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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

INDIGENOUS INTERCULTURAL UNIVERSITIES IN LATIN AMERICA:  
INTERPRETING INTERCULTURALISM IN MEXICO AND BOLIVIA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

LUCIANO PEDOTA

CHICAGO, IL

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Finally, I'd like to thank the loves of my life, my wife Nancy and my daughters Amanda and Amalia, for the times I was absent in their lives during the completion of this work. I remain forever thankful for your support.

To Nancy, my beloved wife, and Amanda & Amalia, our daughters...

*A new generation bearing both academic training and community credentials, both indigenous and western knowledge has emerged – a generation that will certainly in the near future assume a new role as inter-cultural, inter-lingual and inter-actor ‘translators’ who manage, apply and generate knowledge from diverse worlds, worlds which are often asymmetrical and antagonistically shaped, but which are necessarily ever more closely related.*

Dietz & Mateos Cortés

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## ABSTRACT

Western Universities or other Institutions of Higher Education have been known for their universal or globalizing attributes. Such argument is based on the university's function of generating and disseminating accumulative knowledge that has been attained by highly trained individuals or professors using scientific or rigorous research methods. The newly created Indigenous Intercultural Universities in Latin America, which inception throughout the continent began in the early 1990s as a counter-hegemonic response to cultural domination and educational neglect from centuries of colonization, challenge the conventional conception of universities and their "universal" quality. Such universities seek to decolonize knowledge by generating knowledge that is relevant to the communities in which they are located. These intentions, notwithstanding, as preliminary findings reveal, do not necessarily exclude the knowledge and research methods imparted by long-established Western universities. Instead, these indigenous universities are being sought out by the creation of *Intercultural* institutions that, with the support of social scientists, NGOs, foundations, International Cooperation Agencies and governments, are attempting the complex task of training indigenous community leaders to be capable of hybridizing or carrying out a "dialogue of knowledges" (Mato, 2007) and research methods of what are ultimately two different, and often times, opposing and contentious paradigms, one stemming from conventional Western universities, referred to as *Modern (global)*, and another originating from Indigenous people, better known as *Traditional*

(local). Two specific programs offered by two intercultural universities, the *Training Program in Intercultural Bilingual Education for Andean Countries* (PROEIB Andes - UMSS)<sup>1</sup> and the Intercultural University of Veracruz (IUV) have been chosen in countries with strong colonial and indigenous legacy, Bolivia and Mexico, respectively. This study examines and compares how these two distinctive institutions are interpreting and carrying out their conception of intercultural, a term that lately has gained relevance in Latin America with respect to Higher Education because it enables such “dialogue of knowledges” among social actors from different cultures. Nonetheless, the concept of intercultural in this continent, not only appears to have multiple dimensions but it seems susceptible to different interpretations as well. By conducting a comparative study, this thesis will present how each of these institutions interprets the concept of intercultural hoping to highlight the commonalities and differences among them.

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<sup>1</sup> This program is housed in the *Universidad Mayor de San Simón*: <http://www.umss.edu.bo/unidades.php>

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Intercultural Education in Latin America is characterized by the contrasting, complex, and often times contentious relationship between the paradigms of Modernity and Tradition. These two orientations play a significant role in the social and cultural fabric throughout the continent and, by extension, in the field of Education. In the first case, as reflected by the cultural and educational orientations, policies and practices of dominant Western educational institutions. And, in the latter case, by the cultural and educational aspirations of historically colonized and subjugated indigenous people, customarily marginalized by such Western institutions due to their inability or refusal to acculturate and assimilate to a foreign dominant culture, who, in the last decades, have been asserting their right to a pertinent indigenous education.

There is, in a broad sense, much to be appreciated about both paradigms of Modernity and Tradition. The modern Western world, on the one hand, characterized by the perpetuation of liberal democratic values associated with individual freedom and cultural pluralism, as well as, by the scientific, material and technological development partially enabled by the research carried out by its universities. And, on the other hand, the Indigenous People recognized for their respect for nature, holistic practices, cultural preservation, and traditional ways of knowing, as well as, their efforts to contest oppressing hegemonic forces to bring about the cultural and linguistic revitalization

necessary to achieve greater political recognition, democratic participation, and what has been denominated as development with identity<sup>2</sup>.

These contrasting paradigms and their respective worldviews appear to converge and be negotiated in the recently created Latin American indigenous intercultural universities. In the last decades, different indigenous groups throughout Latin America, represented by their respective organizations and indigenous intellectuals, have found assistance from scholars, NGOs, foundations and International Aid Organizations to create universities that would be culturally relevant to them, thus, address the educational, economic and political needs of the indigenous people.

A first look at these universities depicts a very heterogeneous landscape. Daniel Mato (2008) who has looked at many of these universities states that in addition to providing indigenous people with access to Higher Education, in a context of recognition and promotion of cultural differences, such institutions offer...

innovative responses to some important challenges faced by contemporary Higher Education, around the world and in the region, such as those pertaining to the diverse modes of generating knowledge and the dialectic between research, teaching and learning, innovations and the solution of people's problems"<sup>3</sup> (Mato, 2008a, p.11).

Such "innovative responses", on the one hand, play an important role in the provision of educational programs that are culturally relevant to the indigenous people they are meant to serve. On the other hand, however, such responses are what render the

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<sup>2</sup> The term "Development with Identity" is a term used by what is being heralded as social inclusive neoliberalism. See Laurie, N. (2003).

<sup>3</sup> All translations in this thesis are the author's except where indicated.

heterogeneous landscape that characterizes Latin America indigenous universities. Such diversity ranges from the different ways they are conceived and constituted, the degrees and type of education they offer (formal and informal), the variety of course offering, curriculum designs, modes of teaching and learning to the different degree in which they incorporate scientific or Western knowledge and produce or use indigenous one.

Furthermore, the aspirations of many of these institutions are reflected in the annual report of an umbrella institution, the Indigenous Intercultural University (IIU)<sup>4</sup>, a network of Latin America's indigenous intercultural universities, which states that:

the people demand a different university, one that meets their needs, with academic programs that are based on their own spirituality and cosmovision which reappraise and further develop their knowledge and their own ways of knowing from the academic standpoint, avoiding that the university becomes an additional form of modern colonization (p.6).

Such statement, as revealing as it may be about the aims of such universities, should not be taken as a departure from Western knowledge and practices. Although there are indigenous intercultural universities that may depart altogether from conventional Western knowledge and methods to focus solely on the local ways of knowing, the intention of many of these universities is to appropriate western academic methods to further advance the acquisition of their own knowledge. In this regard the report further states that the Indigenous Intercultural University (IIU) “seeks to respond to the sociocultural, political, economic and educational proposals and expectations of the

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<sup>4</sup> See: <http://www.gtz.de/en/praxis/14065.htm>

Indigenous People, without overlooking the academic standards typical of Higher Education” (p.7).

The above declaration presents an interesting challenge. If we consider, from the perspective of those who defend indigenous people’s knowledge, that “all knowledge is influenced by the institutional and social context in which it is produced...[meaning that] there is no universal knowledge...it is all relative to the conditions in which it is produced” (Mato, 2008, p. 106), efforts by indigenous intercultural universities to train indigenous leaders to develop their local knowledge, through the appropriation and application of methods typically employed by universities of Western orientation, represents a new kind of thinking. Such approach, described in this paper as the “dialogue of knowledges”, requires new frameworks, theories, concepts, methods of conducting research as well as teaching and learning praxis. This new way of conducting indigenous academic research and educational efforts are currently being developed by indigenous intercultural universities, with the assistance of academics, NGOs and International Cooperation Agencies and governments through “intercultural” approaches, a concept that tolerates multiple appropriations, conceptualizations and interpretations.

To be sure, the different interpretations of the term are not uncommon especially since the concept and its discourse possesses a migratory nature (Cortes, 2009, p.34). In Europe, for example, where the specific terms of intercultural education and pedagogy have been used extensively in official documents, books and schools’ bylaws, Portera (2008) notes that the term needs conceptual clarity. He states that there has been a “failure to provide a clear semantic definition or distinct epistemological foundation for

the concept” (p.484), a situation that has led researchers in the field of education to use *transcultural*, *multicultural* and *intercultural education* interchangeably to describe similar [educational] approaches and from time to time quite different ones (Gundara & Portera, 2008, p.466).

From the Latin American perspective, such difference in interpretations has been reflected by Williamson (2004), a professor from the Department of Education at the Universidad de la Frontera in Temuco, Chile, in a paper about Indigenous Intercultural Education titled “Multicultural Education, Intercultural Bilingual Education, Indigenous Education, or Intercultural Education?” Although the debate seems to have somewhat settled by the adoption of *Indigenous Intercultural Education* or *Intercultural Bilingual Education* (IBE), terms that are used interchangeably, Williamson’s study denotes the varied interpretations and conceptualizations that permeate this area of study and underscores the complexity that has been brought about by the cultural and educational demands of indigenous people as a result of the revival and redefinition of indigenous ethnic identities in the context of Latin America post-indigenismo.

Moreover, the notion of intercultural education in Latin countries, as Williamson (2004) describes, tends to be malleable to different interpretations due to its appropriation from different indigenous groups with dissimilar historical and contextual realities. Mato (2008b) explains that the concept refers, in a general sense, to the relationships between individuals or groups who are culturally different. He clarifies that, in the field of Intercultural Bilingual Education, the concept is used as if the term in itself implies relationships of mutual respect, equity and appreciation, pointing out that, although the

term has been appropriated correctly by indigenous leaders to advocate policy and design programs, the reality is that intercultural relationships in Latin America have historically been tainted by conflict and not by mutual appreciation or respect for diversity and equity.

Mato (2008a, 2009) who has conducted extensive research with the help of 56 researchers in 11 Latin American countries, identified over 50 indigenous universities and chose to examine 36 of them. The criteria the author used to select these intercultural institutions consisted on whether they had been constituted explicitly with the goal of learning as much from indigenous ways of knowing as from Western knowledge. Moreover, the author states that the definition of intercultural he favored in his research transcend the folklorist interpretation of the term provided by multiculturalism, thus, going beyond the genuine and widespread celebrations of cultural diversity, usually represented by cultural expressions (customs, foods, dances, etc.) to delve more deeply into the recognition of the inherent cultural diversity of humankind pertaining to culture and worldviews, including “differences in value systems, accumulation of knowledge methods and learning modalities” (p.16).

Many indigenous intellectuals and academics believe in the need to go beyond the exotic and folklorist notion of multiculturalism that promotes genuine celebration and appreciation of cultural diversity - traditionally promoted by European, Canadian, Australian and American multiculturalism – to create spaces and programs for truthful and ingenious intercultural interaction that can result in a much more intricate, involved, innovative and transformational educational model where individuals, bearer of ideas,

concepts and methods stemming from diverse and opposing paradigms or cultural orientations, can converge to combine, exchange, transfer, construct and hybridize their respective knowledges.

The above idea is best captured by Camilleri (1985), as cited by Portera (2008), who asserts that “societies became all pluricultural and can be defined as multicultural; in the sense of the presence of people with different norms, values, religions and ways of thinking. Educational interventions, however, should be intended as intercultural: differences and similarities are taken in consideration, brought into contact and bring about interaction.”

How such interaction can be brought into existence remains a task to be completed by educational researchers. However, given the historical inequities and asymmetrical relationships of Latin American societies, reflective of their colonial and postcolonial past, the newly created intercultural indigenous universities of Latin America could harbor interesting insight on the subject of how truly equitable intercultural interaction between culturally diverse actors and their respective orientations can be accommodated in Higher Education institutions. Thus, this thesis examines the ways in which indigenous intercultural universities are interpreting and realizing, as previously mentioned, the concept of intercultural through the interaction and prominent “dialogue of knowledges” which has been conceived as a way to bring together, integrate or hybridize different ways of knowing.

In order to do so, it is important to outline the different dimensions in which some intercultural universities seem to carry out such interaction and dialogue in order to better

articulate their concept of intercultural. Mendoza Zuany (2009), in her study of the *Intersaberes Project*<sup>5</sup>, provides a model which offers three useful dimensions: 1) The Intercultural Dimension which involves studying and analyzing the dialogue between different cultures and world views 2) The Inter-lingual Dimension which focuses on the languages used by the different actors and 3) The Inter-actoral Dimension which takes aim at the interaction between academic, community and organizational actors. Of these three dimensions, the Inter-cultural and the Inter-actoral have been employed to carry out the study and examination of the intercultural indigenous universities of this thesis.

