Prizewinning Dissertation 2014

No.14-AK

Intercultural Bilingual Education

The role of participation in improving the quality of education among indigenous communities in Chiapas, Mexico

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Published: June 2015

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MSc in Development Management 2014

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree

Intercultural Bilingual Education: the role of participation in improving the quality of education among indigenous communities in Chiapas, Mexico

Word Count: 9,989

Abstract

Intercultural bilingual education promises to provide culturally and linguistically pertinent education to marginalised indigenous communities in Mexico. However, legislative advances have not improved academic outcomes among indigenous students. This dissertation goes beyond proximate causes of academic failure to investigate the link between participation and educational quality. It finds that despite the official rhetoric, indigenous communities remain excluded from the design and delivery of education, resulting in a decontextualised learning process where schools reproduce the coercive power relations present in the wider society. It argues that improving educational quality requires transforming those power asymmetries by increasing community participation at all levels.

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Acronyms

CGEIB	General Coordination of Intercultural Bilingual Education
DGEI	General Direction of Indigenous Education
Ecidea	Indigenous Community Education for Autonomous Development
EZLN	Zapatista National Liberation Army
IBE	Intercultural Bilingual Education
INEE	National Institute of Educational Evaluation
INEGI	National Institute of Statistics and Geography
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SEP	Secretary of Public Education
SNTE	Mexican National Educational Workers Union
UNEM	Teachers' Union of the New Education for Mexico

"No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption."

-Paulo Freire, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1970:54)

Figure 1: Map of Chiapas
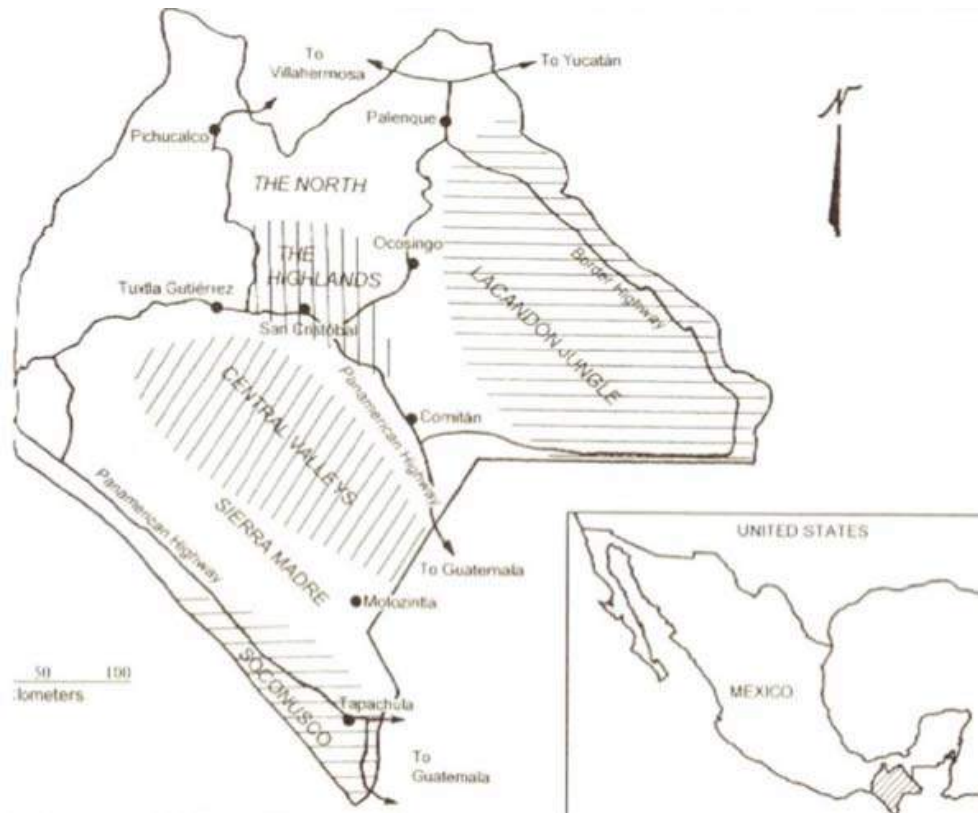
Source: Rus, Hernández and Mattiace (2003:5)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Indigenous people constitute the poorest segment of Mexican society and suffer the highest rates of marginalisation in both socioeconomic and educational terms. Around 75 per cent of indigenous people in Mexico live in poverty, while the corresponding number for the non-indigenous population is around 50 per cent (Garcia-Moreno and Patrinos 2011). In the school year 2009-2010, 7.3 per cent of indigenous students repeated a grade at the primary level compared to a national rate of 3.5 per cent (DGEI 2011). In the state of Chiapas, which has one of the highest concentrations of indigenous people in the country[1], roughly one in six[2] 15 to 24-year-olds cannot read or write[3] (INEGI 2005).

Since the turn of the millennium, indigenous children have been guaranteed the right to receive basic education[4] in their mother tongue within the parameters of the Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) framework. Rather than a mere pedagogical model, IBE seeks to reposition the indigenous and mestizo[5] cultures on an equal playing field and promote mutual respect and understanding of the *other* (CGEIB 2004), thus addressing the inequality which has permeated Mexico since colonial times. However, despite advances in legislation and educational policy, the academic outcomes of indigenous students remain far behind those of their non-indigenous counterparts (PNUD 2013). In Chiapas, the educational

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[1] The number varies depending on the identification criteria used. According to INEGI (2005), 29.1% of the population of Chiapas belongs to indigenous households, i.e. those where at least one of the parents speaks an indigenous language. Rockwell and Gomes (2009) argue that the indeterminancy of the denomination reflects the negation or reification of ethnic identities, as indigenous people remain statistically invisible if they do not speak an indigenous language.

[2] 17.3%

[3] In any language.

[4] Preschool and primary levels.

[5] A person of mixed European and Native American ancestry.

achievement gap between indigenous and non-indigenous students is 30 percentage points (Ibid).

This study goes beyond standardised test results to analyse the failure of IBE to deliver quality education from a participatory angle. Citizen participation in decision-making processes is intended to lead to improved public service delivery and the empowerment of poor people through the creation of voice and agency, yet empirical evidence is mixed (Mansuri and Rao 2004; Banerjee et al. 2006). In this paper, participation is only assumed to lead to citizen empowerment if it is true collaboration rather than tokenistic consultation (Burford et al. 2012). At its best, participation will result in equal representation of indigenous communities and their worldview in the design and delivery of IBE, or the perpetuation of asymmetric power relations at the other extreme.

Using a novel conceptual framework, the extent of participation is measured with regards to indigenous involvement in decision-making and the inclusion of their culture and language in the curriculum, classroom language, pedagogy and educational materials. Subsequently, a conceptual link between participation and educational quality is established and analysed. Quality of education is understood to encompass both academic and affective outcomes, i.e. the affirmation of one's cultural identity and attitude towards schooling (Cummins 1979; Leonard et al. 2004). The inferences are drawn from a literature review of the topic, which is further supported by data from a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with a range of stakeholders in Chiapas and Mexico City in July and August 2014.

1.2 Research Questions

This dissertation is guided by two questions:

1. *To what extent does Intercultural Bilingual Education allow for the participation of indigenous communities in Mexico?*

2. *Can more community participation result in better quality basic education for indigenous children?*

1.3 Justification

Quality of education is a topical issue for study as internationally, the focus is shifting from ensuring universal access to improving learning outcomes in the classroom (UNICEF 2013; UNESCO 2014). Education remains one of the key 'unfinished businesses' of the Millennium Development Goals and is a core aspect to be addressed in the post-2015 framework (UNICEF 2013). Likewise, community participation is increasingly perceived as crucial to achieving better development outcomes (Banerjee et al. 2006). In middle-income countries, reducing inequality and supporting minorities are seen as key to achieving social inclusion, stability and growth (World Bank 2014; IFAD 2014).

IBE as an educational paradigm has received a substantial amount of attention in academic literature, especially among Latin American scholars. Research has focused particularly on proximate causes of poor educational attainment (McEwan and Trowbridge 2007; World Bank 2005; Fernández 2003), complemented by ethnographic studies of indigenous students' and teachers' experiences of IBE (Velasco and García 2012; Pérez Pérez 2012). Although studies regarding the differences between top-down and bottom-up IBE initiatives across Latin America exist, there is a scarcity of research focusing specifically on the participatory aspect of state-led IBE and the potential of community involvement to improve educational outcomes. As Cortina (2014:5) states, 'the most important element for the expansion of

EIB is community engagement, the possibility that the community will participate actively in the education of their children'.

