft law of 6 June 2014.

¹²⁷ Information presented at the parliamentary hearings of 6 December 2011.

¹²⁸ Government order of 4 September 2014; Nikolaev and Chugunov (2012), pp. 27-31.



Indigenous perspectives in mainstream education

Regular public schools situated in ethnically defined localities have been traditionally classified as “national schools”. Such schools use either an ethnic regional language or Russian as the medium of instruction. In localities with mixed populations, regular “Russian” schools sometimes include other languages and multicultural subjects in the curriculum. Such schools often have “national classes” where students study the local ethnic language as a compulsory subject. In both types of schools, children study the history and geography of the region and the culture of its peoples, including games, the arts and ethnic sports. In the north, schoolchildren also acquire skills related to reindeer herding, hunting, fishing, ethnic technologies and other traditional knowledge, with a focus on work experience (see Zamyatin, 2012).

The Russian Federation has a single school curriculum which is both obligatory as well as flexible. The obligatory component is designed by federal authorities in consultation with regional authorities. The teaching of languages other than Russian and literature is provided in some schools, depending on the chosen syllabus. The flexible component, which accounts for 20 per cent of the syllabus in primary school and 30 per cent in basic secondary education, is developed by students, parents, teachers and schools. While parents may request the school to include language learning and other study subjects, they do not make the final decisions (United Nations, General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 2010, paras. 67 and 94; Prina, 2014, p. 15). In practice, parents are typically unaware of their rights or fail to adopt a collective position on the board, which requires the support of the parents of 25 students in urban schools and 14 in rural ungraded schools. It is usually the school administration that makes the decisions regarding the inclusion of flexible modules designed to meet the needs of children, which vary within and among schools.¹²⁹ As a result, many schoolchildren lack access to multicultural education.

The fact that there are practically no textbooks available on the history of indigenous peoples of the north renders those peoples largely invisible. Regional textbooks must undergo examination at four levels of federal expertise, including ethnocultural expertise, to be entered into the list of textbooks that have been federally approved and recommended for use in the classroom, which makes it difficult to issue new textbooks. However, aspects of indigenous history are taught in some autonomous districts through courses on culture.¹³⁰

Currently one tenth of children of non-Russian ethnicity study in their native languages. Education delivered in non-Russian languages is organized only in the republics, mostly in rural schools in Bashkortostan, Kalmykia, Sakha (Yakutia), Tatarstan, Tuva and, to a lesser extent, urban schools (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 110-113).

¹²⁹ Articles 28 and 44 of the federal law of 29 December 2012; Zamyatin (2012), pp. 33-34.

¹³⁰ Article 18 of the federal law of 29 December 2012; Kriazhkov (2010), p. 28.

In the Russian Federation, there is currently no instruction provided in the languages of the small-numbered indigenous peoples, which are taught as optional subjects only. Their teaching is usually organized in local schools in the areas where indigenous peoples reside, including boarding and nomadic schools. Out of 40 indigenous languages in the north, only 23 are taught as a compulsory subject. Five are taught as an optional subject, while the rest are not taught at all. The federal statistics service and the federal education ministry collect information on the use of languages in education based on the data from the regions. The ministry does not collect data on ethnicity, and only estimates can be produced on the number of students who are learning their own language (Zamyatin, 2012, pp. 40-42).

During academic year 2001-02, a total of 20,406 students in 284 schools had been taught indigenous languages as a compulsory subject. Indigenous languages were taught to 14,115 students in 215 schools in 2012-13; and in the same period, the number of indigenous students who were learning their language as a subject decreased from 48.7 to 41.5 per cent. The number is further decreasing owing primarily to the closure of small ungraded schools. From 2001-02 to 2012-13, the number of students who were learning their language as an optional subject doubled, including in facilities of additional education. A change in the number of students learning their language as a compulsory subject and those learning their language as an optional subject might be an outcome of education reform (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 119, 142 and 438; Zamyatin, 2012, pp. 40-42).

The linguistic and educational needs of indigenous peoples who live outside their communities, in towns and urban settlements, are not addressed. They constitute approximately one third of the entire indigenous population in the country (World Bank, 2014, p. viii). In urban areas, the number of indigenous students who can learn their languages is very small (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 120-123). Moreover, in situations where language classes are available at urban schools, language instruction is considered an extracurricular activity is taught as an optional subject for one hour per week. To take advantage of this opportunity, children are obliged to stay after school in study circles or additional education establishments.