Moreover, in addition to these two dimensions and as a complementary tool of examination, this study has attempted to identify what has been emerging, in general, as an important concept in cultural studies and, more specifically, in the examination of indigenous intercultural universities, the concept of cultural and educational hybridizations. In my view, the study of such “hybridizing processes”, defined by García Canclini (2005) as the “socio-cultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices” (p.xxv), will play an important role in the times ahead. Such studies will allow social researchers better discern and understand the levels of complexity and heterogeneity that will more likely be rendered by the intense transferring, borrowing, appropriating or reformulating of ideas, models and practices by highly interconnected and interacting entities from both global and local realms or, better yet, from modern and

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<sup>5</sup> *Intersaberes Project* aims to analyze the process of construction, combination, hybridization, exchange, transfer of knowledge emerging from different contexts and actors (western, indigenous, rural, urban, formal, informal, mestizo, academic, non-academic, etc.) involved in the operation of the academic programme of the UVI (See Dietz 2007).

traditional ways of knowing. To be sure, the study of hybrids is not a novelty. It has been an ancient characteristic of historical development ever since civilizations came into contact with one another. However, as Canclini (2005) states, the last decade of the twentieth century has seen analysis of hybridization become more widespread in the treatment of a broad range of cultural processes. He points out, for instance, that the study of hybridizations “has become extremely useful to understand particular forms of conflict generated in recent cross-cultural contact” (p. xxv). Moreover, the concept of hybridity plays an important role in this study of indigenous intercultural universities because, as Hickling-Hudson (2006) has stated, Western thought and practices have a tendency to ignore global hybridity by excluding the diversity, complexity and sophistication of cultures embodied by intercultural ideas (p.205). In contrast with such statement, this study delves into the inherent complexity of cultural diversity, the dialogue of knowledges and multi and interdisciplinary work, to identify cultural, educational and disciplinary hybrids as a way to develop a better understating of the concept of intercultural in education by indigenous universities.

Consequently, the indigenous intercultural universities of Latin America represent an important object of study for examining the inter-cultural, inter-lingual, the inter-actoral interaction or convergence as well as the hybridization processes that results from the interaction and the “dialogue of knowledges” between actors and institutions who have traditionally related within asymmetrical relationships. Having originated in nations with strong colonial legacy as a response to centuries of cultural, social, political, and epistemic domination and subjugation by the dominant groups, indigenous intercultural

universities provide the ideal prototype for a study that seeks to understand educational interpretations of intercultural.

Many Latin American states possess some form of indigenous intercultural universities or Intercultural and Bilingual Education (IBE) program in Higher Education to address their Indigenous Education problem, either because they have created them through their Ministry of Education or with the assistance from academic institutions, foundations, NGOs or International Cooperation Agencies. Aikman (1997) states that such programs all developed “out of a common concern for the maintenance and strengthening of an indigenous ‘way of life’ which was being eroded and eradicated through a variety of ethnocidal processes including monolingual and ‘monocultural’ schooling.” Moreover, the author explains that participants of these programs are beginning to see such initiatives not only as a strategy to recuperate and evaluate elements of indigenous culture, but as a way to appropriate cultural elements from other groups considered by the community to meet their interest and provide new alternatives. Aikman’s assertion is a testament that these institutions have been conceived from multilogical and multilingual perspectives, thus, seeking to simultaneously revitalize indigenous ways and adopt exogenous cultural and educational elements.

Considering that this is a thesis in Comparative Education, this study examines and compares two programs offered by indigenous intercultural universities. The first program will be the Specialization Course in Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) offered by the *Training Program in Intercultural Bilingual Education for Andean Countries* (hereafter PROEIB-Andes). Mainly sponsored by Germany’s multilateral aid

agency, Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, better known as GTZ, through their Coordination Office for Indigenous People in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>6</sup>, the program has become “a recognized brand of excellence in IBE development efforts (Taylor, 2006, p.14 as cited per Cortina 2010), serving indigenous leaders from five countries: Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador y Peru. This university stands out because it is the only indigenous university of its kind that brings together indigenous representatives from five countries.

The second program examined in this study is the Bachelor in Intercultural Management for Development (Licenciatura en Gestión Intercultural para el Desarrollo – LGID) offered by the Intercultural University of Veracruz (hereafter IUUV) in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, where efforts to decentralize higher education institutions and provide culturally pertinent higher education for indigenous people have translated into the creation of an intercultural program within an already established public university. Designed based on the demands of indigenous organizations and other constituents, such initiative has led to the diversification of curriculum content and teaching and learning approaches in one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse states in that country (Dietz & Cortes, 2010). Operating through four different campuses located in the dense indigenous regions of the state, the bachelor’s program is designed to train students to act as...

intercultural mediators to deal with diversity... [where] the education process implies a potential for inter- or cross-cultural dialogue, which resides in these emerging and hybrid institutions. These institutions have started to construct new bridges between conventional, ‘western’, academic knowledge, on the one hand,

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<sup>6</sup> Retrieve from: <http://www.gtz.de/en/praxis/14065.htm>

and local, community-rooted, indigenous knowledge, on the other...[a model which] implies recovering the value of indigenous knowledge to become part of the course programs and academic curricula parallel to the ‘western’ knowledge that universities have traditionally taught (Mendoza Zuany, 2009, p.215).

As we can observe from the brief descriptions presented above, which offer a glance at the type of training indigenous students are receiving, the study of these intercultural indigenous universities has great potential in revealing the manner in which a “dialogue of knowledges,” between dominant and traditionally dominated actors, and their respective ways of knowing, is being accommodated to create cultural relevant programs designed to address the educational needs of indigenous people in multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic societies.

*Review of Literature on Multicultural, Intercultural and Bicultural Education in Latin America*

In Latin America, the studies that analyze the problems associated with the historical encounters and dialogues between different cultures that coexist and interact in the same territory, as well as, the policies and programs that seek to address such problems have fallen under a wide variety of educational denominations including Multicultural Education, Intercultural Bilingual Education, Indigenous Education, Ethnoeducation, Intercultural Education, Bicultural Education, Diversity and Pluralism.

Williamson (2004) explains:

...this conceptual variety reflects not only different theories but also diverse historical contexts of appropriation, development and

application of categories referring to the plurality of identities and languages, the fundamental contradictions between cultures in [pluricultural] societies, as well as, the plurality of identities that are progressively being constituted during the development phase of nations, indigenous people and societies at large (p.23).

The multiple interpretations and conceptualization of such encounters by diverse humans in different locations and times means that there isn't one concept that dominates the debate but many that coexist and are articulated depending on the historical and social characteristics of the society and, more specifically, on the different actors (academics, indigenous leaders, government officials, NGOs, International Aid Agencies, etc.) who employ the term. However, three concepts appear to dominate the debate and find preference in political and academic circles: *Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE)*, *Indigenous (Intercultural) Education* and *Multicultural Education*.

A brief analysis of these terms must begin with the least favored of the three among Latin America circles (excluding perhaps Mexico): Multicultural Education. Although there are scholars who associate the preceding two terms – IBE and Indigenous Education – with Multiculturalism (Dietz , Mendoza-Zuany & Téllez 2008; Schmelkes 2008), the concept of multicultural education is rarely used in Latin America by Indigenous people - its predilection, rather, appears to be found among Anglo-Saxons and European countries and some Latin American scholars devoted to cultural and educational studies. Despite the fact that Cultural Diversity - an important tenet of Multiculturalism - is central to both concepts, it appears that the reason for its neglect by indigenous leaders has to do, as Ansión (2008) points out, with the fact that Multiculturalism is more concerned with the “diversity” component among people

whereas Interculturalism focuses more on the relationship or interaction between those who are different. Schmelkes (2010), a prominent voice on the subject from one of the leading countries (Mexico) on this topic explains that the current process of globalization forces multiculturalism to be more than coexistence in territories of diverse cultures and to become more about “convivencia”. She explains:

Multiculturalism speaks to us about coexistence between different cultures, or between actors that belong to different cultures. It doesn't tell us anything about the relationship between the actors that represent them. This is the role of Interculturalism, which studies the relationship between members of the different cultures (p.25).

Similarly, also highlighting a contrast with Interculturality, Neu (2008) states:

Multicultural education is not identical to intercultural education given that the former stems from the right to express one's own identity to achieve public recognition of the group's traditions, customs and values...[which] Multiculturalism, as a political ideology, supports...[whereas] Interculturality focuses on the approachment (acercamiento) of beliefs, positions, and customs, seeking acceptance of values of tolerance and respect (p.217).

These notions are also supported by Tubino (2005) who, as pointed out previously, agrees that the concept of intercultural education allows for the emphasis to be in the communication, the contact and the interrelation of two languages and, in particular, two cultures. Finally, Ansión (2008), also making emphasis on the “interaction” but articulating a strong element of equality, states that interculturality can also be viewed as a project that aims at establishing exchange relationships (*relaciones de intercambio*) under equal conditions between those who, for reasons associated with “historical encounters, are obligated to relate to each other with frequency and

intensity...in relationships characterized by conflict, incomprehension, mutual contempt and, particularly, by the hegemony of one group over the other”(p.2).

Williamson (2004) states that in Latin America of the Andes and in Chile the concept of Multicultural Education tends to be ignored or neglected and even rejected mainly due to a matter of “Latin American identity, concerning the indigenous political struggle and the refutation of critical and transformational multicultural tendencies emerging from Critical Pedagogy and the Civil Right Movements from North America” (p.26). Citing Chiodi and Bahamondes, the author points out that *Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE)*, the most commonly used term of the three and widely accepted in Latin America, equates to saying *Indigenous Education*, meaning “an educational model for and by the indigenous people” characterized by “the full participation of indigenous language and culture to the teaching and learning process.” (p.25). Williamson’s assertion sounds truthful. As the author of this proposal observed, the term is often times used to refer to the educational initiatives of indigenous people as a whole without necessarily making a distinction between the different levels of education (primary, secondary or tertiary). Consequently, the term is both utilized to advocate for a pertinent education for indigenous people as well as a catch phrase or political tool to refer to the policies and programs designed by and for indigenous people. More importantly, depending on the context that it is used, as Williamson (2004) points out, IBE can have two meanings that are not contradictory but rather go hand-in-hand with each other: 1) the full incorporation of a national minority’s language and culture into the educational process and 2) the incorporation of the political perspectives of such minority groups as a way to challenge,

both, the assimilationist model of education imposed upon indigenous people, as well as, the relationship model between state – national society – indigenous people.

Moreover, López and Küper (2000) indicate that, when their study was written, IBE and other programs that share similar principals were taking place globally in 17 countries under newly devised progressive educational legislation which recognizes the cultural and linguistic rights of indigenous people. The authors state that 11 Latin American nation-states had modified their constitutions to embrace their culturally diverse and heterogeneous character, thus, recognizing themselves as pluri or multiethnic societies. More importantly, this constitutional change represents an enormous challenge to the educational system of the nation-state since, as the authors point out:

IBE is not applied as a monolithic model or a single homogenous strategy directing educational development in indigenous area. The specific forms that IBE generally takes on keep a direct relationship with the socio-linguistic and socio-educational characteristics of the communities in which they are applied.

It is this notion of IBE being born and shaped from a direct relationship with the distinct indigenous communities that they are supposed to serve which, as mentioned before, opens the door to a heterogeneous landscape and presents a need to study Indigenous Intercultural Universities and the way some of these institutions are interpreting and realizing their conception of intercultural. As explained by Dietz (2009), citing Mignolo (2000), in regards to the Intercultural University of Veracruz:

...intercultural universities...are trying to diversify supposedly universalist academic ‘knowledge’ in order to relate it to local knowledge, to subaltern, ‘ethno-scientific’ and alternative knowledge, all which mutually hybridize each other and thus

create new , diversified, ‘entangled’ and ‘globalized’ canons of knowledge (p.2).

The hybridization of two different forms of knowledge, and their respective research and teaching methods, a process which involves “inter-cultural”, “inter-lingual” and “inter-actor” dimensions, appears to hold great promises for the field of intercultural education.

### *Research Question*

In a broad sense, the present study has focused on the intercultural interpretations by the indigenous intercultural universities being studied. It has looked at how each university, having appropriated the term, interprets their vision and attempts to realize their conceptualization of intercultural. Important to this inquiry has been two dimensions mentioned in this proposal and provided by Mendoza Zuany (2009): the inter-cultural and the inter-actoral dimensions. Consequently, the inquiry driving this thesis was concerned with the following major question:

How are the universities being examined in this study conceptualizing and attempting to realize interculturalism in the production and hybridization of knowledge as well as in the promotion and impartment of such knowledge as they train local indigenous students?

The above major question naturally resulted in the following minor questions:

- What types of programs/degrees are being offered by these universities?
- What orientations or specializations and courses are part of the program?

- Who are the instructors teaching in these universities - what are their professional backgrounds?
- What type of research is being conducted by professors and students who teach and attend these universities?
- What are some of the central issues encountered in the interaction of academics, students, institutional representatives and community members as they implement their interpretation of intercultural?
- What are the different interpretations, if any, of intercultural by the universities being studied?

### *Methodology*

The principal method of research has been the analysis of documents such as institutional research studies and reports, articles and informal commentaries from newsletters and other publications from universities, foundations, forums, etc., as well as, program descriptions and materials from course offerings, workshops and seminars. Many of these materials are accessible through conventional academic journals and databases, as well as, websites from the universities being studied in this paper<sup>7</sup>, International Aid Agencies such as GTZ<sup>8</sup>, foundations and other less conventional websites. One of the advantages of doing research in this area of study – Latin America Indigenous Education - is that much of the literature is available through academic sites such as *Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal*

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<sup>7</sup> Available at: PROEIB: <http://bvirtual.proeibandes.org/bcat.php> and UVI: <http://www.uv.mx/uvi/universidad/identidad.html>

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <http://www.gtz.de/en/686.htm>

(Redalyc)<sup>9</sup> and the *Latin American and Caribbean Social Science Virtual Library* – CLACSO<sup>10</sup> which do not require a subscription to access their material. It should be mentioned that accessing publications through these sites represents an effort to include the perspectives of Latin American intellectuals and indigenous people.