This study adds to existing literature by constructing a conceptual framework to gauge the extent to which community participation is allowed, and subsequently seeks to initiate discussion on improving the quality of education through increased participation. The aim has been to include the views of stakeholders from a variety of sectors in order to gain an all-round view of the perceptions of both indigenous community representatives and policy-makers, something that few previous studies have done.

1.4 Structure

This paper has six chapters. The first chapter sets the context and introduces the research questions. Chapter 2 reviews literature to construct a conceptual framework, which will be used to analyse the extent of participation as well as the link between community participation and educational quality. Chapter 3 details the methodology used. An overview of indigenous education is given in chapter 4, followed by the research findings which are presented in two parts: first, secondary evidence from literature, followed by the findings of the semi-structured interviews. These are analysed in chapter 5. Finally, chapter 6 concludes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter analyses key academic literature to review main concepts, and subsequently introduces a conceptual framework within which the findings of the study shall be analysed.

2.1 Conceptual underpinnings

This section provides a conceptual grounding for analysing IBE. It is divided into four parts: section 2.1.1 explains the theoretical underpinnings, 2.1.2 introduces the concept of interculturalism, 2.1.3 links the concepts of participation and IBE, and finally section 2.1.4 discusses the quality of education as a concept.

2.1.1 Theoretical grounding

This study is informed by a critical view of interculturalism (Gasché 2008), taking the recognition of asymmetric power relations in post-colonial societies as a necessary starting point for analysis. Conceptually, critical IBE is grounded in postcolonial theory, which departs from the premise that colonial dominance was not based merely on power but also on knowledge (Said 1978). The many debates within postcolonial theory shall not be explored here, but what is of importance is that postcolonialism problematizes the power relations through which the legitimisation of Western knowledge occurs, positioning it as universal whilst reducing other knowledge systems to superstition, folklore or mythology (C. McEwan 2008; Sharp 2009).

Although there are arguments against the value of postcolonial theory for solving practical development issues (Goss 1996), it can nevertheless provide a useful conceptual point of departure for analysing the power relations embedded in the legitimisation and dissemination of Western knowledge and worldview through the state education system. Therefore,

the research also draws on critical pedagogy (Giroux 1997), viewing the school as a political construct rather than a neutral site for instruction.

2.1.2 Interculturalism

Interculturalism as a concept is contested and does not have one universally agreed upon definition. According to the General Coordination of Intercultural Bilingual Education (CGEIB 2004:42), interculturalism refers to a relationship between cultures, which is *'constructed from a level playing field and on equal terms between the interacting cultures. Conceptually, it denies the existence of asymmetries deriving from power relations; instead, it admits that diversity is a potential richness'*[6]. Aikman (1998) states that the ideal of IBE is the dissolution of dichotomies between cultural groups, constructive dialogue, cultural recognition and preservation, and the strengthening of democracy. Thus, IBE must be viewed not only as a pedagogical but also a political challenge for the equal participation of indigenous people in society.

2.1.3. IBE as participation

Community-based and –driven approaches that include the poor not as passive recipients but informed participants are proliferating in the development sector in general (Mansuri and Rao 2004). Involving the community in decision-making intends several benefits: smoother implementation of policies (Irvin and Stansbury 2004); the empowerment of poor people; facilitated collective action; and fostering demand-driven projects that can make a difference (Banerjee et al. 2006). Participation is argued to be particularly desirable in situations of horizontal inequalities, i.e. inequalities between culturally constructed groups rather than individuals (Stewart 2002). However, the empirical evidence on whether increased community participation leads to more developmental outcomes is mixed (Mansuri and Rao 2004).

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[6] Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Participation as a concept is not neutral: Slocum et al. (1995) highlight that participation does not necessarily imply transforming the status quo, but can equally be controlled by outsiders to maintain it – something which Aikman (1998) terms participation as consent or participation as control. The form of interculturalism that is produced through these two different ways of participating can either be unequal interculturalism, which assumes a relationship of dependency between the mestizo and indigenous communities; or equal interculturalism, implying a transformation of power and control (Aikman 1997). For participation to be meaningful, the voice of the indigenous community must be considered equal to that of the mainstream. As Arnstein (1969:216) asserts, 'participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless'.

Mosse (2001) points to a further conceptual and operational issue with defining the term 'community' – he argues that participatory projects tend to view the 'community' as a homogeneous group, ignoring internal power struggles which may exclude the most marginalised. Finally, increased participation of the subaltern[7] may lead to conflict and feelings of insecurity in both indigenous and government stakeholders as asymmetric power relations are challenged (Sichra 2002).

In view of these debates, this study seeks to establish the extent to which equal interculturalism is currently promoted in the design and implementation of basic Intercultural Bilingual Education through participatory processes, understood here as the devolution of real control to indigenous stakeholders, whether it is parents, *sabios*[8] or other indigenous representatives. This leads to the first research question: *to what extent does Intercultural Bilingual Education allow for the participation of indigenous communities in Mexico?*

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[7] Subaltern refers to marginalised people, such as indigenous communities (Sharp 2009).
[8] Indigenous wise man

2.1.4 Defining Quality

As Edwards (1991) states, the quality of education cannot be neutrally defined but is always a context-specific and relative concept, which carries a political, social and cultural positioning. Hamel (2009) distinguishes between quality viewed from the neoliberal and humanistic perspectives. In the former, quality is understood as effectiveness and efficiency; measured by universal access, achieving the required standard of learning for each level, reduced grade repetition, resource efficiency, and labour market relevancy (Ibid). It follows that both worldwide and in Mexico, there has been an increasing focus on measuring the quality of schooling through national and international assessments, such as PISA (Álvarez et al. 2007). The assumption is that 'an education system that is based on constant assessment and participation in international benchmarking exercises will improve its effectiveness' (Idem:2).

The humanistic perspective does not reject the values of efficiency and effectiveness, but considers that quality is also inherently linked to the equity, diversity, justice, relevance and pertinence of education (Hamel 2009). Thus, interpreting quality through standardised measures of students' cognitive achievement is insufficient – instead, emphasis should also be placed on affective outcomes, i.e. those related to students' identity, behaviour and attitude to school (Knuver and Brandsma 1993; Leonard et al. 2004). This view of education as a process of human interaction is developed further by Schmelkes (1994) and Cummins (2000), who argue that the quality of schooling is essentially a function of the quality of the relationships between students, parents and teachers.

This paper adopts the latter position, arguing that quality cannot be reduced to measuring academic outcomes through standardised test results only. The second research question - *can more community participation result in better quality basic education for indigenous children* – is therefore two-fold, with quality referring to the extent to which the

school environment promotes academic achievement as well as students' self-worth and identity.

2.2. Towards a conceptual framework

This section presents a conceptual framework linking participation and the quality of IBE. Subsection 2.2.1 introduces the ladder of participation, a framework for gauging the extent to which participation of indigenous communities is encouraged within IBE. Section 2.2.2 establishes a conceptual link between participation and educational quality.

2.2.1 Ladder of participation

As the previous section highlighted, participation can function as consent or control of indigenous people. Drawing on Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, Burford et al. (2012) develop a three-dimensional framework for measuring the extent of indigenous participation in IBE, understood as a continuum ranging from tokenistic consultation (consent) to real collaboration (control). Their framework consists of (1) depth, or 'ladder', of participation, measured by indigenous curriculum content and control over decision-making; (2) breadth (diversity of stakeholders) and (3) scope of participation (number of key stages where stakeholders participate). Potential stakeholders may include policymakers, implementers, beneficiaries, and civil society (Ibid).

Although the framework is a useful conceptual tool for analysing the extent of participation, its application proves challenging in certain aspects. Firstly, considering the depth of participation, the definitions provided for each step lack precision, leaving considerable ambiguity which allows the potential matching of one piece of evidence with multiple categories. Secondly, as the authors acknowledge (Idem: 7), identifying the different categories of stakeholders participating in any given stage is practically impossible due to the existence of individuals who take on a number of stakeholder roles simultaneously – e.g. as a teacher and member of an indigenous community. Finally, identifying all of the key stages where

participation occurs (scope) is difficult when analysing the design and implementation of state- and federal-level policies that are characterised by multiple actors collaborating in various fora simultaneously.