The low social status of indigenous languages provides no incentives for language learning. Most students lack a linguistic environment at home and possess no prior knowledge of an indigenous language. They must therefore learn an indigenous language as a foreign language. Among those with access to language learning, only a few will have acquired good language competence or even communicative skills upon school completion, an outcome that is due partly to ineffective methodology (Dijanskii and others, 2005, pp. 230-233).



Governance, policies and legislation

Legislation

The Russian Constitution recognizes the right to education. This right is guaranteed through universal and free-of-charge access to preschool, primary and secondary general and professional education within public educational institutions and enterprises. The State also guarantees free access to higher education on a competitive basis.¹³¹

The Russian Federation has committed to the universally recognized principles and norms of international law in protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have the right to receive state support for education of the younger generations, while considering the specific characteristics of their traditional livelihoods. They also have the right to create their own study groups for teaching traditional economic activities and trades.¹³²

Educational policy, education reform

Since 2001, the modernization of education has become a policy goal, with general education being financed from regional and municipal budgets. Over the past few years, competition over federal funding needed to modernize the system of education-related governance has led regional authorities to introduce performance-based teacher salaries and per-student school financing (Nikolaev and Chugunov, 2012, pp. 27-31).

In 2001, ungraded schools constituted 70 per cent of all schools and accounted for 30 per cent of students and 40 per cent of teachers.¹³³ However, since 2001, the number of school-age children in the Russian Federation has dropped by almost half. The restructuring of the school system through "optimization" of regional education systems, initiated in 2008, has had a disproportionate effect on national schools, since most of them are ungraded rural schools which do not satisfy the new funding criteria (Council of Europe, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2012, paras. 192-193). During the period from 2006-2007 and 2013-2014, the number of small ungraded schools in the areas of indigenous traditional activities dropped from 300 to about 250 (Arefiev, 2014, p. 126).

In 2007, through education reform, the national-regional component of the state education standards was eliminated. In compliance with the new unified federal education standards, regional education agencies developed the main educational programmes

¹³¹ Article 43 of the Constitution of 12 December 1993; article 5 of the federal law of 29 December 2012.

¹³² Article 69 of the Constitution of 12 December 1993; articles 8 and 10 of the federal law of 30 April 1999.

¹³³ Government Decree of 17 December 2001.

and core curricula that define the scope (number of hours) and structure (list of subjects) of studies and facilitate their implementation. While the educational programmes can still include multicultural subjects, the regional education agencies have lost their power to make those subjects compulsory and educational establishments enjoy relative autonomy in determining the content and methods of education (Zamyatin, 2012, pp. 38-40).

If there is sufficient parental demand, schools will provide educational services and decide on the language of instruction and the teaching of multicultural subjects. The third sample syllabus of the federal basic curriculum applies to schools where native language and literature are taught as subjects; and the fourth applies to schools offering indigenous language instruction. Usually, three to five hours per week are allotted to indigenous language learning in the republics and from one to three hours per week are allotted in autonomous districts and other regions (Zamyatin, 2012, pp. 36-37 and 40-42).

Recently, nation-building was officially declared to be the first goal of the policy of nationalities and the maintenance and development of multicultural diversity were declared to constitute the second.¹³⁴ Under education policy, the unity of the educational space is emphasized in conjunction with the protection and cultivation of the multicultural traditions of the peoples of the Russian Federation, including those traditions' characteristic features.¹³⁵ The promotion of the dominant language and a unified vision of history attest to the aim of achieving homogenization of the population.¹³⁶

Institutional and structural support

Institutional support

Federal law provides significant support for the teaching of non-Russian languages and other specifically ethnic or cultural subjects.¹³⁷ In ethnically defined regions, this is achieved through the implementation of regional programmes targeted at financing, inter alia, for the purchase of textbooks, training manuals and dictionaries, and for the salaries and, in some cases, the bonuses of teachers with knowledge of languages. Research institutions, such as the Institute of Education of the Small-numbered Indigenous Peoples at the Russian Academy of Education and the Institute of National Schools of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), have developed multicultural content and new modalities for education.

¹³⁴ Strategy of the State Nationalities Policy of 19 December 2012.

¹³⁵ Article 3 of the federal law of 29 December 2012.