The aim is to get several perspectives on the university programs being studied from different sources. Also, as mentioned previously in this proposal, the “inter-cultural” and the “inter-actor” dimensions – used in this study to determine each university’s interpretation of intercultural – has served as the lenses through which all the documentation gathered has been analyzed. The lenses of “inter-cultural” has helped to identify the epistemological elements of the programs and help determine the type of knowledge that is being sought out or imparted in courses, research topics, and overall program offering. And, finally, the “inter-actor” lenses has enable this study o focus on the actors (program director, professors, instructors and researchers ) by looking at their professional backgrounds and roles in each of the programs. Such dimensional approach will not only provide a filter for this study through which to screen other aspects of the organization (structural, financial, etc) that are irrelevant for the aims of this study, but more importantly, it will help answer the *What?, Who? and How?* questions needed to determine each university’s interpretation of intercultural.

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<sup>9</sup> Available at: <http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/>

<sup>10</sup> Available at : <http://www.biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/ingles>

### *Limitations*

The limitations of this study were inherent in the method of document analysis. Although such method provides rich and valuable insight, it is also true that there can be discrepancies between what a program is designed to accomplish and what actually materializes. This was true and documented, for example, in the case of PROEIB-Andes where students express some degree of disenchantment regarding the gap between the discourse and the praxis of the program which they claimed made too much emphasis on western knowledge (Garcia, 2008, p.20). It should be noted, however, that the purpose of this study was not evaluative, thus, it did not seek to ascertain the effectiveness of the program, and rather, it aimed to discern how the concept of intercultural is being interpreted by these institutions through their documents, curriculums and research professors' professional background. A field study as part of the overall research project would have been more appropriate specially to gather more specific information about the program in its implementation having to do with the way that different forms of knowledge converge. This notion was particularly evident in the examination of the interlingual dimension which, although originally considered part of the research plans, it was left out of the present study considering that there was no substantial evidence in the documentation analyzed that would serve as confirmation of the role indigenous languages play in these institutions. In order to overcome this and other limitations, research work by scholars who have done field work or examine the university programs being studied such as Garcia (2005) and Limachi Pérez (2008) for PROEIB, and

Mendoza Zuany, R. (2009) and Dietz, G., & Mateos Cortes, L. (2010) for Intercultural University of Veracruz, will be given a prominent voice as part of the overall analysis.

## CHAPTER TWO

COMMENTS REGARDING COUNTRY AND PROGRAM SELECTION, PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE (IK)

Before examining the programs being studied in this paper it is important to share some comments regarding the approach on how the countries (Bolivia and Mexico) and programs chosen for this study were selected. Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru are the countries with the largest indigenous representation in Latin America<sup>11</sup>. Of these five nations, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador are part of the Andean group of nations in the southern part of the continent; whereas Guatemala is part of Central America; and Mexico, geographically speaking, is part of North America thus it has a unique standing among Latin American nations specially due to its proximity to the economically powerful and influential United States. Moreover, although Bolivia has the second largest population of indigenous people set at 5,358,107 inhabitants, in terms of percentage of the overall population, the country stands as the largest indigenous populated nation at 66.2 percent. By contrast, Mexico, with an indigenous population of 9,504,184 (almost twice as large as that of Bolivia), ranks as the bearer of the largest indigenous population in Latin American, although, with a mere 9.4 percent of indigenous people in relation to its overall population (López, 2009, p.3). In short, Bolivia has the largest percentage of indigenous people in relation to overall population but Mexico has the largest number of indigenous people living in its territory.

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<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from: [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNACQ888.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACQ888.pdf)

More importantly, however, for the purpose of this study, Bolivia and Mexico, given their pluri-ethnic, pluri-cultural and pluri-lingual characteristics, have played, as much of the literature denotes, important roles in their respective geographical realms in the development and implementation of Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) in Higher Education.

Bolivia's early IBE initiatives began with grassroots indigenous movements by the rural teacher's union in the early eighties and by the Bolivian Worker's Union and the Peasant's Labor Organization in the late eighties who insisted that the education system needed to reflect the country's linguistic and cultural diversity. In response, UNICEF initiated the Bilingual Intercultural Education Project (PEIB) which implemented bilingual intercultural education between 1990 and 1995 (Ischra, 2007). In 1996, after some preliminary regional meetings which took place in Lima, Peru, between indigenous intellectuals and IBE academics from Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile, the PROEIB-Andes began educational activities aimed at improving the quality of IBE in the Andean sub-region, which they determined to carry out from the Universidad Mayor de San Ramón by providing academic training to indigenous students, school teachers, and community leaders. Today, Bolivia stands as the nation with the most current and far-reaching efforts in the implementation of IBE (Taylor, 2008, p.188).

Mexico, by contrast, a nation known for its institutional efforts to build a national identity through the customarily cultural homogenization of its citizenry, modified its constitution in 1992 defining the country as a multicultural and plurilingual nation. This extraordinary event led to the creation in 2001 of the Ministry of Education's General

Coordination for Intercultural and Bilingual Education, a government agency conceived to contribute to building a more equitable and just society by improving and broadening the educational opportunities of indigenous people and by promoting more equal and mutually respectful relations between groups of different cultures.<sup>12</sup> In 2003, Mexico created its first indigenous intercultural university<sup>13</sup>. By 2008, ten intercultural universities were operating serving 7,000 students with an unexpected higher percent of female students (Schmelkes, 2009, p.12). The Intercultural University of Veracruz was selected for this study among the Mexican intercultural universities because it is the only institution created within a well established and prestigious public university in the country that not only follows its own model (ibid. p.11) but has published much of its research on indigenous intercultural university.

Additionally, the current study should also be preceded by some comments regarding the situation of conventional universities in Latin America. Many researchers and intellectuals believe, albeit from the left side of the ideological spectrum, that these institutions of higher education, largely of public disposition, should reflect the plurilingual and pluricultural character - as recently denoted in many constitutional reforms throughout the continent - of the societies in which they function. Critics of these institutions, such as Mato (2008, october), argue that many universities in Latin America are still part of the colonial legacy. Consequently, the author asserts, they are in need of a long overdue reform that can transform these universities into more relevant institutions

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<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from: <http://eib.sep.gob.mx/cgeib/index.php/la-cgeib>

<sup>13</sup> The first indigenous intercultural university of Mexico was the Indigenous Autonomous University of Mexico created in the late nineties before the inception of the General Coordination for Intercultural and Bilingual Education office but it was not recognized until 2003 and joined the network of intercultural universities until 2005 (Schmelkes, 2009, p.11).

that reflect the cultural diversity typical of the societies they are part of. A reformation of these institutions should seek to include “the worldviews, languages, ways of knowing, knowledge production methods, value systems, needs and demands of indigenous and people of African descent” (p.2).

It is important to point out that the last significant transformation of Latin American conventional public universities, known as the Cordoba Reform, took place in 1918. Back then, such reform represented the first confrontation between a society that began to experiment changes in its social structure and a university stagnated in an obsolete model (Tunnermann Bernheim, 2008). Before then, society and conventional academia had few contradictions, meaning, that the university served the interests of the dominant classes of the times. Although many of the achievements of that reform are very much in place today, most notably, the autonomous and democratic character of public universities as well as universal access policy, many Latin American universities, similarly to institutions of higher education around the world, have had to adapt to the far reaching influences of today’s intense globalization processes. Such institutions, in addition to having to adjust to the demands of the market, as Moncayo (2008) reveals, need to transform the “...‘the rigidity’ of knowledges, disciplines and professions to open the door to multidisciplinary, flexible and associative competences.” As we will see, these are important concepts for indigenous intercultural universities which, given the holistic approach that sets them apart, reflect many of these characteristics.

Finally, some comments should be mentioned about Indigenous Knowledge (IK) considering that it plays a central role within intercultural universities. The term

Indigenous has different interpretations and uses. Generally speaking, as described by the Oxford Dictionaries, it means originating or occurring naturally in a particular place. It is commonly used to describe that which is rooted, native, traditional or local. However, it has also been used in a derogatory manner in terms of being routinely characterized by the Western paradigm as primitive and wild; a representation that has evoked condescension from many Westerners and provoked very little appreciation for the type of knowledge and insight that indigenous people can provide (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999, p.3). Knowledge, in simple terms, can be defined as the awareness or understanding of a practical or theoretical thing or fact (Mwadime 1999, p.247). Moreover, in citing Castellano (2000), Dei states that there are three broad aspects of aboriginal knowledge relevant to the discourse of all IK: *traditional knowledge* recognized as the inter-generational knowledge; *empirical knowledge* which is based on the careful observations of the surrounding environments; and lastly, *revealed knowledge*, usually provided through dreams visions and intuitions (2000, p. 114). Finally, the author describes some of the primary characteristics of IK (in contrast with academic knowledge) that can be useful in better understanding the topics explored and examined in this paper: IK are personal/personalized (no universal claims)<sup>14</sup>; they are experientially based and depend on subjective experiences (as opposed to objective ones); orally transmitted (no always written); holistic and relational (as opposed to fragmented and isolated disciplines); grounded in an awareness and deep appreciation of the cosmos (grounded in methods, tools and theories), among many other differences.

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<sup>14</sup> The comments in parenthesis have been inserted by the author of this paper to highlight the contrast between the different orientations and are not part of the original text.

Considering that the possibility of a magical return to an uncontaminated pre-colonial past are imaginary and, on the contrary, the prospective of a future characterized by a heterogeneity constituted by that which is indigenous, modern and post-modern, the study of the intercultural, and the cultural hybridities that will more likely stemmed from it, become increasingly important and imperative for the understanding of intercultural encounters and dialogues.

## CHAPTER THREE

PROGRAM FOR TRAINING IN INTERCULTURAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION  
FOR ANDEAN COUNTRIES (PROEIB-ANDES) – BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The Program for Training in Intercultural Education for the Andean Countries (PROEIB-Andes) is the product of a series of initiatives taken by institutions and organizations from Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru that are implemented from the program's headquarters in Cochabamba, Bolivia as a result of a technical cooperation bilateral agreement between the nations of Bolivia and Germany. The institutions responsible for implementing such initiative are the Universidad Mayor de San Simón (UMSS), a higher education institution located in Quechua territory in Cochabamba, Bolivia; and the German Federal Republic, through its international aid agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). Subscribed to this agreement are the ministries of education of the above mentioned countries, including 20 universities and other indigenous organizations from the region. As of the year 2000, having received a formal request from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Argentina has been added as part of the group. The result is a network of indigenous organizations, ministries of education and universities committed to the advancement of Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) in the region.<sup>15</sup>

The inception of the program began in 1993 with a series of meetings attended by all the participating universities. The purposes of the meetings, which took place in Lima, Peru, was to find solutions to many of the problems faced by IBE in the region but, more

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<sup>15</sup> Retrieved from: <http://programa.proeibandes.org/programa/>

specifically, to address “the training of human resources that the educational systems of Latin America require in order to meet with pertinence the socio-cultural and socio-linguistic diversity that characterizes them” (López, 2002, p.1). Having collectively chosen Bolivia and the University Mayor of San Simon’s Faculty of Humanities and Science of Education as the headquarters, the university began its activities in March of 1996.

López (2002) explains that PROEIB-Andes is upheld by the existence of approximately 40 million indigenous people in Latin America as well as by a long history and tradition of bilingual education programs and projects which date back at least 50 years and were implemented in indigenous regions where vernacular languages are still spoken. The author argues that such programs originated as an institutionalized response to the cultural, linguistic and learning differences that characterized the indigenous people who are known to suffer from the greatest educational deficits and the highest indexes of low quality education in the region. The supranational or subregional aspect of PROEIB-Andes is justified by the characteristics of the ethnic groups it serves whose ethnic-cultural boundaries do not coincide with the geographical distribution of the different nations – many indigenous people are separated in different groups by the current state borders.

Consequently, PROEIB-Andes was conceived as a need to consolidate indigenous people’s IBE efforts in the region and to contribute to the development and improvement of the quality of education in context of cultural and linguistic diversity (Garcia, 2008, p.10). Serving students from the aforementioned five Andean countries, the program

represents a transnational space for the training of students to act as protagonists in indigenous development and full participants in the process of implementing the educational, political and social reforms of their people (Garcia, 2005, p.23).

In 2007, PROEIB-Andes stood recognized as a widely acknowledged educational research program that offered human resources development as well as research and consulting functions with the fundamental objective of transforming educational practices of people working in Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) programs in both formal and informal settings. With this aim in mind the program has four areas of action including Human Resources Development, IBE Research Development, Knowledge Management and IBE Professional Development Network.