Due to these theoretical and practical limitations, the main analytical tool that will be used here is the 'ladder of participation'. It has been defined and expanded by adding the linguistic-cultural aims and the role of the mother tongue in different IBE paradigms (López 2009; for López's original framework, see Appendix 7). The new framework has been colour-coded to demonstrate how the different authors' contributions have been fitted together to create a new ladder: Burford et al.'s original definitions are in green and López's contributions in blue. The red text denotes any gaps identified, which were subsequently filled to arrive at a comprehensive framework (for the original ladder, see Appendix 5). For the purposes of the study here, the first two steps of the original ladder (denigration and neglect) have been left out, as the official endorsement of IBE by the Mexican Secretary of Public Education (SEP) clearly indicates at least some level of acknowledgement.

The original two indicators of participation (curriculum content and decision-making) have been complemented by another three: (1) pedagogy, referring to the extent to which the methodology teachers are trained in and subsequently implement in the classroom reflects indigenous ways of learning and teaching; (2) materials (e.g. textbooks), as indigenous participation in their design is assumed to lead to materials in indigenous languages with culturally relevant content; and finally (3) the role of indigenous language, whether used as a language of instruction in the classroom or reduced to a mere subject of study. The additional indicators allow for a more comprehensive analysis of whether the educational system treats cultural diversity as a resource, or whether alternative worldviews and ways of teaching and learning are considered a problem to be eradicated.

Figure 2: Ladder of participation

Level	Decision-making	Curriculum content	Indigenous language (IL)	Pedagogy	Materials
Level 4 Full partnership – 'learning as one'	Fully collaborative; incorporates local stakeholders outside the formal sector. Opportunities for collective social action are created. The 'us and them' mindset is dissolved, fostering a sense of common humanity and shared responsibility.	New knowledge is generated at the intersection of indigenous and Western knowledge.	Bilingual/multilingual curriculum for the whole education system. ILs as subjects and media of instruction. Spanish as language of intercultural communication.	Indigenous and Western pedagogic approaches are equally represented.	Materials are written in indigenous languages, accounting for local linguistic varieties, with culturally relevant content.
Level 3 Interculturality – 'learning together'	Collaborative decision-making and an awareness of learning together towards shared goals. The dichotomy between indigenous and non-indigenous (the 'us and them' mindset) is still maintained.	The inherent equality of different knowledge systems is acknowledged (integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge).	Bilingual curriculum. ILs as subjects and media of instruction.	Indigenous and Western pedagogic approaches are equally represented.	Materials are written in indigenous languages and their content is culturally relevant.
Level 2 Engagement – 'learning from'	Limited indigenous involvement in decision-making, e.g. by teachers who are also local community members.	The merits of indigenous knowledge are emphasised, but non-indigenous approaches still dominate curricula, and their superiority is assumed.	Spanish curriculum (except for learning IL). Spanish as media of instruction.	Mainstream pedagogic approaches dominate.	Materials translated into key indigenous languages from Spanish with mainstream content.
Level 1 Acknowledgement – 'learning about'	Indigenous involvement in decision-making is very limited or non-existent.	Indigenous knowledge is described in formal curricula, usually by outsiders; assumes homogeneity or reinforces discourses of traditionalism.	Spanish curriculum implementation (except for learning IL). Spanish as media of instruction.	Mainstream pedagogic approaches only.	Materials provided in Spanish with mainstream content.

Adapted from Burford et al. (2012) and López (2009)

2.2.2 The missing link between participation and quality

Although participation can be considered to have intrinsic value, this study focuses on whether increased community involvement has the potential to result in better quality basic education for indigenous children. Recent research is beginning to address this issue, yet few theoretical explanations exist regarding the mechanisms through which participation may affect students' academic and affective outcomes. Calls for increasing school-level accountability and giving parents a greater role in school management (Bruns et al. 2011) are narrowly focused on the efficiency and effectiveness variables; treating the problems of poor quality schooling as technical rather than political. Therefore, they critically ignore the need to pay attention to unequal power relations and the potential of community empowerment to affect students' learning.

Cummins (2000) establishes a link between asymmetric power relations in the wider society and bilingual students' educational outcomes. He argues that coercive power relations between the state and subaltern communities influence both teacher attitudes and expectations and the type of educational structures that are established, and that these in turn condition the relationships between educators, students and communities. These micro-interactions determine students' academic success or failure, either reinforcing or challenging the societal status quo, and thus empower or disempower culturally diverse students.

Cummins demonstrates that the pedagogic and socio-political aspects of IBE are fundamentally interrelated, implying a need to go beyond the realm of the classroom to find, and subsequently reverse, the causes behind poor academic outcomes. However, the extent of community participation is presented as an educational structure produced by societal power relations at the top with no capacity to influence outcomes. This is in clear contrast with the literature discussed earlier, which maintains that participation can lead to improved service delivery (Mansuri and Rao 2004).

Figure 3 presents an adapted framework which considers the community as a key factor influencing educational quality. Following the original framework, participation depends on the extent to which established structures and teacher attitudes allow for community involvement – yet in the new version the interaction between community participation and educational structures is seen as bidirectional. This idea draws on earlier work by Cummins (1979), in which he suggests that the establishment of a particular educational program can influence a community's attitudes in relation to linguistic issues such as first language maintenance, not just vice versa.

The adapted framework demonstrates how community involvement in the design of IBE can improve marginalised students' academic and affective outcomes by increasing the cultural and linguistic relevancy of education. This increased relevancy can be manifested through the structures detailed in the previous section (2.2.1): the incorporation of students' language and culture into the curriculum, educational materials and pedagogy. The importance of cultural relevancy is highlighted by Morris (1971:162), who argues that minority language children do poorly in reading comprehension not because they cannot decode or reproduce the word, but because the word 'fails to trigger *anything* because the concepts it represents to us and to the author simply do not exist for the child, or they exist in a limited vague form'[9]. Thus, creating empowering academic and affective outcomes requires involving the community in the design of culturally relevant educational content and practices which depart from the context in which the children live.

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[9] Italics in original.

Figure 3: Framework for empowering IBE

Coercive power relations present in wider society → Ambivalent/insecure or resistant group identity

Teacher attitudes and expectations ↔ Educational structures ↔ Community participation or withdrawal

- Curriculum content
- Indigenous language
- Pedagogy
- Materials

Micro-interactions between educators, students and parents

Reflecting a

Transformative / intercultural IBE

Exclusionary / assimilationist IBE

Quality of education

Positive academic and affective outcomes

Negative academic and affective outcomes

Empowered students and communities

Disabled / resistant students and communities

Adapted from Cummins (2000:46). The added contributions are marked in red. For the original, see Appendix 6.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research design used in the study and discusses the limitations and ethical issues involved.

3.1 Methodology and research design

Qualitative methodology was adopted for the study as it is deemed to be particularly appropriate for researching vulnerable populations such as indigenous people (Daly 1992). According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2005:28), qualitative research allows hearing the voices of those who are 'silenced, othered, and marginalized by the dominant social order'.

The research design involved a review of the academic literature on IBE, followed by 15 semi-structured interviews with indigenous and government representatives (see Appendix 1 for a full list). Two sets of questionnaires were designed for the different groups of respondents (see Appendix 2). These were applied over a period of two weeks in three locations in Chiapas and a further two weeks in Mexico City. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to their flexibility, making it possible to interview a variety of stakeholders with different experiences and backgrounds as the question set could be modified (Walliman 2005).

As the interviews potentially involved criticism of government policies, the respondents were given the option of remaining anonymous. All interviewees read and signed an information sheet and a consent form. An English version of the original Spanish documents can be found in Appendix 3. Transcripts are available upon request.

3.2 Limitations

The interviewees were contacted through snowballing methodology due to the difficult-to-reach nature of the communities in question (Liamputtong

2007), which limits the robustness of the findings. Access to these groups is challenging to arrange and thus the sample of respondents is too small to infer statistically significant results. However, the answers obtained provide some support for the conclusions drawn from literature and seek to illustrate similarities and differences between the views of indigenous and government representatives.

A significant challenge was posed by the timing of the research during the summer holiday period; although officially the school year does not end until 15 July, in practice all the schools in the area had finished teaching by the time the research commenced on 1 July. This meant that classroom observations were not possible. Methodological triangulation or employing more methods for data collection could have resulted in more reliable results (Golafshani 2003).

Another limitation was presented by the fact that despite several attempts, interviews with students' parents could not be arranged. Anderson and Hatton (2000) explain that some vulnerable people may not be able to participate in research due to pressing socioeconomic needs. Additionally, many of the teachers interviewed were or had been involved in innovative projects concerned with improving the quality of education and thus cannot be considered to represent the majority of indigenous teachers in Chiapas.