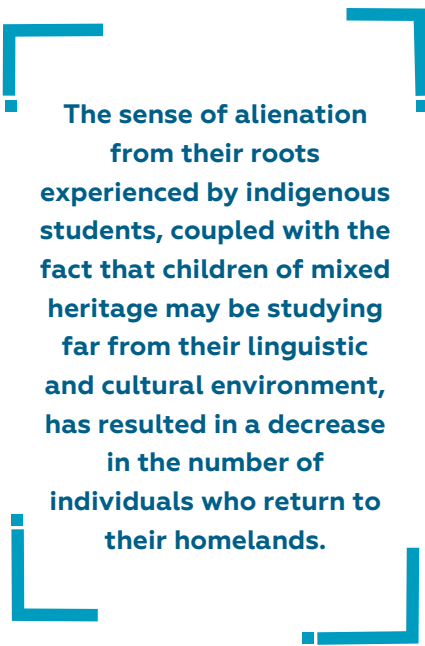
¹³⁶ Government order of 3 August 2006; Zamyatin (2012), pp. 29-30.

¹³⁷ Article 263 of the Federal law of 6 October 1999; article 8 of the Federal law of 29 December 2012.



One means of ensuring continuity between secondary and tertiary education is to produce qualified teachers. The training of indigenous teachers for work in preschool, schools and vocational institutions has been formally implemented in the Institute of the Peoples of the North at Herzen Russian State Pedagogical University. Following the introduction of the Bologna system in the Institute during 2009-2010, a new requirement established a 10 to 1 ratio of students to university instructors, which increased the difficulty of training teachers of most indigenous languages. Teacher training in master's-level studies has not yet begun; and training of preschool tutors was terminated, as it was determined that they no longer required higher education (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 145-148 and 445; Dijanskii and others, 2005, pp. 142-145).

The sense of alienation from their roots experienced by indigenous students, coupled with the fact that children of mixed heritage may be studying far from their linguistic and cultural environment, has resulted in a decrease in the number of individuals who return to their homelands. Teacher training in regional institutes is one means of solving this problem. Currently, future teachers of indigenous languages, literature and culture are being trained at regional institutes such as the Amosov North-Eastern Federal University, Yugor State University, Far Eastern Federal University, Petrozavodsk State University, Buryat State University and Kuzbass State Pedagogical Academy. However, there continues to be a lack of young, qualified teachers in many other regions. In total, there are about 350 full-time and 150 part-time indigenous language teachers whose median age is close to 50. Distance learning has also been proposed as an alternative solution (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 148-152; Dijanskii and others, 2005, pp. 277-279 and 283-287).



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Structural support

The inter-institutional efforts to support indigenous peoples in the north are coordinated through the concept of sustainable development of the indigenous small-numbered peoples of the north, Siberia and the far east of the Russian Federation, as approved by decree No. 132 of the Government of the Russian Federation of 4 February 2009. The goal is to improve indigenous peoples' access to educational services by considering their specific socio-cultural needs. The first action plan for the implementation of the concept, as approved by order No. 1245 of the Government of the Russian Federation of 28 August 2009, included measures for the delivery of high-quality education such as

professional teacher training and provision of schools with modern equipment encompassing computerization and Internet access. The action plan also enabled distance learning to be implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science.¹³⁸

Some international funding is available, for example, through a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO-funded project entitled “Promoting the literacy of indigenous pupils through capacity building among nomadic peoples of the north of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)” and a World Bank-funded project entitled “Innovative development of the system of preschool education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)” (see Robbek and others, 2009; World Bank, 2014, p. 31).

Main findings

The programme for providing indigenous peoples with access to education in the Russian Federation suffers from some significant deficiencies in terms of both its quality and its content. While the establishment of the particular types of schools needed to meet the needs of indigenous peoples is permitted, those schools must remain within the integrated educational space and often face financial difficulties. Efforts to transmit traditional knowledge using indigenous pedagogy in the formal education system are centred mostly on nomadic children with involvement of indigenous teachers. School curricula may include a multicultural component, but indigenous peoples do not participate directly in the development of those curricula.

Learning indigenous languages as a subject is not available to some indigenous smaller-numbered peoples. In this regard, the proportion of students among indigenous peoples of the north who have the opportunity to learn their indigenous languages is close to 40 per cent and is currently decreasing.