Moreover, nowadays, the institution is recognized by the Executive Committee of Bolivian Universities as an institution that offers: a) a masters in Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE); b) a specialization course in IBE and c) a program in indigenous leadership development. This study focuses on the specialization course that is offered through the network of institutions, centers or programs that fall under the Universidad Indígena Intercultural (UII)<sup>16</sup>, an organization promoted by the Fondo Indígena<sup>17</sup> which acts as the umbrella institution for some of the most relevant indigenous universities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

It is important to clarify the structural design of this regional network and PROEIB-Andes' role in it since this is a relatively new arrangement between the UII/Fondo Indígena and PROEIB-Andes. Building up on its trajectory and reputation,

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<sup>16</sup> See: <http://www.reduii.org/>

<sup>17</sup> See: <http://www.fondoindigena.org/index.shtml>

PROEIB-Andes acts as coordinator of the IBE program within the network by offering a Specialization Course in IBE. In a personal communication with the program's coordinator some ambiguous understanding of such partnership were clarified and more precision was provided regarding the structural design of such partnership:

The PROEIB-Andes continues to be an independent program of specialization in EIB for the region installed in the Universidad Mayor de San Simón. El Fondo Indígena, with assistance from the German cooperation agency, is the umbrella organization of the Universidad Indígena Intercultural (UII) project which brings together some indigenous universities through a network. The PROEIB-Andes executes a Specialization Course in IBE within the framework of UII and, by extension, with the Fondo Indígena. Nonetheless, as PROEIB [sic], we have other programs, courses, and agreements in which there is no relation with the Fondo Indígena. Other universities are related to the Fondo Indígena in a similar way - in the framework of UII - and teach other courses including Indigenous Rights, Intercultural Health, etc. ( Arrueta, J.A., 2011).

Having established clarity about the roles of PROEIB-Andes and UII, it is important to outline the programs that constitute the network because they reveal the regional dimension of this effort as well as the different types of programs being offered transnationally. These programs include a Masters in Indigenous Rights through the Universidad de la Frontera (Chile); a Masters in Indigenous People, Human Rights, Governability and International Cooperation by the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (Spain); a postgraduate degree in Development with Identity Management, a program offered and accredited by a joint collaboration between La Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural (Colombia), Universidad Intercultural de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas del Ecuador and La Universidad de las Regiones Autonomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaraguense (Nicaragua) which also offers a postgraduate degree in

*Intercultural Health*; a degree in Government and Intercultural Public Policy through a collaboration between the Concejo Indígena de Centro América (CICA) and the Universidad Estatal de Educación a Distancia (Costa Rica), as well as other specific post graduate programs such as CIESAS's Master for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women Leaders (Mexico), the Universidad Mayor de San Marcos' Cultural and Linguistic Revitalization program.

As it can be observed, the programs being offered to indigenous students, leaders, and community activists represent a variety of topics designed to address many of the common issues that indigenous people have had to face historically throughout the continent. Hence, this network represents a unified effort, a Latin American and Caribbean educational movement of indigenous people throughout the continent. Mato (2000), who has studied the transnational connections between global agents (international aid agencies, NGO's, etc.) and indigenous people – questioning any assumptions “that ‘global’ and ‘local’ agents exist as separate realities - , confirms that such connections “have linked indigenous peoples’ organizations not only with global agents but also among themselves” (p.350).

In this sense, PROEIB-Andes, through its Specialization Course in IBE, is part of a regional or continental effort to provide relevant higher education training to Latin American indigenous people.

*Specialization Course in Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE)*

*In Latin America (Third Edition)*

The design of this course has been conceived taking into account the need to recreate educational programs that bear in mind the ethnic, cultural and linguistic characteristics of indigenous people as well as the asymmetrical relationship that these groups have with their hegemonic nation-state. As a result, the program's design is by nature complex and set apart by the inclusion of different areas of knowledge. Conceived as a way to address some deficiencies of IBE articulated by researchers like López (2002), the program aims to train professionals that (Retrieved:

<http://proeib.proeibandes.org/courseib-iii/3raversion/justificacion.html>):

- Act efficiently as mediators between the State and society to promote, on behalf of indigenous people, the exercise of educational, cultural, linguistic rights
- Execute sustainable educational development projects that preserve cultural identity
- Have effective influence in the State's administrative systems
- Participate in the universities to ensure that they implement intercultural practices in the educational functions
- Promote and consolidate the everyday construction of a multicultural society in the different sectors of society

The aforementioned goals indicate that the program has been designed with the intention of training students so they are able to function in different domains and act in a variety of professional roles as advocates, program managers, and administrators capable of holding government or institutional positions to influence policy formation and intercultural practices, as well as, oversee and implement culturally pertinent projects. Such approach reflects an interesting multidimensional agenda and a grand undertaking considering that students are expected to contribute not only to the overall advancement of IBE but to make significant contributions to the construction of a genuine multicultural society. This larger aim is particularly challenging if we bear in mind the asymmetrical relationships between the different ethnic and racial groups in a society like Bolivia which social structures and institutions are permeated by a strong colonial legacy set apart by obvious ethnic, racial, and linguistic discrimination. An examination of the overall program and its most salient characteristics, thus, calls for closer examination as a way to identify ways in which the concept of intercultural has been envisioned and realized.

A first look at the program reveals the use of a constructivist educational orientation that employs a student-centered approach that attempts to construct knowledge from the cooperation and the creation of synergies among students and instructors. Limachi Pérez (2008) explains:

The program is based on an epistemological focus that recognizes particular social processes and realities that enable symbolic articulations between two or more cultures with different cosmovisions, experiences and ways of thinking. In this context, learning and knowledge are constructed throughout the educational processes, where the interpretation of the experiences which

constitute previous knowledge is fundamental for the construction of new knowledge in accordance with the culture and reality of the students represented in the program (p.443).

The symbolic articulations between two different world views -Western and Latin American Indigenous - referred in the above excerpt is best described by Garcia (2005) who has conducted extensive field research of the program. The author points out that in addition to reading bilingual education methodology and discuss language attainment theories, students “also read such theorists as Michael Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Mikhail Bakhtin”, receive training in “bilingual methodology and theory by European, North American, and Latin American Instructors....discussed theories of power and inequality, and debated anthropological notions of culture, identity and ethnicity” (p.23). The author explains that such approach, which also includes the learning of international languages such as English and French and the use of computers and internet, was meant to train authentic indigenous intellectuals, a method which she interpreted as being simultaneously rooted in local histories and identities as well as versed in international language of social theory (Ibid. p.24).

A look at the inclusion of foreign theorists in the program calls for brief mention because it represents the type of dialogue of knowledges or disciplinary hybridity that are central and yet challenging components of indigenous intercultural universities like PROEIB-Andes. In an evaluation of the program, Garcia (2008), who surveyed graduates from the university, found that students expressed their satisfaction with the curriculum, the diversity and breath of knowledges they acquired, and the horizontal and democratic characteristics of the program, making emphasis on the reading of critical theory, writing

and field based research (p.12). However, criticism of the program also transpired in regards to the program's tendency to give priority to Western knowledge and in terms of students having to read too much theory but, generally speaking, they express appreciation of having the opportunity to approach Western studies and appropriate them. The use of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural and social capital represents one of these examples of Western knowledge appropriation.

It should be mentioned that many of these concepts are intertwined in a series of educational modules to be outlined later in this study. In fact, the production of new knowledge in line with the culture and reality of the students is a learning process guided by such modules which employ an educational approach that is driven by questions about the students' own living experiences, a process denominated as autobiographical reconstruction (Limachi Pérez. p. 447). In this context, the students' experiences serve as the starting point to explain important concepts associated with the social and cultural discrimination that characterizes Bolivia's colonial legacy which the students themselves have experienced. To illustrate the relevance of such "dialogical" workshop, one of the students surveyed by Garcia (2008) commented that "writing about myself, I began to see me, for the first time". Another student said "the workshop was like a mirror that reflected images not always recognized" (p.12). This self-reflexive educational approach, which is intended to develop students' awareness regarding their social and cultural conditions, is typical of educational perspectives and methods stemming from Critical Pedagogy. Critical and reflexive teaching and learning practices as well as autonomous educational approaches are used as strategies to achieve the student's self-evaluation and

commitment with his/her own learning, a process that has been conceived to strengthen the students self-esteem.

Having an emphasis on developing critical awareness of the social and cultural injustices is carried out by an examination of the historical circumstances and events that led to such conditions. Thus, indigenous history not only plays an important role in the program but it is the starting point of every educational module. Historical analysis helps indigenous students develop awareness of the social and cultural context in which they are situated before advancing to more professionalized courses.

As the name of the institution denotes, the program has a strong intercultural orientation. However, their interpretation of intercultural attempts to go beyond the traditional interaction and dialogue between cultures, actors and epistemologies that characterizes the concept to “reveal and discuss the different forms in which inequity, discrimination and lack of appreciation take place as a way for students to confront the historical conflict of domination and hegemony of indigenous people”<sup>18</sup>. In this sense, the intercultural becomes the analysis of the “synchronic and diachronic” of Latin America’s inequities and inequalities, a process that calls for an interdisciplinary and intercultural approach that allows establishing a relationship between the course offering, the theory stemming from different areas of knowledge and the design of pedagogical approaches related to indigenous ways of knowing. Limachi Pérez (2008) explains:

The structuring of a curriculum based on areas and not on isolated subjects allows for an integral and interdisciplinary approach to problems and topics so necessary for the training in IBE. From the beginning, our program sought to develop a curriculum that was equally intercultural as well as interdisciplinary, that would

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<sup>18</sup> <http://proeib.proeibandes.org/cursoeib-iii/3raversion/curso.html>

overcome disciplinary fragmentation and, simultaneously, conjugate the way in which knowledge is conceived and structured from both the western hegemonic and the indigenous perspective (p.447).

In the above text “intercultural” and “interdisciplinary” are used by Limachi as separate concepts, rightly so, but a question arises on whether these terms are indeed separate concepts in the context of indigenous education- especially when speaking about epistemologies - or so closely related that they could be used interchangeably. If educational institutions are a reflection of the society in which they are embedded, it could be argued that, in societies such as Bolivia where the problems faced by indigenous people require an integral approach to problem-solving, intercultural and interdisciplinary could be one and the same. In this sense, the choice of designing a curriculum based on areas that would integrate different subjects is a reflection of the different roles the students are supposed to play and the problems they will have to face in their society once they have graduated. Students are expected to design and manage pertinent educational policies and projects guided by a framework of development with identity; strengthen social and community participation processes from an educational perspective; provide support to indigenous organizations and communities regarding educational rights; and play an important role as interlocutors between indigenous people, the state and society in a equitable and intercultural dialogue. Regarding these expectations, Limachi Pérez explains that the design of the program was conceived taking into account the professional skills that the graduates needed to utilize in IBE. Such approach, given the complexity that characterizes this field of study, leads inevitably to an

interdisciplinary curriculum where subjects from different disciplines concatenate in one area of study seeking answers required by unique problems (Ibid).

### *Thematic Areas and Modules*

We should take a look at the different thematic areas that play an important aspect in the course offering that are weaved-in transversally throughout the courses in the form of educational modules reflecting the interdisciplinary quality of the program. Such areas include (retrieved from: <http://proeib.proeibandes.org/courseib-iii/3raversion/curso.html>):

**Indigenous Rights:** Considering that indigenous rights are a part of indigenous demands and international law, this area is built as a foundational component in all modules so that they can be applied in the field of education from an IBE perspective.

**Intercultural:** Plays a central role in every module. It entails an ongoing discussion and construction of the concept as well as an analysis of the term's use and application in the region.

**Historical Perspective:** All modules begin establishing its foundation for analysis using history as a starting point and applying critical perspectives of such history.

**Territoriality:** Territoriality, as a matter of demand and legitimization of indigenous rights in addition to as backdrop of the relationship between indigenous organizations and the State, plays an important aspect in every module

to understand the different forms of indigenous territoriality in the planning and management of educational programs.

**Cosmology:** Given the cultural traits that characterize the topics of each module, these units are designed keeping in mind the cosmology reflected by the cultural identity of each indigenous group. This means that Indigenous world views are part of the analysis and a starting point for each module in the context of IBE, therefore, building IBE as a privilege realm for the dialogue of knowledge and ways of knowing.

The nature and scope of this study does not allow for an in-depth examination of each thematic area but, a quick look at them denotes that they have been conceived thinking about prominent and enduring areas of concern for indigenous people. The theme of Territoriality, for example, is a good representative sample given the role that land plays in indigenous cultural revitalization and preservation. This struggle has been extensively documented by Van Cott (2001) who has studied indigenous movements in Latin America. The author has articulated how indigenous people in this continent have gained political-territorial autonomy based on their racial and cultural distinctiveness going as far as to questioning the territoriality of the nation-state in which they are located.

Furthermore, it is equally important to look at some of the modules' themes in order to better understand them. The modules are a central component of other educational offerings that include an introductory seminary, lectures and a series of

virtual workshops that lead to the completion of a final research project. Such modules are characterized by a thematic focus. Thematically related to each other the modules are (retrieved from: <http://proeib.proeibandes.org/courseib-iii/3raversion/modulos.html>):

1. **Indigenous Movements and Educational Demands:** Seeks to impart an understanding of indigenous movements as a backdrop that influences indigenous educational demands, making distinctions between regional and global processes that include the struggle for indigenous ways of knowing and intellectual property, as well as, indigenous migration processes, indigenous organization forms and political participation strategies and current demands and challenging faced by such movements.
2. **Society, Languages and Education:** Provides a focus and analysis of indigenous languages face-to-face with hegemonic languages and the consequential efforts of indigenous displacement and revitalization. It enables the discussion of the relationship between language, culture and ethnicity for educational planning purposes in multilingual and pluricultural contexts and highlights the role of language in the conception of territoriality and in the transmission of ancestral knowledge.
3. **Indigenous Knowledge Organization for a Curriculum:** Makes possible the study of the cultural production of knowledge and the forms of socialization in indigenous societies. From such perspective, authentic forms of knowledge production and pedagogy based on indigenous worldviews as well as the

educational agents and spaces where education takes place are analyzed. Such analysis reflects upon the different ways in which indigenous people manage their knowledge and reproduce their societies, and how these cultural strategies can influence the diversification or production of authentic or alternative curriculums.