During the research I was conscious of my position as a subjective researcher. The answers given by the interviewees may have been influenced by the fact that I am a white, Western outsider. For a critique on researching and representing non-Western people, see Spivak (1994). It is also recognised here that there are ethical issues with studying indigenous communities when the outputs are going to be disseminated among the academic community and unlikely to be accessible to the research subjects (Liamputtong 2007).

4. IBE IN MEXICO

This section gives a brief overview of the development of indigenous education in Mexico and sets the policy context.

4.1 Indigenous education in Mexico

Early nation-building ideologies in Mexico sought to affirm the monolingual-monocultural character of the nation-state, first through the exclusion of indigenous people from state education and later through assimilation (López 2009). Despite the project of *mestizaje,* aimed at virtually forced cultural integration (Castro and Smith 2011), Mexico today has the largest indigenous population in Latin America, comprising 68 linguistic groups which can be further subdivided into 364 linguistic dialects and varieties (SEP 2009).

Assimilatory education with Spanish-only instruction led indigenous children to continuously repeat grades or fail completely (López 2009). As a response to these challenges, Mexico introduced bilingual education in the 1940s, one of the first countries in Latin America to do so. The official aim of the new paradigm was the Spanishization, evangelisation and civilisation of indigenous peoples (López 2014). In the 1970s, the bilingual bicultural approach was adopted with an emphasis also on indigenous culture (Schmelkes 2006a).

These paradigmatic changes in education must be seen within the broader context of indigenous-state relations. The 1970s marked the 'return of the Indian' (Albó 1991) with indigenous movements beginning to recall their rights throughout Latin America. In Mexico, this culminated in the 1994 rebellion of Mayan Zapatista rebels in Chiapas, calling for rights and recognition for the indigenous people (EZLN 1993). Since the early 1990s, several legislative reforms have been passed to officially endorse

interculturalism. Mexico reformed its constitution in 1992 to acknowledge the multicultural nature of the state, guaranteeing the right of indigenous people to 'preserve and enrich their languages, knowledge and all the elements that constitute their culture and identity' (Mexican Constitution of 28.1.1992).

The General Directorate of Indigenous Education (DGEI) was founded in 1978-9 as subsystem of the Secretary of Public Education (SEP), but IBE was not officially embraced until 1997 when it was first adopted for the indigenous population at the primary level (Schmelkes 2006a). The creation of CGEIB in 2001 broadened interculturalism to encompass the education system as whole (Schmelkes 2004). Considering that IBE is only offered at the primary level, students are expected to gain an adequate level of literacy in both their native language and Spanish before transitioning into Spanish-only secondary education. This is in spite of the fact that the Law on Indigenous Language Rights of 2003 grants the right to receive bilingual education at all levels (Ibid).

4.2 Findings I: Literature

This section reviews literature to determine the extent to which the current IBE model allows for the participation of the indigenous community, and whether more participation can result in better quality IBE. It is organised according to the categories in the conceptual framework: part 4.2.1 reviews the extent of indigenous participation in decision-making; 4.2.2 curriculum content; 4.2.3 the role of indigenous language; 4.2.4 pedagogy; 4.2.5 educational materials and 4.2.6 educational quality.

4.2.1 Decision-making

The literature highlights a virtual lack of participation of indigenous communities in the design and delivery of state-led IBE in Mexico. Bertely (2007) sums up the main message by stating that the advances in legislation have not led to the participation of indigenous peoples in the

design of national or state-level plans, programs or educational policies. This argument is supported by López (2009), who concludes that the IBE model in implementation still reflects the transitional approach, which has the aim of assimilating the indigenous into the mainstream. Indeed, Rockwell and Gomes (2009:104) maintain that 'schools, even bilingual and intercultural schools, tend to integrate Indigenous children not into a space of mutual recognition of difference but, rather, into a subordinate role in a dominant national configuration'.

According to Sartorello (2009), far from constructing a new equal relationship between the state and indigenous communities, this form of top-down IBE merely substitutes the poverty discourse with a discourse on culture. The highly centralised educational system leaves no room for regional adaptation, with SEP designing the curriculum, hiring and training teachers 'based on a Western vision of what (bilingual) intercultural education should be' (Despagne 2013:117). At the local level, Schmelkes (1994) finds that parents' role in education is limited to purely administrative matters and rarely extends to supporting children's learning. As the following sections shall demonstrate in more detail, this top-down system reflects a neoliberal approach of multiculturalism, where diversity is recognised but still treated as a problem to be solved through cultural inclusion (Díaz Polanco 2006).

It is also evident that, as Mosse (2001) states, the indigenous 'community' is far from uniform in their opinions regarding IBE. Although indigenous movements have fought for the right to a culturally and linguistically relevant education, considerable disagreement among different actors exists: many parents resist their children being taught in their native languages, often due to fear of discrimination (López 2009; Martínez Novo 2012). Santis Gómez (2011) asserts that this is due to parents' perception of their children already speaking their native language and needing to learn Spanish instead – even if the children's writing or grammatical skills are non-existent. Additionally, as government officers, indigenous teachers

are usually politically aligned with the state or the powerful Teachers' Union SNTE (Rockwell and Gomes 2009; López and Sichra 2007).

By contrast, literature demonstrates that bottom-up IBE projects led by indigenous people themselves are highly participatory in nature and treat education as a political rights challenge rather than a mere technicality (López and Sichra 2007). The literature on the topic is mainly limited to evaluating two of the most prominent alternative educational projects in Chiapas, Teachers' Union of the New Education for Mexico (UNEM) and Ecidea (Indigenous Community Education for Autonomous Development), which are characterised by a high level of community participation. In Ecidea, for example, educators discuss and define educational policies together, with any decisions requiring the participating communities' seal of approval (CGEIB 2006; see Appendix 4 for the organisational structure of Ecidea). Both organisations elect their educators democratically within each community (Bertely 2006). This is a clear difference from the SEP model in which indigenous teachers are regularly sent to communities whose language they do not speak (Schmelkes in: Fierro Evans and Rojo Pons 2012).

4.2.2 Curriculum content

The literature conclusively demonstrates that indigenous content is not included in the national curriculum, which is competency-based and applied both in indigenous and mainstream schools. Even if the curriculum is sufficiently ambiguous to allow individual states to accommodate local content in theory (Pérez Pérez 2012), López (2009) argues that its density and abundance make the inclusion of indigenous knowledge[10] practically impossible. Comboni Salinas (2009) asserts that the content taught in mainstream schools is completely alien to the students and at odds with the indigenous worldview. The fact that indigenous content is omitted in

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[10] Mistry (2009) defines indigenous knowledge as local and context-specific, orally transmitted, constantly changing and holistic.

mainstream schools may contribute to reproducing inequality between the indigenous and non-indigenous populations (Del Popolo and Oyarce 2005).

By contrast, curriculums designed by grassroots IBE initiatives are constructed from the sociocultural context of the indigenous villages, fostering the integration of the school into normal community life (Sartorello 2009). These alternative programs combine the national curriculum with indigenous content, positioning the two knowledge systems as equal in status (Hamel 2009). For example, UNEM and Ecidea have systematised and combined indigenous and Western knowledge, and translated scientific concepts into indigenous languages (Bertely 2009a).

4.2.3 Indigenous language

The evidence on the use of indigenous languages in IBE schools shows that the role of indigenous language is minimal and bilingual pedagogic tools are severely lacking. Officially, 1st and 2nd grade students are supposed to be taught in their native language for 80% of the time, with 3rd and 4th graders 50% of the time and finally 20% in the 5th and 6th grades (Velasco and García 2012). However, empirical studies have demonstrated that bilingual pedagogy in primary schools is non-existent, with some teachers not using indigenous languages at all, some code-switching inconsistently between Spanish and indigenous languages; and in every case, dedicating far less time on the indigenous language than officially required (Ibid).

In another ethnographic study in Chiapanecan schools with monolingual Tzotzil and Tseltal students, Pérez Pérez (2012) finds that the staff include teachers who only speak Spanish, and the language and culture of the students is considered an obstacle rather than an asset. Likewise, in the community of San Andrés Larráinzar, Gomez Lara (2011) records teachers' attitudes demonstrating suspicion towards indigenous cultural practices and a belief that students are only able to participate fully in the Mexican society if they Spanishize.