While the right to education is outlined in legislation, the exercise of this right in practice remains a concern. During the last decade, education reforms have reinforced Russian as the state language. The nation-building agenda envisages education as the central tool for identity construction. The closure of small ungraded schools has reduced access to education in the regions and has had an impact on the use of indigenous languages as a means of instruction.

Institutional support for multicultural education is provided mainly at the regional level. It is the regional authorities that are responsible for taking into account the linguistic and ethnocultural demands of their populations. The level of support, including provision of funds, varies across regions and depends on economic conditions and the

¹³⁸ Government decree of 4 February 2009; Government order of 28 August 2009.



responsiveness of their authorities. In many instances, there is a lack of qualified teachers and up-to-date teaching materials. Specialized public bodies at the federal level provide structural support for coordinated efforts across regions; international support for efforts at the regional and national levels is also important in this regard.

In the Russian Federation, the Constitution and national legislation set out the rights of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the north. At the same time, the level of education of indigenous peoples is lower than the average, and indigenous students have little or no opportunities for learning their own languages. Many indigenous peoples must face the fact that their ancestral language and traditional values have or are in danger of being lost. Racism and xenophobia in society at large as well as dominant language ideologies reinforce stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards indigenous education.

While some good school models do exist in the Russian Federation, inadequate development of appropriate preschool facilities for indigenous children remains an issue. The nomadic kindergarten-school model represents an important contribution to the education of nomadic boys and girls.

Indigenous peoples must be encouraged to participate and to be involved in decision-making with regard to the development and implementation of educational programmes, curricula and school administration.

Recommendations

1. The Government should provide disaggregated data on the number of students who attend small ungraded schools, nomadic schools and boarding schools across the regions. These schools provide the opportunity for children to remain in their communities and receive an education locally. The use of boarding schools for nomadic indigenous children should be minimized;
2. Indigenous peoples must be encouraged to participate and to be involved in decision-making about the development and implementation of educational programmes, curricula and school administration. Indigenous parents need to be made aware of their right to request the inclusion of indigenous languages and other ethnocultural subject-matter;
3. There is a need to raise awareness among indigenous peoples of the opportunities for learning their own languages and to encourage the value of bilingualism. Authorities should ensure that education reform does not result in the diminishment of ethnically oriented education and the decrease of number of small ungraded schools which support indigenous students.

The State should facilitate the upgrading of small rural schools into centres of local cultural life, where indigenous peoples' languages and traditions are maintained, and should facilitate the development of networking among such schools;

4. Best practices and initiatives on appropriate teaching methodologies, training of qualified teachers and preparation of supplies and materials should be approved at the federal level and extended to the various regions of the country. The use of innovative models, such as nomadic schools and the language nest, should also be supported. Indigenous peoples' perspectives on pedagogy and knowledge should be included in the development of educational programmes and bilingual education, to ensure that all languages enjoy the same level of importance. The teaching administration should consider the psychological, linguistic and cultural demands of indigenous children; and
5. The authorities should ensure continuity in the provision of ethnocultural and polycultural education and should encourage all children to participate in such programmes.

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Conclusion
State of the
World's Indigenous Peoples:
Education



State of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Education

Conclusion

Indigenous peoples have always had their own way of generating and transmitting knowledge. Grounded in specific cultural contexts, their education systems have allowed them to survive as unique communities in a predatory environment. As indigenous peoples have been deprived of their territorial, economic and political autonomy, their customary beliefs and values have become vulnerable. Invariably, the loss of cultural identity and of pride in their languages, cultural practices and respect for elders has made indigenous peoples vulnerable to other pressures in the wider global culture.

Indigenous peoples have suffered severe challenges within the educational sector. In particular, indigenous women and girls usually have limited access to formal education. Indigenous students tend to have lower enrolment rates, higher dropout rates, higher absenteeism rates, higher repetition rates, lower literacy rates and poorer educational outcomes than their non-indigenous counterparts, with retention and completion being two important educational challenges. Although there has been progress in enrolment rates, access to education encompasses much more than enrolment.