4. **Management of Educational Projects:** Designed for students to expressed and implement the acquired knowledge and skills through the elaboration of an IBE project, this modules allows for the recuperation of theoretical and empirical assets as well as theoretical foundations and methodological tools for the formulation, planning and evaluation of educational projects.
  
5. **Intercultural Bilingual Education and the State's Educational Systems** provides an explanation of Bilingual Education, Intercultural Bilingual Education, Ethno-education, among others indigenous educational initiatives, to better understand the role played or still being played by each of these educational policies in the current educational systems. It makes emphasis on the manner in which they were implemented in specific situations and contexts and how they were articulated in relation to the educational demands of indigenous people and their organizations, analyzing the experiences associated with the educational levels that were considered, the preferred curricular areas and/or transversal topics, the methodological approaches utilized, as well as, the level of social participation that was allowed or promoted.

6. **Indigenous Educational Projects and Models:** Analyzes alternative educational programs to the state's provided IBE throughout the Latin American continent including programs from Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Mexico. The analysis of different models developed by indigenous organizations or in conjunction with the state determining the guidelines of educational policies that contribute to new perspectives and new educational management approaches.

A brief assessment of these modules reveals that they have been envisioned to provide students with a multidimensional (regional and global), multidisciplinary (history, language, cultural studies, education, social theory, citizenship, international and national law, etc.) and yet specialized training (intercultural bilingual education) that provides, on the one hand, a continental and local perspective about their own reality and that of many other indigenous groups in the region, and, on the other hand, the conceptual tools and training necessary for graduates to better understand the complex environment in which they are enmeshed so they may be able to confront the educational, political, social and economic intercultural challenges of the societies and communities they live. In doing so, the program not only advances the IBE agenda envisioned by the leaders of the PROEIB-Andes, but it makes significant contributions toward building and strengthening the Latin American indigenous movement as a whole.

*Academic Staff & Researchers*

Program Director positions within institutions of higher education are usually occupied by professors who play an important role in determining the design and content of the programs, the research focus, and the journals and authors of preference. They determine the themes, topics, theories, concepts and methods that programs need to convey and students need to learn in order to have the necessary training to work in a specific field or area of work. In addition, academics in such positions play the role of transmitters of the very same knowledge they learned in their training programs and research projects. Such affirmations are also true for professors in the PROEIB-Andes. The program has nine professors-researchers with training in different areas of the social sciences, having Masters and Doctorate degrees from Latin American, North American and European universities. In this sense, the development of the program adopts and constructs an interdisciplinary vision of the field. The teaching staff includes a sociologist, a psychologist, an anthropologist, a pedagogist, two specialists in IBE and three sociolinguists, all of them with work and life experience with indigenous people who work full time and are exclusively devoted to PROEIB-Andes. The teaching staff includes two instructors who are indigenous and are responsible for the development of indigenous languages, Quechua and Aymara, and four who are also faculty of the of the Universidad Mayor de San Simón. PROEIB professors play a similar role to that of educators in conventional western universities of designing courses and imparting knowledge but they see their role more as facilitators of an educational process, a quality typical of constructivism.

More importantly, we should look at the profile of the founder and directors of the program. The first director of the program and the principal consultant to GTZ was Dr. Luis Enrique López, a linguistic and Peruvian educator and researcher widely cited in the field of IBE in Latin America. In addition to getting the program started, López advised the Bolivian government in its educational reform. His contributions in the field of indigenous education include seminal works like *La educación intercultural bilingüe en América Latina: balance y perspectivas* (1999). Similarly, the current program director and instructor of PROEIB-Andes is a Bolivian linguistic who is a graduate of the very same program which he manages and teaches. Magister Vicente Limachi Pérez holds a Masters in Intercultural Bilingual Education and vast experience in teacher training programs associated with the reading and production of texts in vernacular or original languages including Quechua, Aymara and Guarani as well as Spanish as a second language. He has provided technical assistance in curriculum design and has delivered teacher training programs in Argentina, Chile, and Peru in the field of IBE. His research publications are in the area of Children Second Language (CL2) and Spanish as a second language SSL.

Another important educator and instructor in the program is Inge Sichra, an Austrian sociolinguistic from the Viena University who holds a doctorate and whose dissertation studied the vitality of Quechua in two provinces in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Established in this city since 1986, she managed CENDA<sup>19</sup> in the area of education implementing reading and writing programs for Quechua children. Her association with

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<sup>19</sup> More information at: <http://www.cenda.org/educacion.htm>

PROEIB-Andes began first as a consultant in IBE programs and consequently as an instructor in the area of language. She was also responsible for overseeing the area of research denominated “Interculturality and Bilingualism in Urban Areas”. Currently, she is a teacher researcher and imparts teacher training courses for Ministers of Education and indigenous organizations in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Venezuela. Her research and publication in this area of study are extensive to be mentioned in the scope of this study<sup>20</sup>. However, to get an idea, she recently coordinated and edited The Sociolinguistic Atlas of Latin America Indigenous People<sup>21</sup> for FUNPROEIB, the foundation of PROEIB-Andes, UNICEF and AECID (Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development).

The program has attracted professionals with a strong training in linguistics. This is perhaps due to the fact that 500 indigenous languages have been found still in existence throughout Latin America (López & Küper, 1999, p.11). Accounting for 32 of those languages, Quechua, which is the most widely spoken in Bolivia, is the language with the largest number of speakers throughout the continent being spoken also in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina and perhaps even Brazil (Ibid). The use of Quechua throughout the continent may also help to explain the continental dimension of PROEIB-Andes and the reason why much of the functions of this program has a transnational emphasis that is also reflected in their research projects.

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<sup>20</sup> Available at: <http://programa.proeibandes.org/programa/docentes/isichra.php>

<sup>21</sup> Available at: [http://www.movilizando.org/atlas\\_tomo1/pages/tomo\\_1.pdf](http://www.movilizando.org/atlas_tomo1/pages/tomo_1.pdf)

### *Research*

Research is a significant function of PROEIB-Andes. It is one of their main areas of action in the development of IBE. The organization is committed to research answers to the inquiries that have stemmed from the implementation of intercultural programs. It seeks to do so by building bridges and devising collaborative plans of action between researchers from the academic world and those from the indigenous communities. The topics of research are identified in a participative and cooperative process between these two actors and are based on the need to learn more about the socio-cultural, socio-lingual, socio-educational variables that impact educational planning. Therefore, topics of research deal with the socialization and transmission of knowledge in indigenous families and communities; sociolinguistic variation and diversity and its implications in establishing intercultural bilingual educational processes; and the interaction of teacher-student in rural and urban schools with indigenous students of vernacular language<sup>22</sup>.

Some of the specific research themes include (retrieved from:

<http://programa.proeibandes.org/investigacion/lineas.php>):

- Bilingualism and interculturality in urban areas
- Interculturality in teaching and learning processes
- Classroom practices in multilingual contexts
- Evaluative studies of IBE in formal education
- Interculturality in the classroom
- Cultural capital and cultural reproduction

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<sup>22</sup> Retrieved from: <http://programa.proeibandes.org/investigacion/>

- Local knowledge and curriculum diversification

These research themes represent the core knowledge that PROEIB-Andes has set out to develop. These areas of expertise are in fact what they are known for throughout the region and within the network. Ministries of Education as well as other organizations in the region have hired PROEIB-Andes to conduct sociolinguistic and socioeducational studies of different indigenous people. Such studies have had significant implications for the development of IBE and have entailed assisting with the definition and implementation of language policy including the teaching of mother tongue, Spanish as a second language, the teaching of math as well as courses on gender in indigenous contexts.

This level of expertise has allowed PROEIB-Andes to work with international organizations and aid agencies to offer twenty seminars around these topics. Moreover, PROEIB-Andes has participated in six Latin America Congresses of IBE in Antigua Guatemala (1995), Santa Cruz de la Sierra (1996), Quito (1998), Asunción (2000), Lima(2002) and Santiago de Chile (2004). In addition, program staff from PROEIB-Andes, in conjunction with other Bolivian institutions, assisted the Bolivian government's Ministry of Education with the VII Latin American Congress of EIB<sup>23</sup>.

In addition, as an incentive to advance research, the program promotes a yearly competition known as the Andean Countries Regional Research Contest of Indigenous Education. This contest is carried out yearly and has produced some studies worth mentioning as a way to see the type of research that the organization values. Below are

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<sup>23</sup> Available at: <http://200.6.193.206/viieib/programa.html>

selections of past winners per country and year (retrieved from:

<http://programa.proeibandes.org/investigacion/informes.php>):

- Bolivia (2006): Achievements and difficulties in the development of reading comprehension and texts production in second language. Case study of fourth and fifth grades elementary school children from the Rene Fernandez Becerra Elementary - Melga, Sacaba – Cochabamba.
- Bolivia (2006): Community Participation in the elaboration and implementation of the intercultural curriculum of the intercultural unidad educativa "alto saucini" Provincia Charcas, Norte de Potosi
- Peru (2006) The art of indigenous learning: contributions to enhance the culture of pedagogy in IBE.
- Argentina (2006) Interculturality and school practice: the bilingual assistant teacher in Salta.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### INTERCULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF VERACRUZ (IUV) – BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Created to meet the cultural and educational needs of indigenous people from the state of Veracruz and substantiated by proclamations such as UNESCO's Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity and the International Labor Organization's Convention 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, the Intercultural University of Veracruz (IUV) was conceived at the time of its inception as an intercultural institution of higher education legally empowered to generate, apply and impart knowledge through the design and implementation of educational programs with an intercultural focus. A reading of the institution's mission reveals that its aims are centered on situated learning and community linked research (*investigación vinculada*) that would ensure the dialogue of knowledge, the harmonization of regional, national and global visions, the promotion of a sustainable quality of life and the strengthening of the state of Veracruz's diverse languages and cultures.<sup>24</sup>

The institution is incorporated in the University of Veracruz considered to be among the largest public autonomous university of higher education in Mexico and it is located in Xelapa, the capital of the state of Veracruz. Having started as a program, it recently became a department (Dirección). The origins of the IUV date back to 1996 with the creation of a permanent "Seminar of Multicultural Education in Veracruz"

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<sup>24</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.uv.mx/uvi/universidad/identidad.html>

implemented by the university's Institute of Educational Research (Instituto de Investigaciones en Educación). The seminar was born out of a need to understand more deeply the complex educational process of Mexico associated with its cultural diversity and its new sociocultural realities. Such initiative generated an "innovative process" and represented a "space conducive for the communication between various domains from different disciplines such as linguistic and social anthropology, philosophy of education, intercultural communication, cultural pedagogy and basic education, thus, establishing the beginning of an informal constitution of a hybrid discipline" (UVI, 2006, p.31). The participation of multidisciplinary researchers and professionals enabled the seminar served both as a research and a professional development program focused on multi and intercultural education. In 2003, having solidified itself in the area of intercultural studies, the seminar evolved, creating formal academic degree offerings including a Masters in Intercultural Studies and Doctorate in Multicultural Societies and Intercultural Studies in collaboration with the University of Granada in Spain (UVI, 2009, p.10). Research themes established by these programs included *Communication media, Cultural diversity and the construction of difference; Intercultural studies and gender; Politics, society and multiculturalism; Rural communities and global processes in Latin-American; and Interculturality and education*. In 2004, however, looking to further advance its horizons, as part of a program sponsored by Mexico's "Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe" (CGEIB)<sup>25</sup>, which had a mandate to establish 10 indigenous universities in the country, the IUV was created grounded on an:

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<sup>25</sup> Accessible at: <http://eib.sep.gob.mx/cgeib/index.php>

...academic perspective conceived to ensure that disciplinary borderlines not determine what is to be examined but, on the contrary, taking the context as the starting point, the needs of the community and the complex vision of social and cultural phenomena, conducive to a repositioning of conventional scientific wisdom, establish a space of disciplinary hybridization, primarily, as a space in which the dialogue between other knowledges, previously ignored, can be facilitated (UVI, 2006, p.32).

As it can be observed, the conception of the institution is grounded in a model that seeks to overcome the limitations established by isolated academic disciplines and the potential inaccuracies that could take place in decontextualized learning. However, the “repositioning” of western knowledge means two things. On the one hand, its relocation entails the dehegemonization or demotion of the prevailing superior position of such knowledge to locate it face-to-face with local or indigenous forms of knowledge. On the other hand, such repositioning of knowledge means that the academic perspective envisioned for the institution has no intention of excluding western knowledge, rather, it intends to appropriate or make use of such knowledge to form ontological and epistemological syncretism or to enable a space where, as Garcia Canclini (2005) would describe it, disciplinary hybrids may be created.