4.2.4 Pedagogy

Although there is evidence to show that indigenous ways of learning and teaching differ from those favoured in standard education (Paradise and de Haan in: Rockwell and Gomes 2009), literature demonstrates that these are not accounted for in indigenous schools. Gomes (2004) and Pérez Pérez (2012) explain that the complex systems of learning in indigenous communities are based on participation in everyday activities and rituals. However, according to Despagne (2013), the pedagogy employed in SEP schools is traditional and teacher-centred. This is supported by Velasco and García (2012) who find that memorisation, copying from textbooks and decoding words syllable by syllable rather than pronouncing them properly are common practices in indigenous classrooms. Podestá Siri (2009) attributes this behaviour to teachers' training, never having learnt to teach from their own indigenous worldview.

Yet again, bottom-up IBE projects stand out from the state paradigm. For example, the Ecidea model, organised around the concept of *puy* or a spiral and developed with the participation of students, considers that the spaces for learning are limitless and extend beyond the school walls (Bertely 2009b). The methodology includes exploration out in the community and the transformation of new learning into works of art, which are then presented to the community (see Appendix 4 for the full Ecidea model). Indeed, the community is considered the foundation of educational processes, with students as the protagonists and the educator as the creator of learning situations, a companion in the learning process instead of a civiliser (Guzmán Gutiérrez et al. 2009).

4.2.5 Materials

The literature on the topic reveals that the materials used in indigenous classrooms are often lacking; or when they exist, culturally irrelevant and direct translations from Spanish. According to Despagne (2013:117), 'the few pedagogical materials and textbooks in Indigenous languages that exist are mere translations of the textbooks used in the monolingual system'.

Studying four primary schools in Chiapas, Velasco and García (2012) find that the textbooks used for Spanish language teaching in indigenous schools are inappropriate for students of Spanish as a second language. Furthermore, they give an example of a lesson plan provided by SEP where the understanding of a story is based on knowledge of traditional Western fairytales – the children are able to read the words in Spanish but the content is lost on them.

Materials developed by UNEM in collaboration with indigenous communities are an exception: the first is a textbook called *'Men and Women of Corn: Indigenous Democracy and Law for the World',* written by academic researchers and indigenous teachers in Tzotzil, Tseltal, Chol and Spanish (Bertely 2007). The book combines both indigenous and mestizo content and is aimed at teaching literacy. The second is *Tarjetas de Autoaprendizaje*, a set of cards for independent learning in indigenous languages and Spanish (Bertely 2009c).

4.2.6 Quality of education

The literature is unambiguous in that indigenous students suffer from a poor quality of education. Some of the main issues include desertion, reprobation and non-inscription (Schmelkes 1994). Measured by national exam results, a mere 2.5% of indigenous sixth graders achieve the highest score levels in Spanish, with 0.67% in mathematics respectively. The corresponding figures for urban schools are 14.09 and 3.12% (Schmelkes 2006b). A substantial amount of academic literature is focused on trying to explain this considerable test score gap (Álvarez et al. 2007; Hernandez-Zavala et al. 2006; P.J. McEwan 2008). However, these studies do not take into account that standardised testing leaves out indigenous, context-specific knowledge (Del Popolo and Oyarce 2005), making the testing process inherently biased against those outside the mainstream.

A significant lack of reliable research is evident regarding the effects of increased participation on educational outcomes. However, recent studies

invariably recommend involving indigenous communities to a greater extent (Cortina 2014; Zavala 2007). One of the few exceptions is provided by Hamel (2009), whose research in Michoacán shows that students attending schools employing their own, context-specific and appropriate curriculum taught in their native language, P'urhepecha, obtain significantly better results in reading and writing in both Spanish and P'urhepecha than those in schools employing a Spanishizing strategy. The P'urhepecha curriculum is also found to strengthen students' cultural identity. He thus concludes that the application of an inappropriate curriculum is one of the most significant reasons behind poor performance in national and international assessments (Ibid).

Other available research is limited to improved outcomes as a result of increased indigenous language use: evidence from Bolivia and Ecuador suggests that teaching students in their mother tongue can result in increased and better quality participation, as well as produce significant improvements in enrolment, attendance, retention and decreased grade repetition (López 2006; Garcés 2006). Finally, Danbolt (2011) finds that students in bilingual schools report higher levels of self-esteem than in monolingual schools.

4.3 Findings II: Interviews

This section details the findings of the semi-structured interviews. It is organised similarly to the previous chapter: subsection 4.3.1 discusses decision-making; 4.3.2 curriculum content; 4.3.3 the role of indigenous language; 4.3.4 pedagogy; 4.3.5 materials and 4.3.6 educational quality. For a description of the interviewees' organisations, see Appendix 1.

4.3.1 Decision-making

All of the indigenous teachers were strongly of the opinion that education was delivered from the top down without real participation of the indigenous communities, save some superficial consultations. A professor from Jacinto Canek teacher training college said: *'everything comes from above, sometimes they'll call one or another bilingual teacher but it is the high-up people in SEP who make the plans'.*

At the local level, community involvement was seen to be limited to parent committees that concern themselves with purely administrative matters. Moreover, in many respondents' experience, rather than willing participants, parents were often against teaching their children in their native language. This was put down to a fear of discrimination or because they thought indigenous language and knowledge was going to be useless when the children would invariably leave for the city. To illustrate parents' attitudes, another Jacinto Canek professor said: *'parents would ask: why are you going to teach him in Tzotzil or Tseltal if he already knows it? It is just the internalisation of the racism that the state used to incorporate indigenous people. The community itself is making barriers so that they wouldn't be taught in Tzotzil or Tseltal. Those attitudes have to be worked with'.* Another one concurred, adding: *'the teachers acquiesce because of parents' resistance'.*

By contrast, government officials stressed that mechanisms had been set up to include indigenous communities, including various SEP pilot projects

and consultations. A National Institute of Educational Evaluation (INEE) representative cited an on-going free prior informed consultation on the organisation of education and evaluation in 50 communities. However, she also contended indigenous people had no real role in any stage of the design of IBE education, with the only form of national-level involvement being independent grassroots organisations or NGOs communicating the results of their projects to the wider public.

Indeed, Ecidea stood out as having a much higher level of community involvement in education. Although their initial experience with parents was similar to the one reported by SEP teachers, an Ecidea representative told parents' resistance had been overcome by raising awareness on the importance of culturally relevant education. He highlighted that Ecidea is not fully recognised by the SEP, with teachers receiving rather than a salary, a meagre monthly grant varying from MXN 853.00 to 2390.50 (65-181 USD) designated for continuing their own education. During the interview and visit to the office, it became evident that Ecidea educators are highly motivated, having worked for free prior to the agreement with SEP which set up the grant system in 2001. According to the representative, *'the government doesn't want to recognise [Ecidea] because it's an autonomous education; because the government thinks it's the same as the EZLN[11]. But no, it's an education that was constructed by Tseltal indigenous groups who were thinking of the future of the children who are left behind'.*

When asked about the SEP's official position regarding these bottom-up initiatives, a CGEIB representative said they sought to support the numerous community organisations seeking official recognition, compile and publish their experiences, but added: *'we have to keep an eye that they fulfil what the educational system asks for'.* This seems to support the argument that the priorities of the educational system are decided upon in a centralised manner, with indigenous involvement or interculturalism

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[11] EZLN has its support bases in the Chiapas Highlands where Ecidea operates.

being a mere add-on. Another official from CGEIB's area of Intercultural Curriculum Development stated: *'the fact that national and autonomous projects are seen as separate is a more sophisticated way to continue the dichotomy. We continue playing with that separation which won't let us enter into an intercultural relationship'.*

However, government representatives were in general of the opinion that there should be more participation. One asserted: *'personally, I believe the system should be decentralised and leave much more freedom to make decisions if not by school, by region or state because they vary. The general guidelines would need to be very precise and clear in what needs to be achieved, but how to achieve it should be down to the school. They should be seen as a minimum, not a maximum'.*

4.3.2 Curriculum content

Although one of the principles of the national curriculum is interculturalism, all of the respondents said that indigenous knowledge was not present in official content at the primary level apart from a module called Civics and Ethics Education. Respondents considered that each teacher could include indigenous content if they so wished, but that this was unlikely to happen because of lack of respect for their own culture: *'we have always thought that the book says everything. We'll never ask a parent; we think that the knowledge of the community is worthless'* (teacher trainee student, Jacinto Canek).