Indigenous peoples suffer from multiple forms of deprivation, such as disproportional levels of multidimensional poverty, absence of health care, land dispossession and discrimination. While physical barriers – such as rugged geographical terrains and underdeveloped road infrastructure, as well as issues of mobility faced by nomadic communities – are also factors determining indigenous peoples' lower levels of education, it is cultural barriers that constitute a bigger challenge. In most cases, negative stereotyping and condescension when indigenous peoples are treated as primitive or culturally inferior function as potent drivers of marginalization. Experiences of

re-traumatization in the classroom reinforce and perpetuate stigmatization of indigenous children. A wide range of economic, social, cultural and political obstacles need be addressed holistically to enable success in learning and to promote systemic change in the areas of education legislation and governance, human resources, curriculum and assessment based on indigenous priorities and aspirations.

Indigenous peoples' right to education is affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,¹³⁹ and the rights to education and culture are protected in a variety of international instruments including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights,¹⁴⁰ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,¹⁴¹ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,¹⁴² the Convention on the Rights of the Child,¹⁴³ the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,¹⁴⁴ the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107) of the International Labour Organization,¹⁴⁵ and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization,¹⁴⁶ as well as the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) of the International Labour Organization.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, indigenous peoples' right to education is also increasingly recognized in national legislation.

Quality of education, as considered in articles 26 and 28 of ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), remains below desired levels for the vast majority of indigenous communities. Access and quality disparities between indigenous peoples and their non-indigenous counterparts, which are intensified in the upper levels of education, hinder upward social mobility of indigenous youth. In Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, there are gender disparities in access to quality education owing to indigenous girls' experience of domestic work, early marriage and teenage pregnancy, as well as child abuse, rape and other forms of physical violence.

There are also examples of the additional barriers to education faced by indigenous boys and men. In the Russian Federation, for example, indigenous men are more significantly involved in the traditional economy, while more women are oriented towards formal education. Similarly, in Alaska, more indigenous women than men obtain academic

¹³⁹ General Assembly resolution 61/295, annex.

¹⁴⁰ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

¹⁴¹ See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., vol. 660, No. 9464.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., vol. 328, No. 4738.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 1650, No. 28383.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., vol. 362, No. 5181.



degrees and are able to take advantage of opportunities generated by the increasingly information-based and globalized economy.

Support for education for indigenous peoples should encompass pursuit of two major goals, which in some cases may be conflicting. The first goal should be to provide indigenous children and youth with full access to the educational system, as a means of ensuring their social inclusion and that they are considered valuable members of mainstream society. The second goal should be to foster and preserve their sense of indigenous identity by implementing culturally appropriate strategies focused specifically on the issues that they face as indigenous peoples – and in particular because of that identity – while attempting to access the various levels of education. Although most formal processes of learning are based on non-indigenous values and knowledge systems, assimilation through educational integration must be avoided. Indeed, many indigenous peoples have come to see formal education as a mechanism for eradicating their cultures, languages and ways of life.

Assimilationist educational policies have often triggered cultural and generational conflicts between youth and elders, and threatened the social cohesion of indigenous communities. The gradual loss of the traditional identity of indigenous youth, which has never been fully replaced by a sense of belonging to the dominant national society, is an important determinant of their high rates of substance abuse and suicide. Colonization has entailed a denial of indigenous peoples' intellectual capacity, the benchmark by which academic qualifications and competencies are measured. Such standards are grounded in implicit, untested perceptions, and as dictated by those standards, indigenous peoples are expected to acquire skills they are assumed to lack, rather than to build on the strengths and real assets that they possess. Indigenous peoples are collectively the treasure bearers of much-needed experiential knowledge, and hold the potential to articulate visions of the future of education and development. They are not passive recipients of aid and external interventions. Instead, their own worldviews and pedagogies should be accepted to enable them to exert an influence over educational processes and systems. Educational reformers therefore have much to do to unpack the long-term effects of colonization, and to lead the way towards national reconciliation.

In the Arctic region, owing to historical cultural domination and uneven patterns of education attainment, many indigenous self-governing institutions still rely on external civil servants to fill many of their positions (see chap. II). Nonetheless, the role of traditional cultures in education has improved in the past few decades. Positive changes in governance, policies and legislation have been implemented thanks to the lobbying of an effective indigenous leadership. Adoption by the State of regulations that allow for teachers to be evaluated based on cultural standards is a good example of formalizing recognition of indigenous languages and cultures. To achieve educational decolonization, indigenous communities will be required to achieve the professional capacity to make necessary changes to curricula and to ensure that they align with indigenous

supportive policy and legislation. Along similar lines, indigenous teacher education programmes that support cultural competence have been established in some countries to assist educators in becoming better equipped to work in mainstream and in indigenous-controlled schools.