The concept of disciplinary hybrids plays a crucial role especially when examining a Mexican “intercultural” indigenous university. Epstein (1985), who studied the national consciousness of Mexicans and their efforts to build a collective sense of nationality through education, states that the Mexican education system reflects a constant “ebb” and “flow” in the importance given to the following “countervailing motives and tendencies: ...primordial versus foreign cultural orientations, ethnic pluralism versus assimilation ...Anglo-saxon industriousness versus Latin American

artistic sensitivity, socialist versus capitalist explanation...science versus the humanities” (p.57). Epstein’s assertion, in essence, reflects the tensions that exist in Mexican society due to the cultural heterogeneity that has resulted from the country’s history of colonization and *meztizaje*. Moreover, these tensions can be interpreted in part as the familiar dilemma associated with the dichotomy of modernity and tradition that permeates not only Mexican society but much of Latin America where “traditions have not yet disappeared and modernity has not completely arrived” (Garcia Canclini, 2005, p.1), creating spaces where both paradigms and their material manifestations can exist simultaneously. In this scenario, it is important to recall Portera’s claim stating that the intercultural principle can find its place between two perspectives such as universalism and relativism concurrently subsuming both in a new synthesis by incorporating all the positive aspects of trans-cultural and multicultural pedagogy (2008, p.485).

With the intention of hybridizing disciplines from conventional academics and traditional indigenous knowledge orientations and their respective disciplines, the UVI was officially instituted in 2005, offering a Bachelors in Regional Sustainable Development (*Licenciatura en Desarrollo Regional Sustentable*), a Bachelor in Intercultural Management and Promotion (*Gestión y Animación Intercultural*), and a Program in Culture and Language (*Programa de Lengua y Cultura*) that served as a transversal or complementary offering for the bachelors programs. These programs, first received by public officials as strange and yet novel, represented an “alternative disciplinary hybridization ad-hoc proposal” that met the uniqueness and the needs of the

Veracruz's intercultural regions by establishing pertinent indigenous educational programs (UVI, 2009, p.14).

It is worth noting that the university, in collaboration with the government entities responsible for population census, carried out a diagnostic to identify the location of four satellite campuses where the IUV program would be more viable and have greater impact. Consequently, based on combined ethno-linguistic and socio-economic criteria, such as marginalization, human and social development and indigenous population indexes (UVI, 2005, p.6), including criteria related to infrastructures and demand<sup>26</sup>, four "intercultural regions"<sup>27</sup> were identified along with four specific communities.

Intercultural Region of Huasteca; Intercultural Region of Totonacapan; Intercultural Region of Grandes Montañas and the Intercultural Region of Selvas. The universities in these regions were first housed in provisional venues granted by their local municipalities such as a cultural center, an old elementary school house and an indigenous organization center. Although study programs and other intercultural workshops continued to be administered through the headquarters in Xelapa, the bachelor degree programs were imparted at all four satellite venues.

Equally important to highlight is that the IUV in Xelapa is housed within a university that has already embraced an innovative approach. The University of Veracruz, in general, seeks the construction of an alternative university paradigm and the

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<sup>26</sup> By "infrastructure" is denoted households and access roads. And by "demand" is meant students who completed some form of elementary school.

<sup>27</sup> This term was used to reflect the pluriethnic and internal diversity that characterizes the indigenous regions of Veracruz (Dietz in Mato 2008a) and to denote the relationship of indigenous and mestizos sectors in such regions which generate a high confluence, interaction and hybridization of cultures (UVI, 2007, p.5).

social distribution of knowledge based on an Integral and Flexible Educational Model<sup>28</sup>.

The institution offers quality educational programs to groups historically marginalized from higher education. It looks to develop relationships with the different local producers and economic representatives as well as municipal programs and civil organizations to close the gap between education and the demands of the market. With this aim in mind, part of the university's strategies include the design of curriculums with a transdisciplinary and with an intercultural focus; the offering of programs where access to higher education is absent; the use of pedagogical approaches that ensure a link or connection (vinculación) with the community as a way to strengthening the diversification of academic work by professors; the provision of a tutoring program as a crucial strategy to promote students' professional, personal and social development, among many other strategies (UVI, 2005, p.15).

In addition, it should be noted that the IUUV is the only indigenous intercultural university that is housed within a preexisting university<sup>29</sup>. Most indigenous universities in Mexico were created autonomously or independently from other institutions, an option that was considered at first for the IUUV, but quickly discarded as inconvenient in terms of

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<sup>28</sup> One of the most important educational reforms recently undertaken by the university, MEIF is an educational model that promotes a harmonious and integral education (intellectual, professional, personal, humanistic and social) throughout all of its study programs by strengthening autonomous learning in a flexible framework that allows students to make their own decisions regarding their educational experiences and the spaces and educational modality (present, semi-present, virtual) to obtain credits, allowing them to complete program at their own pace (retrieved: <http://www.uv.mx/conoce-tu-universidad/meif/index.html>). Some have described MEIF as a flexible curricular proposal designed to overcome conventional academic rigidity commonly characterized by exhaustive study programs (see: <http://www.uv.mx/gaceta/Gaceta55-56/55-56/mar/mar2.htm>). The course requirements of the model reflect four important educational areas 1) Basic course requirements 2) Mandatory or foundational courses related to a particular discipline 3) Electives related to the student's disciplinary interest or focus and 4) Free elective courses (retrieved from: <http://www.uv.mx/universidad/doctosofi/nme/areas-formac-plan-estud.htm>)

<sup>29</sup> The University of Veracruz is over 53 years old.

institutional academic support and infrastructure as well as in terms of the ongoing political changes of the environment (UVI, 2009, p.12).

After two years of operations (2005-2007), the university, based on their guiding principle of ongoing reassessment, felt the need to review its program offerings and carried out a reevaluation of their curriculum which resulted in combining two of their original programs, the abovementioned Bachelors in Regional Sustainable Development (*Licenciatura en Desarrollo Regional Sustentable*) and the Bachelor in Intercultural Management and Promotion (*Gestión y Animación Intercultural*) into one bachelor program, Bachelor in Intercultural Management for Development (*Licenciatura en Gestión Intercultural para el Desarrollo*) known as LGID. Part of that revision also included efforts toward generating an academic program designed to meet the need<sup>30</sup> to train teachers-tutors-researchers with a multidisciplinary, holistic and integral vision of education (UVI, 2009, p.19), resulting in the design of a Masters in Intercultural Education (*Maestría en Educación Intercultural*).

Similarly, the incorporation of five orientations (Sustainability, Communication, Health, Language, Rights and Intercultural Education) that provide thematic lenses to the students and have a strong research emphasis linked to the needs of the students' communities, and the creation of an Academic Linkage Unit that provides of resulted from such revision.

This study will focus on the Bachelor in Intercultural Management for Development.

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<sup>30</sup> One of the challenges faced by the IUV, which is also associated with the fact that we are talking of a new university, has to do with lack of teaching staff familiar with the community.

*Bachelor in Intercultural Management for Development*

Legally recognized by the State of Mexico, LGID is an official bachelor program comprised of eight semesters characterized by an interdisciplinary, multi-modality, curriculum flexibility and students autonomy approach that is part of, as mentioned above, what the University of Veracruz at large has adopted and called Integral and Flexible Educational Model (Dietz, 2008, p.360). The author explains that such educational model allows students to choose not classic courses but “educational experiences” grouped by areas of training which include basic-propaedeutic, disciplinary, specialized and elective courses, through different learning modalities including classroom presence, semi-presence and virtual modes (Dietz, 2008, p.360). These educational experiences, Dietz claims, generate “training itineraries” (as opposed to specializations) denominated “orientations”.

The use of the “orientation” label to nominate these educational experiences, described by Dietz as training itineraries, is not casual. The term “orientation” has been favored over the term “specialization” because the former allows for the interdisciplinary and organic construction of a body of knowledge, which can easily be oriented toward different aspects of a complex and interconnected reality; the latter, by contrast, offers compartmentalized notions to address segments of such reality considered to be self-sufficient systems (UVI, 2007, p. 13). It is important to highlight the open ended connotation of the term “orientation”, as reflected by the use of “organic construction” in its definition, in contrast with the bounded implications of the compartmentalized characteristic of the term “specialization”. In this sense, the concept of orientation, as

defined and utilized by UVI, appears to be an especially suitable choice considering that the university programs at large have been conceived to adapt to “the complex environment in which they are implemented” as well as to “the challenges of a highly changing environment” and to “the implications of knowledge production resulting from the interaction with students and the communities in which the programs are offered” (UVI, 2009, p.56). Moreover, in a broader sense, the conceptualization and adoption of such orientations appear ideal if we consider the university’s emphasis in studying the phenomena of cultural diversity and its manifestations in the field of education – an effort that in multi and intercultural education has been characterized as “an emerging, dynamic, unfinished, open and continuous discursive field.” (UVI, 2005, p.17).

### *Orientations*

If the study of cultural diversity and its manifestations in the field of education is an open-ended continuous discursive field, it implies that very little within the program is fixed, predetermined and/or prescribed. Therefore students are given the flexibility to customize the program to their own specific needs and those of their communities. The flexibility required for students to “customize” their own programs is facilitated through these orientations. Dietz (2008) explains that these orientations are not “disciplinary curricular specializations, but interdisciplinary fields of knowledge and ways of knowing destined to the professionalization of the future intercultural manager” (p.360).

These orientations play an important role throughout the entire program, including in the area of research which will be addressed later in this study, thus, it is

necessary to examine them. Below are brief descriptions of the five orientations offered by the LGID. In order to better understand these orientations, some representative courses and research<sup>31</sup> carried out within each orientation have been listed:

1) **Communication:** Designed to train professionals in the area of cultural promotion based on the use of diverse communication media and, more importantly, in their critical understanding of their role in the construction of indigenous identity in the context of globalization. (Retrieved: <http://www.uv.mx/uvi/programas/Orientacion-Comunicacion.html>)

- Representative Courses: *Aesthetics Appreciation, Promotion of Cultural Traditions, Critical Perception of Mass Communication, Tourism and Cultural Development. Identities and Globalization*
- Representative Research: *Management of a social space for diversity through the traditional celebration of Xantolo.*

2) **Sustainability:** Conceived to generate professionals capable of making contributions toward improving the quality of life in the regions and toward the construction of sustainable modes of development; resulting from the production of knowledge, skills and attitudes oriented toward the valorization, development and promotion of ancestral ways of knowing, the strengthening of organizational and technical abilities of both local and regional initiatives, and the interaction of networks of support (*solidaridad*) and the wide array of regional, national and global actors which

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<sup>31</sup> Obtained from UVI (2007) p.147-152 and UVI (2009) p.82-86 respectively (see References for links)

entails a dialogue of knowledges (Retrieved:

<http://www.uv.mx/uvi/programas/Orientacion-Sustentabilidad.html>).

- Representative Courses: *Ecology, Ethnoecology and Agroecology; Projects of Environmental Protection and Restoration; Ecotourism; Community Normative System; Agrarian and Environmental Law; and Production and Commercialization for a sustainable economy.*
- Representative Research: *Study of the agroecosystem of milpa in the community of Puyecaco, municipality of Ixhuatlán de Madero*

3) **Languages:** Seeking to promote the development, employment, strengthening and the vitality of the national languages and cultures by applying theoretical and methodological approaches capable of integrating diverse research perspectives, this orientation is conducive to the creation of an academic environment adequate for the promotion, management and mediation of inter-linguistic communication processes in an intercultural framework (Retrieved from: <http://www.uv.mx/uvi/programas/Orientacion-Lenguas.html>).

- Representative Courses: *Language & Literature; Didactics of Languages; Language Policy; Language Materials Design; Knowledge Interpretation*
- Representative Research: *Causes of analphabetism in Tequila*

4) **Rights:** From an intercultural perspectives, it seeks to train human resources to influence the delays in the administration and the procurement of justice, in the effective

access by the most vulnerable sectors to the rights granted by the state's "rule of law", as well as, in the promotion of human rights to guarantee basic civil rights (*seguridad jurídica*) (Retrieved from: <http://www.uv.mx/uvi/programas/Orientacion-Derechos.html>)

- Representative Courses: *Knowledge Interpretation, Educational Methodologies in Human Rights, Positive Transformation of Social Conflict, Strategies for the Argumentation and Documentation of Cases, National & International Tools of Indigenous Rights.*
- Representative Research: *Analysis of the judicial customs and community organizational forms.*

5) **Health:** Procuring theoretical and practical elements for intercultural discourse, it seeks to improve the state of health in the indigenous regions of Veracruz by training professionals to act as agents of dialogue between traditional medicine and Mexico's official medicine, promoting processes within the community in the face of the major health problems, a method which entails the revalorization and revitalization of traditional medicine's knowledge and practices (Retrieved from: <http://www.uv.mx/uvi/programas/Orientacion-Salud.html>)

- Representative Courses: *Sociocultural Epidemiology, Specific Community Health Problems. Communication and Health, Indigenous Therapeutic Resources.*

- Representative Research: *Intercultural Health: theoretical and practical concepts and tools.*

As can be observed, these orientations and the flexibility and openness that characterizes them not only enable the preparation of students as inter-cultural, inter-lingual and inter-actoral managers but, in doing so, they allow for the needs of the community regarding identity construction and self-image, improvement of quality of life, inter-linguistic assistance, civil and human rights and health related matters. Dietz (2008) points out that regardless of the orientation chosen by students, the educational experience is characterized by an early and ongoing immersion in activities of community linkage (*vinculación comunitaria*), project management, and projects of research-action which involve methodologies of community and regional diagnostic, knowledge management, and projects of participatory planning and evaluation in the communities of their origins (p.359). Hence, the importance of these orientations guiding the research projects.