Primary school teachers participating in the Diploma in Education Methodology for Indigenous Teachers thought SEP's national targets, or core competencies, were another reason for the omission of indigenous knowledge as each level left no time for other activities. By contrast, the Ecidea representative reported the organisation's curriculum was designed by the teachers themselves and was organised around five core themes of indigenous knowledge, combined with scientific content from the national

curriculum. He highlighted the fact that community members are seen as important contributors to the learning process.

Both indigenous and government representatives invariably considered it important to teach indigenous knowledge in the formal school system. Many expressed concern about the gradual disappearance of indigenous knowledge with the elders passing away unless transmitted to younger generations at school. Many asserted it should be up to the communities to decide what content to include. As one professor contemplated,

> *'The problem is that you would get into a logic of certification for the knowledge that a traditional healer has. Who has the power to do that? Another issue is that these days, people in the villages do not believe in traditional knowledge anymore. They trust certified midwifes; not parteras[12] who don't have a certificate from the national healthcare system - - if we take a traditional healer into a school where there are protestant children and so on, people will say it's superstition and that children shouldn't be learning it - - the community itself should legitimise which knowledge will be carried on.'*

4.3.3 Indigenous language

All of the indigenous respondents stated that the role of indigenous language in primary education was restricted to being taught as a subject, with Spanish remaining the language of instruction. They considered the process of Spanishization to be still in effect and contended that little or nothing had changed from earlier educational policies despite the official rhetoric endorsing interculturalism.

The teacher trainee students interviewed expressed discontent about the lack of qualified professors for indigenous languages, considering their own language skills insufficient for teaching others. A CGEIB official explained the recent development of intercultural high schools and universities was

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[12] Traditional Mayan midwife.

an attempt to address the problem. All respondents considered it fundamental to reinforce the teaching of indigenous languages and foster pride in speaking them, whilst ensuring an adequate level of Spanish.

4.3.4 Pedagogy

It was evident from the responses that the current pedagogy, both in teacher training and its practical implementation in the classroom, reflects the standard Westernised model. With regards to state-led IBE, the responses highlighted complete lack of dialogue and participation in pedagogy development except for occasional courses delivered by CGEIB.

4.3.5 Materials

The respondents said that textbooks and other materials were produced in indigenous languages, but several issues were mentioned with regards to their content and availability.

Both government and indigenous representatives acknowledged that materials often did not arrive at schools in remote locations. It was also mentioned that the materials did not reflect different linguistic varieties; sometimes the materials would be sent on a USB memory drive when the teachers didn't have access to a computer or didn't know how to use one; and in general, the content translated directly from Spanish was considered inappropriate and contextually irrelevant. One of the teacher trainee students said:

> *'An indigenous child doesn't know what a supermarket is, nor has he been to a theme park. He has only been to a local shop. It's not that he doesn't have the capacity to understand, but you have to start with the easy and go towards the more complex. Now it is being done the wrong way round. A child has to begin from his natural surroundings, from his context. Yes, the curriculum should be different, in terms of contextualisation.'*

4.3.6 Quality of education

Overall, the lack of relevance of the curriculum was considered to be the key issue behind poor outcomes and high drop-out rates. The INEE representative explained: *'the homogenous curriculum is one of the most important reasons for academic underachievement. - - It has been an error by the Mexican government to organise the curriculum in a centralised manner. To be able to move towards better quality, it is necessary to decentralise and open up spaces of participation'.*

This view was echoed by indigenous teachers and teacher trainees, who considered the issue to be particularly grave in relation to standardised national exams, which are applied in Spanish and thus place indigenous students at a disadvantage. As one professor exclaimed: *'the argument [itself] is racist. On the one hand, it is true. If I apply a test with Mayan parameters to a mestizo, he won't do well. - - The exams are designed from a different logic... we, indigenous people, would have to submit ourselves to that Western assimilationist logic to be able to do better in those exams.'*

A CGEIB official agreed that standardising meant that those who are different lose out, but added: *'we do need standardised exams because they tell us a lot about the hiccups in the system in general. That's how they should be used. On the other hand, we need to evaluate different types of learning and compare and complement one with another. We do need standardised tests to see if the system is delivering. The fact that they perform badly doesn't mean they are stupid but that the system could be bad'.*

Finally, interviewees were asked whether increased participation could lead to what they understood as a better quality education. One professor said: *'Ecidea and UNEM are schools which depart from what indigenous people want – sustainable development. From the indigenous point of view, they are of better quality but not from the state's point of view. They are giving people what they want'.* This highlights the subjectivity of

educational quality, conceived by the indigenous communities to depart from local needs. The Ecidea representative added: *'they [SEP] did evaluations for six years to find the quality of education. But we have seen that you don't achieve quality education by evaluating the students'.*

Overall, the interviewees coincided that more participation could lead to a better quality education. Community involvement at the local, state and federal levels was considered to have several positive effects, with the increased relevance of curricular content as the most important. According to the INEE representative, *'participation can certainly lead to better quality education insofar as there is curricular relevance. They will feel like the school belongs to them, and that the school is part of them. It'll be possible to hear their voice – on what they don't like and what should be emphasised'.*

In Ecidea's experience, students' performance had improved since the introduction of the Ecidea system – however, it was not possible to confirm this as test results had been sent away to SEP and were not available for viewing; also, improved quality would not necessarily show in standardised test results due to the bias discussed earlier. However, the representative remarked that the students experienced difficulties transferring to Spanish-only secondary school. As mentioned before, IBE at the secondary level is a legal right yet remains unrealised in practice. Additionally, the practice of hiring teachers from the communities themselves has been a clear improvement from the past: *'the communities expelled the [SEP] teachers because they won't stay in the class for the whole week. They come in on Monday and leave on Thursday. They lose days and don't recover them'.*

When asked whether there was any evidence on improved quality as a result of the participatory Diploma in Methodology of Education for Indigenous Teachers project, the INEE representative replied: *'the Diploma shows that there are important changes in the teachers and students. There have been many changes in the professors, but we haven't been able to*

capture those. The students really want to be at school for what they are learning. The school is much closer to the community'. However, she also highlighted the need for indigenous communities to organise themselves: *'if you want to give them the responsibility to design a curriculum, who is going to take charge? There are two tasks: the state needs to open up, decentralise, give more autonomy to communities and schools. But the indigenous communities also need to strengthen their organisations'.*

5. DISCUSSION

This chapter analyses the findings of the literature review and interviews within the conceptual framework outlined in chapter 2.

More participation, better quality education?

The findings of the literature review are clearly confirmed by the interviewees' perceptions: despite the official rhetoric of interculturalism, indigenous communities are virtually absent from the design and delivery of state-led IBE. The national curriculum, pedagogy and teaching materials lack any influence of indigenous culture and worldview, with indigenous languages playing a negligible role in the classroom and educational materials. The official educational policy is contradictory with supposed room for local adaptation, yet teacher training practices, national evaluation standards and educators' own perceptions of their culturally diverse students demonstrate that IBE is far from intercultural. Currently, rather than a cross-cutting value in the national curriculum, interculturalism is something that is left for the teachers to implement at their own discretion. However, this is made all but impossible by the lack of appropriate materials, density of the national curriculum and centrally defined targets, and most importantly, teacher training practices reflecting traditional Western methodologies.

These characteristics point to level 1 in the ladder of participation, where IBE is reduced to acknowledgement, or 'learning about' indigenous communities. A careful analysis of all of the five categories reveals that decision-making, indigenous knowledge in the curriculum, indigenous language and pedagogy are all at level 1, with only educational materials reaching level 2 (engagement or 'learning from' indigenous communities) due to the fact that at least some materials are provided in indigenous languages despite their content being completely Western. Both the

literature review and interviews show that legislative advances have not translated into a culturally and linguistically pertinent education for Mexico's most marginalised citizens.

By contrast, the bottom-up IBE initiatives Ecidea and UNEM are characterised by high levels of participation in all areas studied. For a point of comparison, these projects reach a level 3 in the ladder of participation overall: decision-making involves local communities; the equality of different knowledge systems is acknowledged by integrating Indigenous and Western content in the curriculum; children are taught in their native language and the pedagogy reflects indigenous ways of learning. However, although these projects are arguably delivering a much more culturally and linguistically relevant education than what SEP is currently offering, they are small-scale and thus have a limited impact. Achieving true intercultural education – represented by levels 3 and 4 of the ladder – must encompass the education system as a whole and be aimed at transforming the deeply rooted attitudes which foster the continuation of asymmetric power relations. Educational projects that leave out the mestizo population cannot thus be considered intercultural in the full sense.