In Asia, there is an emerging recognition of the need for intercultural bilingual education and some positive policy and legislative developments. However, there has been little progress at the implementation level. There are numerous small-scale initiatives, promoted mainly by indigenous and non-governmental organizations, whose goal is to facilitate the development of curricula, textbooks and pedagogic approaches, but many of them are dispersed or unaligned with sectoral policies, have had low sustainability and have led to a certain fragmentation of the education sector. The region has yet to witness the creation of comprehensive and coherent intercultural bilingual education frameworks.

From the commitment expressed in the 2030 Agenda, there consequently emerges the opportunity to address indigenous peoples' issues in more developed regions, where they are often marginalized and subsist in pockets of poverty.

Throughout the Americas, legislation and policies provide for culturally and linguistically adequate education, and while implementation remains a challenge, extensive experience has been gained to enable, for example, the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and language in curricula. The progress achieved is attested by the development of learning objectives that accord with indigenous peoples' rights, the adoption of indigenous teaching methods that include traditional knowledge-holders as teachers and resource persons, and the training of indigenous teachers for bilingual and intercultural education. Other examples include the

establishment of partnerships between indigenous and non-indigenous educational institutions, family and community involvement in education as well as special measures to counter high dropout rates of indigenous children and youth.

In the African region, a small number of countries have made attempts to develop inclusive education programmes for indigenous peoples, in order to improve the situation with regard to equity in education. In some cases, mobile schools that target pastoralists' children have been developed. The learning cycles and curricula of mobile schools are designed to take account of the pastoralist production system and culture, and mobile school programmes include inputs from parents in respect of the learning process and in the selection of teachers. The children participate in the process of formulating the curriculum and in deciding on the learning approaches. In other countries, the right of marginalized groups including indigenous peoples to receive culturally appropriate education in their mother tongue during the first years of school has yet to be recognized.



The Pacific region offers encouraging examples of language immersion and revitalization programmes in secondary education, as well as development of culturally adequate curricula. Higher education and research have become an important focus for indigenous peoples in the Pacific who view higher education and research as a means of protecting their cultures and engaging their communities in knowledge production. While the building of indigenous research capacity remains a challenge, it is also seen as a step necessary to prevent the Pacific indigenous space from remaining the preserve of non-indigenous researchers, scholars and authors. Building qualifications in higher education alongside research capacity is one of the many challenges faced by indigenous peoples in Pacific economies that rely heavily on knowledge and technology innovation.

In the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia, and Central and Eastern Europe, a certain flexibility exists in respect of accommodating cultural and linguistic diversity in curricula at both the state and local levels. Similarly, there are some schools, including nomadic schools, that have adapted to diverse community situations. However, indigenous languages are taught mainly in the lower grades as an optional subject, which does not count in final examinations and therefore does not play a substantive role in the opening up of career and employment opportunities. Further, the linguistic and educational needs of indigenous peoples who live outside their traditional communities are not addressed. Although legislative provisions allow for the establishment of private educational institutions, indigenous peoples do not have the resources to avail themselves of such opportunities.

Respectful and appropriate representation of indigenous identities in the content of curricula is an effective means of contributing to the retention and intergenerational transmission of culture and language. The development of any education policies must include consultations with indigenous communities and representative bodies elected by the members of those communities. Indigenous peoples need to play a proactive role in designing, implementing and improving the kind of educational systems that work best for them and their children. The formulation of the content of textbooks by indigenous experts, the training and recruitment of teachers, the implementation of culturally responsive programmes of bi- and multilingual education for children and adults, and the establishment of language nests and nomadic schools are good examples of progress. Even the cross-cutting incorporation of indigenous concepts such as “good living” in the regular curriculum of schools, as a means of embracing social diversity and inclusiveness, generally improves mainstream education, regardless of whether indigenous children are attending those schools.

Linking education to other aspects of the learner’s life, such as health and the natural environment, and utilizing and integrating formal and non-formal learning styles and teaching methods, are alternative means of giving value to the oral wisdom of indigenous peoples and recognizing the importance of verbal communication in education.

The lack of indigenous scholars and researchers in the top echelons of academic institutions, as well as the absence of culturally appropriate teacher training and assessment institutions, leads ultimately to a deficit in the educational process. Indigenous scholars and researchers who support knowledge exchange in the collaborative networks of tertiary education institutions are needed to break new ground as well as set good examples for future indigenous learners.