#### *Academic Staff & Researchers*

Research professors of the program have a wide range of academic backgrounds in the humanities, social sciences and engineering with bachelor's degrees and some with masters and few with doctorates degrees. Most instructor come from the same regions where they will be teaching as a way to guarantee that they don't only share their academic knowledge but also their local ways of knowing. In short, each satellite has six

instructors; one per orientation plus one for academic support, in addition to six to eight local part-time instructors.

One of the challenges that the program has faced is the shortage of teaching staff for its different satellites. Through the newly created Master's in Intercultural Education, they are currently training Educational Personnel (EP) at the locations of high marginalization in the four intercultural regions previously mentioned, with the goal of establishing a direct relationship of the graduates with the community through the dialogue of knowledge and liked research. The academic profile of the teachers includes: the knowledge of an indigenous language spoken in the intercultural regions and experience in community development projects. Seventy-one percent (71%) of the teaching staff (67 total), speaks another language other than Spanish - Nahuatl being the most spoken. Nonetheless, the institution is not able to meet the demands posed by the variety of languages spoken by the students (UVI, 2009, p.38).

In terms of researchers, much of the research related to interculturality at the Intercultural University of Veracruz is guided by three research professors with vast experience on the topic. Professor Dr. Gunther Dietz is the main researcher in the field of Intercultural University at IUUV. He holds a M.A. and a doctorate in Anthropology from Hamburg University where he has worked extensively on multiculturalism and intercultural education at the Institute for Comparative and Multicultural Studies and other institutions such as the Laboratory of Intercultural Studies at the University of Granada, at the School for Postgraduate Interdisciplinary Research on Interculturalism and Transnationality at Aalborg University, at the Steunpunt Intercultureel Onderwijs at

Ghent University, and at the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at the University of California, San Diego on issues relating to minority, indigenous, and ethnic communities, including migration and integration<sup>32</sup>. Research carried out by Dr. Dietz is extensive and it can be accessed at IUUV's website<sup>33</sup>. His main areas of interest are interculturality, ethnicity and intercultural and inter-religious education, ethnic movements, indigenous people and autonomies, multiculturalism, cultural and religious diversity, and migrant communities.

Important to highlight for the purpose of this study, however, is that he currently directs the research project “Diálogo de saberes, haceres y poderes entre actores educativos y comunitarios: una etnografía reflexiva de la educación superior intercultural en Veracruz” (*InterSaberes*), a research project that explores how IUUV produces, manages, links, exchanges and mutually fertilizes diverse knowledges and ways of knowing. A multidisciplinary team from pedagogy, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, linguistics and translation, under the Academic Body of Intercultural Studies, is currently compiling and contrasting the different knowledges that converge in the IUUV's educational praxis and community linked research. They are working with formal and informal produced in rural and urban contexts, articulated by actors identified as mestizos and indigenous. Such knowledges are exchanged in the academic context of the IUUV, but they are themselves closely related with indigenous communities, social organizations,

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<sup>32</sup> Adapted from his book: *Multiculturalism, interculturality and diversity in education: an anthropological approach*

<sup>33</sup> Available at: <http://www.uv.mx/iie/personal/gunther.html> or [http://www.iaie.org/2\\_about\\_board.htm](http://www.iaie.org/2_about_board.htm)

NGOs. Therefore, participation in this “dialogue of knowledges” encompasses teachers, researches, students’ community neighbors and the regions that host the satellite<sup>34</sup>.

Another important academic in this program is professor researcher Laura Selene Mateos Cortés who has a Doctorate in Multicultural Societies and Intercultural Studies from the *Universidad de Granada/ Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación*. Her areas of interest are in the area of Intercultural Education, cultural diversity, interculturality, intercultural philosophy, and intercultural discourse and its transnational migration. Important to highlight is that her doctorate thesis dealt with the transnational migration of the intercultural discourse and its incorporation, appropriation and re-signification by educational actors in Veracruz Mexico. This work appeared in the journal of Intercultural Education with a slightly different title and played an important role in informing and visualizing the current study<sup>35</sup>. Currently she is working in phase two of the *IntersaberesII* project with Dr. Dietz .

Similarly, Rosa Guadalupe Mendoza-Zuany, another important researcher in the program, who is a board member of the International Association for Intercultural Association<sup>36</sup>, is responsible for research projects that examine the construction and development of intercultural education policy in higher education in México. She has been academic coordinator of the Department of Human and Indigenous Rights at the UVI and her research interests are in educational policies in culturally diverse contexts, interculturalization of higher education, anthropology of public policies, participation as

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<sup>34</sup> Accessed at: <http://www.uv.mx/iie/gruposinv/intercultural.html>

<sup>35</sup> See Cortés in the References of this study.

<sup>36</sup> Website: [http://www.iaie.org/1\\_about.htm](http://www.iaie.org/1_about.htm)

basis for public policies' processes, and indigenous autonomy in multicultural societies. She has taught courses such as Ethnography in Educational Contexts, Ethnicity and Nation-state, Public Policies, etc., at postgraduate and bachelor levels. She holds a doctorate in Political Science from the University of York in the United Kingdom, a Masters in Social Anthropology from the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, México, and a Bachelor Degree in International Relations from the ITESM Campus Monterrey, México<sup>37</sup>. Her paper “Building hybrid knowledges at the Intercultural University of Veracruz, Mexico: an anthropological study of indigenous context”, which appeared in the Intercultural Education Journal, was important in determining the scope and aim of this study.

The research interests of these research professors include many topics that fall under multiculturalism/interculturalism and cultural diversity in the context of Indigenous Education with a special emphasis in the relationship between institutions of higher education and community as it relates to diverse forms of knowledge production. Considering that their academic degrees have been granted by Western universities, it can be inferred that the research tools and methods used in their research activities are reflective of their Western educational background. What seems to be different from conventional research is that these researchers utilize their expertise to assist in the recovery, classification, systemization, documentation and transferring of knowledge stemming from the community to its integration into the academic curriculum of the institution, thus, enabling the hybridization or dialogue of knowledges.

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<sup>37</sup> Available at: [http://www.iaie.org/2\\_about\\_board.htm](http://www.iaie.org/2_about_board.htm)

Finally, taking into consideration the educational background, the research interest of these research professors as well as the fact that they are working in an institution that is hybridizing disciplines and knowledge from conventional Western institutions and traditional indigenous orientations in one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions of Mexico, it can also be infer that IUV is likely set to make significant contributions to the field of indigenous intercultural education. Hence, the importance of taking a closer look at the institution's overall research program.

### *Research*

Since its inception, an important tenet of the UVI has been to maintain an ongoing and intimate relationship between research, teaching and community linkage (*vinculación con la comunidad*) to construct curricular proposals through research projects that, taking into account a complex and intercultural vision of social phenomena, maintain a coherent interrelation of these three areas of pertinent education. As a result, the university has established Lines of Production and Application of Knowledge (Lineas de Generación y Aplicación del Conocimiento) that determine the areas of research and establish specific research topics or themes. These lines of research are overseen by two academic bodies.

**The Academic Body of Language, Culture and Community Process**, has been conceived for the research and analysis of the cultural and social processes, having as a starting point the languages, the cultures and the constitution of the different identities of groups and diverse collectives that interact in local and regional contexts and endorse an ethnic or different discourse (Retrieved: <http://www.uv.mx/uvi/cuerpo/descripcion.html>).

Under this line of research two areas of focus have been determined:

- 1) **Cultural Diversity, Identities and Dialogue of Knowledge:** proposes the study of cultural diversity and community knowledge as points of reference concerning identity formation.
- 2) **Public Policies in Multicultural contexts:** suggests the study, creation and strengthening of processes of public policies including the definition of agendas, design, implementation, instrumentation, management and, more importantly, the evaluation of such policies at the community, local, municipal, regional, federal and international level (Retrieved: <http://www.uv.mx/uvi/cuerpo/lgacs.html> ).

The second one is the **Academic Body of Intercultural Education Processes:** established to analyze and produce knowledge stemming from the diverse contexts found in the field of Intercultural Education, this area of research is responsible for the formulation of programs and curricular proposals as part of the institutional and social intervention in training students and educators and/or researchers responsible for the implementation of the different academic programs (Retrieved: <http://www.uv.mx/uvi/cuerpo/descripcion.html> ). Similarly, two areas have been determined as important research topics:

- 1) **Educational Training and Diverse Learning:** intended to develop projects related to diverse learning processes including, but not limited to, institutional, communal, and collaborative learning. Projects include the IUV's previously mentioned linked research (investigación vinculada) approach from

theoretical-conceptual perspectives to the development of methodological learning strategies.

2) **Knowledges and Management for the strengthening of biocultural:**

proposes the production and application of knowledge regarding the specific and symbolic manner in which the relationship among human groups as well as these groups and nature develop, seeking to register, systematize and disseminate the cultural heritage of local knowledges regarding social relations and territory management. Such efforts include the promotion of dialogues between such cultural heritage and scientific and technical knowledge (Retrieved: <http://www.uv.mx/uvi/cuerpo/lgacs.html> ).

In examining the above research orientations, it is clear that the program has a strong emphasis in identifying, classifying and systematizing new knowledges as well as in generating innovative and pertinent programs, curriculums, and educational methods of teaching and learning by having important elements of cultural diversity (culture, languages and identities) and the social process of the communities and the regions they serve at the center of all educational and research activities. However, and perhaps more worthy of examination, is the relation between teaching, research, and community linkage. Dietz (2008) explains that the Lines of Production and Application of Knowledge were conceived to attenuate the gap between academic teaching of conventional faculties and the research carried out by the separate and traditional research centers. Consequently, as the author explains, “the [community] linked research activities of professors are closely articulated with the community demands and the students’

practice of management and intervention... [resulting] in an integral and circular concept of teaching/research/linkage” (p.367).

Moreover, Mendoza Zuany explains that, through the *Intersaberes* project, which has adopted a research approach that is participative and endogenous in its process and topics, seeks to study the process of construction and combination, hybridization, exchange, transfer of knowledge emerging from different contexts and actors including western, indigenous, rural, urban, formal, informal, mestizo, academic and non academic (2009, p.216) Utilizing, lenses to identify elements of inequality, differences, and diversity, the research employs an ethnographic method that enables the study of local phenomena and identifies answers to problems and inquiries.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PROGRAM COMPARISON

Through this study, we've learned that there exist strong similarities as well as some fundamental differences between the two programs studied. These institutions are a testament of the assertion made by Williamson (2004) that the reason the concept of intercultural tends to be malleable to different interpretations is due to the appropriation of the concept by different indigenous groups with dissimilar historical and contextual realities. In this sense, the emphasis on language by PROEIB-Andes is as much a reflection of the professor researchers specialized in linguistics who established and continue to run the program as it is a manifestation of the history of Bolivia and the region in terms of their colonial legacy and postcolonial circumstances related to indigenous people's efforts to decolonize themselves culturally and educationally as well as politically and economically. The emphasis on language by PROEIB-Andes is also an expression of the large number of indigenous people who still speak native languages such as Quechua, Aymara and Guarani in the region. By contrast, the broader multidisciplinary approach of the IUUV, as denoted by the wider variety of course offering, is more likely reflective of various factors including the fact that the IUUV is housed in a public university that seeks to close the gap between education and the demands of the market, as well as, the fact that the institution is one of the major public universities in Mexico, a much larger, richer and institutionalized nation which also

happens to be a member country of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)<sup>38</sup>.

In addition, such wider course offering may be reflective of the academic background of the leading research professors (experts in multiculturalism, interculturalism, anthropology, and political science). Moreover, although language is an important component of the IUV program and many courses are offered on this regard, including an Orientation on “Languages”, the program has an overall greater emphasis on what has been denominated as development with identity. Consequently, the program offers courses such as *Tourism and Cultural Development, Ecotourism, Production and Commercialization for a Sustainable Economy, Media, Information and Statistics Management, Public Policy and Public Management, and Fundraising*, along with many of the traditional courses also offered by PROEIB-Andes dealing with indigenous languages and world views, human rights, and territoriality, history and identity, to mention a few. In short, the IUV as a whole appears to have a stronger institutional quality and resources that PROEIB-Andes does not. However, PROEIB-Andes, although more focused on language, it gives the impression of being a grassroots program or movement from below that, with the help of GTZ, has reached transnational or regional dimensions with a large network of partnerships with other universities, centers and institutes, including strong influences in the different Ministry of Education in the region, something that IUV not only lacks but, aside from a collaboration with the University of

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<sup>38</sup> Mexico, along with Chile which recently obtained membership in 2010, is one of the few Latin American countries that is a member of the OECD:

[http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en\\_36734052\\_36761800\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_36734052_36761800_1_1_1_1_1,00.html)

Granada, it does not appear to have remotely considered. As suggested above, it is possible that these disparities may be a mere reflection of the differences between Bolivia and Mexico in terms of GDP, population, and history which, in turn, are reflected in the public universities in which the programs are housed.