The interviews also highlighted the challenge of overcoming the internalised discrimination among parents and entire communities in order to truly decolonise education (Gustafson 2014). However, the experience of Ecidea demonstrates that these engrained attitudes can be overcome by a conscious effort to strengthen the school-community relationship and by creating a school which does not only contribute to students' academic learning but fosters the cultural identity of the entire community. This supports Cummins' (1979) suggestion that the establishment of a particular educational program can influence a community's attitudes in relation to first language maintenance, not just vice versa.

Although literature offers little clue as to whether community involvement can improve the quality of education, the interviews highlighted that stakeholders across the board are convinced of the need for increased participation to reverse poor academic outcomes. What is clear is that limiting our understanding of educational quality to standardised test results fails to capture the role of schools in forming students who are knowledgeable and proud of their cultural and linguistic identity. Additionally, it contributes to the continued dominance of the Western worldview over indigenous knowledge, legitimising the former and discrediting the latter as irrelevant to the nation as a whole.

The interviews provide support for the conceptual framework developed in this paper, with both indigenous and government representatives asserting that increased community participation can lead to improved educational quality, both in the sense of academic and affective outcomes. Accounting for the heterogeneity of indigenous communities and contextualising learning and assessment to students' realities accordingly was seen as the key mechanism through which this could happen. Although the study is limited in its scope and generalisability, the tentative findings point to the potential of improving quality through taking students' culture and language as a point of departure for designing curriculum content, materials and pedagogic practices. This cannot be achieved through the current top-down process.

A number of other questions that have arisen during the study also merit further inquiry. It is evident that the theoretical foundations for assessing the role of participation in improving educational quality need to be developed. Ecidea's success in overcoming parents' resistance to IBE calls for further investigation of the conceptual link between educational structures and community participation. How can community resistance be overcome in instances of internalised discrimination? What factors have contributed to successful community involvement in the communities where alternative educational projects have been established?

Although offering policy recommendations was not the purpose of this study, some suggestions are however put forward. The antagonism between the state and indigenous communities in Chiapas can only be overcome through the real inclusion of indigenous people in the design and delivery of national education. Consultations and occasional pilot projects in marginalised communities do little to change the exclusion, discrimination and perception of being treated as second-class citizens. True interculturalism can only surge when indigenous communities feel their input is required and valued. Decentralising education, with substantial room for adaptation at the state and local levels, is the only way for the Mexican Government to deliver linguistically and culturally relevant education to the diverse population.

6. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored the extent of indigenous participation allowed by the IBE model of basic education in Mexico, and sought to analyse whether increased community involvement has the potential to improve educational outcomes. These questions are topical areas of study as indigenous people continue to be the some of the poorest citizens worldwide (UN 2014), with improving the quality of education remaining high on the post-2015 policy agenda (UNICEF 2013).

Drawing on critical pedagogy, intercultural bilingual education is aimed at the equalisation of asymmetric power relations rooted in the colonial past. It is thus not only an educational but also a political challenge for the equal participation of indigenous people in society. However, the literature and stakeholder interviews reveal that legislative advances and a rhetoric of interculturalism have not translated into real inclusion of indigenous communities, but instead, perpetuate and legitimise the status quo.

Using a novel conceptual framework, this dissertation has demonstrated that indigenous people, their cultures and worldviews are virtually absent from the design and delivery of education – measured in terms of decision-making, curriculum content, native languages, ways of teaching and learning, and educational materials. This represents IBE as acknowledgement, or 'learning from' indigenous communities, rather than true interculturalism. Bottom-up IBE initiatives in Chiapas are characterised by a much higher level of participation, yet remain almost entirely shut out of the official system.

It is argued here that this lack of participation is fundamentally linked to poor educational outcomes, as the exclusion of indigenous cultures and languages results in a decontextualised learning process where schools merely reproduce the inequality present in wider society. Interviews with

government and indigenous stakeholders have revealed that actors across the board view increased community involvement as key to reversing educational failure, yet true inclusion requires substantial changes at the institutional level. In order to improve marginalised students' academic and affective outcomes, it is necessary to move beyond standardised test measures and invest in a culturally and linguistically pertinent basic education whilst opening up spaces of democratic participation at all levels of government.

The challenges of underrepresentation and poor educational quality within IBE are part of a broader narrative of the struggle for indigenous rights in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. Recognising indigenous languages, cultures and worldviews as equal to those of the mestizo requires moving beyond the rhetoric of interculturalism and democratising education through real participatory processes. Quality Intercultural Bilingual Education can only be achieved when the indigenous leave the margins to become the protagonists in its design and delivery.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Interviewees

1.1 List of interviewees

Name	Role / institution	Place	Date
1. Anonymous	Teacher trainee student / Jacinto Canek	Zinacantán, Chiapas	2.7.2014
2. Anonymous	Teacher trainee student / Jacinto Canek	Zinacantán, Chiapas	2.7.2014
3. Anonymous	Teacher trainee student / Jacinto Canek	Zinacantán, Chiapas	2.7.2014
4. Anonymous	Teacher trainee student / Jacinto Canek	Zinacantán, Chiapas	2.7.2014
5. Anonymous	Teacher trainee student / Jacinto Canek	Zinacantán, Chiapas	2.7.2014
6. Anonymous	Professor / Jacinto Canek	Zinacantán, Chiapas	3.7.2014
7. Anonymous	Professor / Jacinto Canek	Zinacantán, Chiapas	3.7.2014
8. Anonymous	Professor / Jacinto Canek	Zinacantán, Chiapas	3.7.2014
9. Anonymous	Primary school teacher / Diploma in Education Methodology	San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas	8.7.2014
10. Anonymous	Primary school teacher / Diploma in Education Methodology	San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas	8.7.2014
11. Anonymous	Ecidea	Ocosingo, Chiapas	10.7.2014
12. Anonymous	UNICH	San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas	11.7.2014
13. Anonymous	CGEIB	Mexico City	25.7.2014
14. Anonymous	INEE	Mexico City	31.7.2014
15. Anonymous	CGEIB	Mexico City	5.8.2014

The role of some of the participants has been left out so as not to compromise their anonymity.

1.2 Description of interviewees' organisations

1. Indigenous Intercultural Bilingual Teacher Training School Jacinto Canek, Zinacantán, Chiapas

Jacinto Canek is the first Normal School in Mexico which exclusively trains indigenous education professionals for the preschool and primary levels. It is located in the village of Zinacantán, Chiapas.

2. 'School and Community' Diploma in Education Methodology for Primary and Secondary Teachers in Indigenous Communities

The Diploma is a participatory project for indigenous teachers focused on developing the pedagogy, cultural relevance and revaluation of traditional knowledge in education. It is led by Sylvia Schmelkes in her position as the Director of the Research Institute for the Development of Education at the Universidad Iberoaméricana (INIDE, online resource).

3. Ecidea

Ecidea, which stands for Community Indigenous Education for Autonomous Development, is a grassroots educational project implemented in some of the poorest Tseltal communities in the Chiapas Highlands. It is run by Lumaltik Nopteswanej, a collective of indigenous teachers (Bertely 2009a).

4. UNICH

The Intercultural University of Chiapas is one of eight intercultural higher education institutions in Mexico. It has campuses in five locations in the state of Chiapas. UNICH's mission is to form professionals fluent in the indigenous languages of Chiapas and integrate indigenous and scientific knowledge to contribute to the construction of a society with a higher quality of life (UNICH 2013).

5. CGEIB

The General Coordination of Intercultural Bilingual Education is the entity which coordinates, promotes, evaluates and assesses material related to equity, intercultural development and social participation within the Secretary of Public Education. Its activities include investigation, design of educational materials and programs, delivery of teacher training courses, and promotion of culturally and linguistically pertinent education to indigenous students (CGEIB 2013).

6. INEE

Founded in 2002, the National Institute of Educational Evaluation is responsible for the evaluation of the quality, performance and results of education in Mexico. It designs and carries out evaluations and issues guidelines for lower level authorities. It has been an independent public entity since 2013 (INEE 2014).

APPENDIX 2

Interview questions

Question set 1: indigenous teachers, professors and teacher trainees

The same set of questions was used for all indigenous interviewees in Chiapas. The teacher trainees were asked to answer the questions based on their experience of teacher training and professional practice in indigenous pre- and primary schools.