In addition to the academic community, non-governmental organizations, international agencies and indigenous peoples' organizations need to work together closely – and strategically – and in alignment with Governments in order to enable further harmonization among the numerous donor-assisted education projects targeting indigenous peoples. The coordination and collaboration among different implementing and funding organizations and Governments call for comprehensive and better-articulated policy guidelines. Overarching principles, goals and common platforms for knowledge generation and sharing become particularly important given the enormous diversity of the contexts within which indigenous peoples live.

As stated throughout this publication, States play a crucial role in the quest for quality education for indigenous peoples. States are responsible for (a) the provision of the census data, country-specific statistics and data disaggregated by ethnicity and gender that are needed to portray accurately the situation of indigenous peoples in education and (b) implementation of responsive, accountable and inclusive policies designed to facilitate enhanced delivery of educational goods and services. In the outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 22 and 23 September 2014,¹⁴⁸ Member States of the United Nations committed to working with indigenous peoples to disaggregate data to better address the situation and needs of indigenous peoples. States need to implement positive national educational policy provisions and address any reasons for non-implementation. Financial and human resource mobilization is needed to support indigenous education. To assist indigenous communities in fulfilling their educational needs and exercise their rights, States must strengthen and refine the existing educational policies that are weak, inconsistent or problematic. By educating the public on the importance of indigenous education, Governments will enlist stronger support for their efforts.

This publication points out that official identification of indigenous peoples has a profound impact on recognition of indigenous peoples nationally and internationally. States often treat the term “indigenous peoples” as inapplicable or irrelevant to their contexts, thereby diverting attention away from the core issues that its usage internationally is meant to address. Where indigenous peoples are recognized officially, their

¹⁴⁸ General Assembly resolution 69/2 of Para. 10.



educational needs stand a much better chance of being included in constitutional provisions, and in laws and regulations.

States need to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to ratify international agreements such as the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization and align their policies with the key international instruments and the best practices which promote quality education for indigenous peoples. Recent development frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals failed to address the specific situation and challenges of indigenous peoples. In contrast, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹⁴⁹ bears the potential to address and correct previous deficiencies, as it addresses development in a comprehensive and universal manner. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes non-discrimination and affirms that no-one should be left behind, including indigenous peoples. From the commitment expressed in the 2030 Agenda, there consequently emerges an opportunity to address indigenous peoples' issues in more developed regions, where they are often marginalized and living in poverty.

Specifically, Sustainable Development Goal 4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The related targets focus comprehensively on access, affordability, quality and relevance of education services, extending from early childhood development and pre-primary education, to primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as vocational training. With respect to implementation, the targets emphasize the importance of adequate education facilities, scholarships and teacher training.

Under Goal 4, target 4.5, that is to reduce disparities related to gender and other bases of discrimination, specifically mentions indigenous peoples. In terms of respecting indigenous peoples' rights and self-determination, target 4.7 is of particular importance, as its aim is to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through human rights, gender equality and appreciation of cultural diversity. Adequate implementation of the 2030 Agenda can help overcome the multidimensional and systemic marginalization of indigenous peoples. If they are not to be left behind, the indigenous peoples must be consulted and participate in the dialogue, design and planning of national strategies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and national strategies to achieve Goal 4, which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education.

States and other actors need to adopt a human rights-based approach to keep the promise that indigenous peoples will not be left behind. Through the process of linking the relevant articles of the human rights instruments with the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 4, States and indigenous peoples can assemble a

¹⁴⁹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

“human rights-based guide” to indigenous peoples’ education, to inform the policies and strategies to be pursued up to 2030.

Furthermore, the relevance of the 2030 Agenda to the issue of indigenous peoples’ right to education goes beyond the specific goal on education. For example, targets 16.7 (Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels) and 16.10 (Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements), under Sustainable Development Goal 16, are equally meaningful.

For indigenous peoples, education is fundamental for the realization of other fundamental human rights. The right to education is also essential for development that is equitable and respectful of cultural diversity. Education is a means of reducing chronic poverty in indigenous communities and countering the entrenched discrimination faced by indigenous peoples. For women and girls, equal access to quality and culturally appropriate education is also a crucial means of ensuring their empowerment, and their full economic, social and political participation as members of their communities and States.

www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples



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