Nonetheless, it was illuminating to see that both institutions used a thematic complex approach (Gadin and Apple, 2004) in their curriculum design structure - the PROEIB-Andes in the form of Thematic Areas (Rights, Intercultural, Historic Perspective, Territoriality, and Cosmology) and IUUV in the form of Orientations (Communication, Sustainability, Languages, Rights and Health). These thematic areas and orientations are curriculum design approaches that give the indigenous intercultural universities the flexibility to customize their educational experience by areas of indigenous concern through which they are able to integrate courses from different disciplines. The aim of such approach is to provide the skills and knowledge necessary for students, the indigenous leaders of the future, to act as interlocutors between their communities and the different institutions of society to meet the needs and address the problems that affect their respective communities or to advance the indigenous Intercultural Bilingual Education agenda<sup>39</sup>.

Gadin and Apple (2004, p. 183) point out that the “Thematic complexes” approach describes the culture of a community itself as the starting point for the construction of curricular knowledge not only in terms of content but also in regards to perspectives. Through action research in the community, which this study describes as

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<sup>39</sup> The advancement of the IBE agenda is more an explicit and intentional aim of PROEIB-Andes than it is of IUUV.

linked research, the main themes, as articulated by the community, are listed and used in the design of the educational curriculum and experience. The authors explain, “the most significant [themes] are constructed in the thematic complex that will guide the action of the classroom, in an interdisciplinary form .... [t]he traditional rigid disciplinary structure is broken and general interdisciplinary areas are created” (Ibid.) This description has great resemblance with the description of the curriculum design approach utilized and articulated by both PROEIB-Andes and IUV and their use of Thematic Areas and Orientations respectively.

Moreover, the PROEIB-Andes has a strong emphasis in studying the history of indigenous movement through Latin America and Bolivia. Having Historical Perspective as a thematic area, it shows that the program has a strong element of historical analysis of the injustices committed against the indigenous people in Bolivia and the region. Hence the analysis of the “synchronic and diachronic” of the inequities and inequalities that have characterized relations between culturally diverse groups in Bolivia and Latin America at large. The same affirmation could also be made about the thematic area of Territoriality. Moreover, the use of constructivism and critical pedagogy approaches throughout the curriculum by PROEIB-Andes, coupled with these two thematic areas give PROEIB-Andes a unique characteristic of grassroots movement. By contrast, the UVI, perhaps due to a variety of plausible reasons including different historical reality and the fact that the program is funded by the government, and/or as a result of the more affluent and institutional quality of the university as described above, it has a greater emphasis on the concept of development with identity, steering away from any radical

analysis of the country's history of discrimination and injustices and, on the contrary, providing a wide variety of course offering and tools designed to equip and empower indigenous students to reinforce and promote their identities through the preservation, documentation, research and promotion of their cultural heritage and simultaneously carry out the economic development of their communities while addressing matters of health, indigenous rights, and sustainability.

Similarly, while both programs train their students to be interlocutors between their respective communities and society at large, UVI makes no mention of specific objectives to train students so that they can act as mediators between their communities and the State to promote the “exercise of educational, cultural, and linguistic rights”, something that PROEIB-Andes states explicitly, giving this program a quality of advocacy or activism face-to-face with the State. IUV, however, does have an indigenous rights orientation that is geared towards preparing students to take an active role in the processes that are to warrant the civil rights of indigenous groups in their communities.

Both institutions, however, coincide greatly in their efforts to hybridize knowledge. UVI describes such efforts in terms of making sure that disciplinary borderlines not determine what is to be study or research and, on the contrary, having the community and their needs as the starting point, including a complex vision of cultural and social phenomena, establish a space for disciplinary hybridization. This same notion, although articulated somewhat different nevertheless expressing the same principle, is described by PROEIB-Andes official documents in terms of the program being based on epistemologies that recognize specific social processes and realities that facilitate the

dialogue between knowledges from different cultures, where previous knowledge represents an important aspect in the production of new knowledge to address the problems and needs of the community.

Similarly and equally illuminating as the previous aspect of knowledge hybridization, both programs include community field research as an important component of their institutional efforts to rescue ancient ways of knowing or produce new knowledge. PROEIB-Andes more focused on IBE related topics such as bilingual and multilingual education, teaching and learning methods in the classroom, curriculum diversification, and cultural capital reproduction. UVI with a significant emphasis in the study of cultural diversity and community knowledge and the role they play in the processes of public policies formation, as well as, in the development of projects related to diverse learning processes including institutional, communal, and collaborative learning that takes place in the interaction between the actors from these different domains . Such research undertakings, similarly to PROEIB-Andes, also include efforts to register, systematize and disseminate the cultural heritage of local knowledges.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine and compare how two indigenous intercultural universities are interpreting and thus carrying out their conception of intercultural, a term that in the context of indigenous people of Latin America has gained great significance with respect to Higher Education because it enables a “dialogue of knowledges” between the paradigms of modernity and tradition. As stated from the outset and described in the theoretical framework of this study, the concept of intercultural has multiple dimensions - social, political, pedagogical, curricular, actoral, linguistic, to mention a few - and, as a result, it is susceptible to different interpretations as well.

By carrying out a panoramic examination of two specific programs within each university and examining those elements that represent some form of materialization of the dialogue of knowledges such as the institution’s aims, the curriculum design, the research focus and the professional background of the research professors, who are an intricate part of the impartment of established knowledge as well as the production, classification, systematization, documentation and dissemination of new knowledge, this study has explored and attempted to find insight that could be useful in formulating an approximate interpretation of intercultural in the context of Latin America’s Intercultural Bilingual Education for indigenous people. As mentioned before, being amenable to multiple interpretations, the term is still in need of conceptual clarity despite the fact that

it has been used extensively in official documents, books and schools' bylaws in Europe, where the concept is not new. As Portera has stated, there has been a "failure to provide a clear semantic definition or distinct epistemological foundation for the concept" (Portera, 2008, p.484). The same notion applies to Latin American's interpretation and conceptualization of intercultural. Given the multi and inter-disciplinary characteristics of this area of study as well as the social and cultural complexity that characterizes the study of cultural diversity, it is not an easy task to elaborate a definitive conceptualization of intercultural especially if we recall that IBE is not applied as a monolithic model or a single homogenous strategy - programs are designed taking into account the socio-linguistic and socio-educational characteristics of the communities in which they are applied (López and Küper, 2000). Consequently, at this point in the term's developmental course, what can be accomplished in this study is a mere and approximate attempt to understand the term's interpretation by PROEIB-Andes and IUUV. Cortes (2009) who conducted a study regarding the present use and meanings of interculturality as a crucial component in various educational process and contexts, showed that due to the migratory characteristic of "intercultural" and its appropriation by different actors, the discourse on interculturality is permeable and that the language used in this discourse is not fixed. The author concluded that "to be able to come within reach of a reliable comprehension of interculturality, it is necessary to maintain the ambiguity and the conceptual 'chaos' that it entails"(p.36).

In a context of conceptual ambiguity and chaos, perhaps the best way to attempt to attain a conceptualization and interpretation of intercultural by the indigenous

universities studied in this paper, would be to highlight indicative words or phrases reflected in documents as well as in the discourse, a method used by Kowalczyk (2010). In his examination of the European discourse of education reforms and immigrants, he analyses several government documents to discern the continuities and discontinuities of such reform in its trajectory from an education of migrants' children to an intercultural education designed to simultaneously integrate immigrant students to European societies and retain their cultural distinctiveness - as a way to offer native European students an opportunity to "engage in intercultural dialogue." Looking at the introduction of a Council of Europe document on Intercultural Education, Kowalczyk finds concepts and language that serve as "markers for the [European] intercultural discourse: *flexibility, social cohesion, equality, tolerance, mutual understanding, productive cooperation, cultural enrichment, genuine democracy, common European heritage, inter-religious dialogue, human rights, cultural exchange, unity in diversity, conflict management*" (Ibid. p.13).

In the same spirit, the following markers, extracted from the examination and comments of important and relevant documentation from the two indigenous universities examined in this paper as well as from pertinent research papers cited in this study, serve as markers of and a starting point for any viable conceptualization and interpretation of intercultural by these universities: *historical and critical examination; autobiographical reconstruction; decolonization of knowledge; cultural capital rescuing, assessment and strengthening; constructivism; appropriation of western knowledge, concepts and methods; community linked research; community diagnostic; contextualized approaches*

*and knowledge production; language and knowledge systematization, categorization, and transmission; authentic forms of knowledge production and pedagogy; textbook production; dialogue of knowledge (between indigenous knowledge and western knowledge); pertinent or relevant educational programs; cultural hybrids; disciplinary hybrids; interdisciplinary curriculum design; curriculum thematic complexity; indigenous interlocutors; and development with identity.*

As a way of concluding, we should evoke Portera's assertion once again in which he states that "...[e]pistemologically, the intercultural principle can find its place between universalism and relativism. At the same time, however, it can subsume both in a new synthesis. In other words, the intercultural principle can incorporate all the positive aspects of trans-cultural and multicultural pedagogy (Portera, 2008, p.485). Portera's contribution is significant because it reminds us that in the new context of globalization, where the global (universal) and local (traditional) meet, if there is indeed a different location for these two spaces, universalism and relativism will find themselves closer face-to-face and all the long-established dichotomies or binary oppositions, many of them mentioned in this paper, will inevitably come together to a form of dialogue, that is, they will likely have to collaborate in a framework of intercultural discourse. Although such dialogue does not guarantee that the conversation will be an orderly one, Intercultural Education, in its many interpretations, holds important promises, especially for indigenous people and the pluri-cultural, pluri-ethnic, pluri-lingual societies in which they live. Sutton (2005) has described it as an orientation toward multiculturalism that appears "most adaptable" to today's global culture because the "issues associated with

multicultural education increasingly become an aspect of global educational debate; they converge around a common perspective of intercultural education” (p.98).

Intercultural Education, then, as Portera has stated, represents the most appropriate response to today’s increasingly globalized and interconnected world where different languages, religions, cultural behaviors and ways of thinking [and knowing] increasingly converge (Ibid. p.483). It is in this conversion, or hybridization, or intercultural dialogue, where the challenges of educational researchers lay ahead. Once the debate in Intercultural Education completes its trajectory from its formative years to maturity, in the process, it will have made significant contributions to another perspective that has significant work ahead of itself, one which knows that there is much to learn from our differences (Appiah, 2006, p.xv). I am alluding to Cosmopolitanism. If this assertion is verifiable, acknowledgments will be owed to Latin American indigenous intercultural universities for having started the dialogue of knowledges.

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## VITA

The son of Italian immigrants, Luciano Pedota was born in Venezuela where he lived a significant part of his life during the country's booming period in the late 1980s but also through some of its political turmoil in the early 90s. Seeking better opportunities, he came to the United States to pursue studies in Arts Management at Columbia College Chicago. Since his graduation, he has been working with some of Chicago's most important cultural institutions managing cross-cultural partnerships with a variety of organizations from some of the city's ethnic communities designing and implementing cultural and educational programs conceived to serve underrepresented minority groups; organizing professional development for elementary school teachers to incorporate creativity and the Arts in the classrooms; and implementing music education programs for Chicago Public School (CPS) children from underserved neighborhoods as a way to enhance their learning experience. His pursuit of a Master of Arts in Cultural and Educational Policy Studies from Loyola University of Chicago is part of his continuous lifelong efforts to promote intercultural understanding through the promotion of arts, culture and education in different domains (cultural institutions, schools, universities, and communities at large) and to enhance his empirical knowledge implementing cross-cultural programs with the study of Multiculturalism, Interculturalism and Cosmopolitanism.

Luciano Pedota

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INDIGENOUS INTERCULTURAL UNIVERSITIES IN LATIN AMERICA:  
INTERPRETING INTERCULTURALISM IN MEXICO AND BOLIVIA

The newly created Indigenous Intercultural Universities in Latin America challenge the conventional conception of universities and their “universal” quality. Such universities seek to decolonize knowledge by generating knowledge that is relevant to the communities in which they are located. These intentions, however, do not necessarily exclude the knowledge and research methods imparted by long-established Western universities. Instead, they have been conceived as *Intercultural* institutions designed to train indigenous community leaders capable of hybridizing or carrying out a “dialogue of knowledges”(Mato, 2007) and research methods of what are ultimately two different, and often times, opposing and contentious paradigms, one stemming from conventional Western universities, referred to as *Modern (global)*, and another originating from Indigenous people, better known as *Traditional (local)*. Two specific programs offered by two intercultural universities have been chosen in countries with strong colonial and indigenous legacy, Mexico and Bolivia. This study examines and compares how these two distinctive institutions are interpreting and carrying out their conception of intercultural, a concept that not only appears to have multiple dimensions but it seems susceptible to different interpretations as well.

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

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