1. What do you understand by the term interculturalism, both in theory and practice?
2. How is interculturalism reflected in the:
   a. Curriculum – i.e. does it contain indigenous content/knowledge?
   b. Materials – i.e. what language are they written in and do they include indigenous content?
   c. Pedagogy – i.e. are indigenous modes of teaching and learning included in the methodology, both during teacher training and implementation in the classroom?
3. How does the indigenous community you come from participate in the provision of formal education (*sabios*, parents or other)?
4. How is indigenous knowledge included in intercultural bilingual education?
5. Should indigenous knowledge be taught in the formal school system or left to the community? If so, what should this include?
6. There is a lot of evidence indicating that indigenous students perform poorly compared to non-indigenous students in terms of educational outcomes. In your opinion, why is this so?
7. Should the model of intercultural bilingual education continue as it is, or should it be changed somehow?
8. Can more participation of the indigenous communities result in better quality basic education? If so, how?

Question set 2: Government representatives

1. What do you understand by the term interculturalism, both in theory and practice?

2. How is interculturalism reflected in the:
   a. Curriculum – i.e. does it contain indigenous content/knowledge?
   b. Materials – i.e. what language are they written in and do they include indigenous content?
   c. Pedagogy – i.e. are indigenous modes of teaching and learning included in the methodology, both during teacher training and implementation in the classroom?

3. Should indigenous knowledge be taught in the formal school system or left to the community? If so, what should this include?

4. How does [your institution] perceive the role of the indigenous community in designing and implementing the plans and programs of basic education? In practice, how do they participate (parents, *sabios,* committees etc.)?

5. What is the position of [your organisation] with regards to alternative educational projects which are developed by the indigenous communities themselves (e.g. Ecidea, UNEM or other)?

6. There is a lot of evidence indicating that indigenous students perform poorly compared to non-indigenous students in terms of educational outcomes. In your opinion, why is this so?

7. What does quality of education mean to you? To what extent can national exams serve as indicators of quality of education?

8. Can more participation of the indigenous communities result in better quality basic education? If so, how?

APPENDIX 3

Informed consent

3.1 Participant consent form

Participant consent form

Title of Project: Intercultural Bilingual Education and Traditional Knowledge: How Does the Indigenous Community Participate? Evidence from Chiapas, Mexico.

Researcher: Anni Kasari, MSc Dissertation Student, Department of International Development, LSE.

Email: a.p.kasari@lse.ac.uk

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet. I understand what my role in the investigation will be and I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I agree to participate in the research.

- I have been told how the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.

- I understand I have the freedom to withdraw from the investigation for any reason and without prejudice by informing the above named researcher within two weeks (14 days) of my interview.

- I have been given a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

_____

SIGNATURE:

_____

DATE:

_____

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.

3.2 Participant information sheet

All participants were informed they had the option of remaining anonymous, but that their organisation and position could be referred to if this did not compromise their anonymity. Any participants who wished to remain anonymous have had their names changed in the interviewee list.

Participant information sheet

You are invited to take part in a research study which forms part of the assessment for my MSc degree. Before you decide whether you wish to take part, please read the information below so that you have a better understanding of the research, how it will be conducted and the likely outputs. Please feel free to ask if you require any further information.

Title: Intercultural Bilingual Education and Traditional Knowledge: How Does the Indigenous Community Participate? Evidence from Chiapas, Mexico.

Purpose of the study:

The study is focused on analysing how the Intercultural Bilingual Education model involves indigenous knowledge and enables the participation of indigenous communities in the planning and implementation stages of primary education in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. The analysis will be based on interviews of government representatives, teachers and representatives of indigenous communities (including parents).

The findings will be used to examine the extent to which the inclusion of indigenous knowledge can have implications for the quality of primary education.

Who is undertaking the research?

Anni Kasari, MSc Dissertation student, Department of International Development, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK. Email: a.p.kasari@lse.ac.uk

Why am I being invited to participate in this study?

You have been invited to participate in the investigation because you are either

   a) A representative of the Mexican Government with particular

knowledge on Intercultural Bilingual Education;
b) A parent with children who attend an indigenous primary school.
c) A representative of an indigenous community with knowledge on education; or
d) A teacher in an indigenous primary school.

Do I have to participate?

It is your choice whether or not to participate in this study. If you do take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet, and I will ask you to sign a consent form. Please note that even if you do decide to take part, you are free to withdraw within 14 days of the interview without giving a reason.

What happens if I decide to take part?

If you decide to take part, I will ask you a series of semi-structured questions. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

Will my responses be anonymised?

All information you provide will be kept anonymous at your request, and will be securely stored. Your name will never be associated with any of your answers. Some comments may be attributed to describe your organization or the community you represent.

What will happen to the findings of the study?

Selected quotes from your interview may be used in my MSc dissertation. The information generated by the study may be published, but no details from which you could be identified will be divulged.

Will I be notified of the findings of the study?

I will offer you a short summary of the research findings should you request it at the time of the research.

Thank you for reading the Participant information sheet.
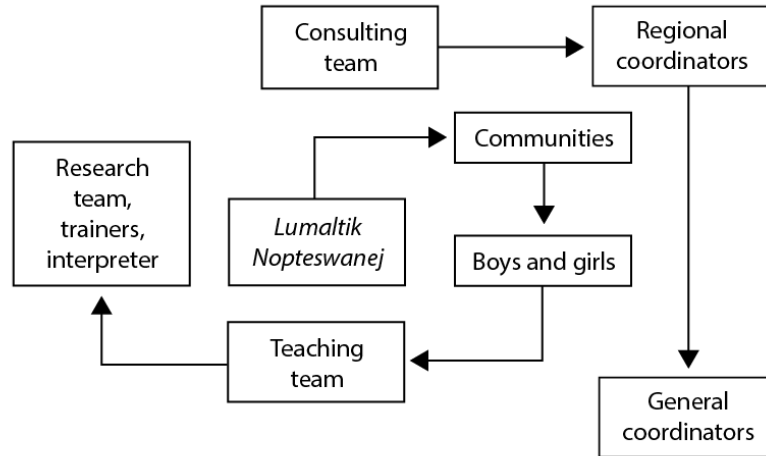
30 June 2014

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.

APPENDIX 4

Ecidea

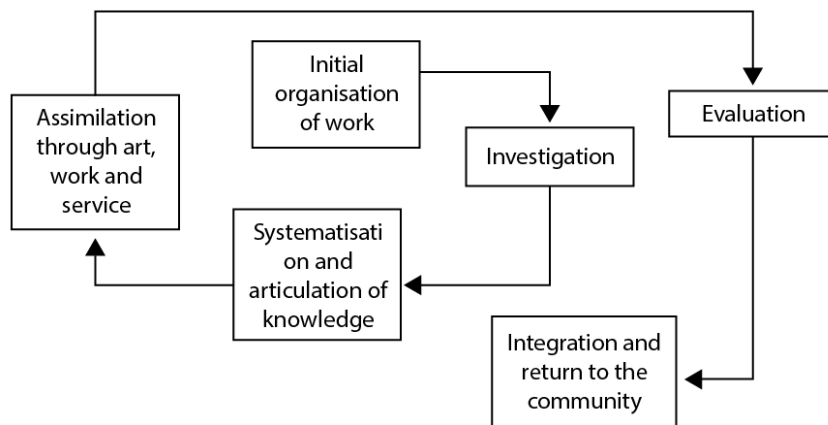*4.1 Ecidea organisational structure*

ORGANISATION OF THE PROGRAM
Organisational structure of Lumaltik Nopteswanej

Source: Bertely 2009b: 51

4.2 Ecidea methodology

Puy (Spiral) Methodology

Source: Bertely 2009b: 13

APPENDIX 5

Burford et al.'s ladder of participation

A ladder of indigenous participation in intercultural education

LEVEL -1: DENIGRATION
Indigenous knowledge is explicitly denigrated in formal curricula. No indigenous involvement in decision-making.

LEVEL 0: NEGLECT
Indigenous knowledge is not explicitly denigrated, but it is still devalued by omission from formal curricula, rendering it invisible in mainstream education. No indigenous involvement in decision-making.

LEVEL 1: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – 'LEARNING ABOUT'
Indigenous knowledge is described in formal curricula, usually by outsiders, and often in a way that assumes homogeneity or reinforces discourses of traditionalism. Indigenous involvement in decision-making is very limited or non-existent.

LEVEL 2: ENGAGEMENT – 'LEARNING FROM'
The merits of indigenous knowledge are emphasised, but non-indigenous approaches still dominate curricula, and their superiority is assumed. There may be limited indigenous involvement in decision-making, e.g. by education professionals who are also local community members ('boundary spanners').

LEVEL 3: INTERCULTURALITY – 'LEARNING TOGETHER'
The inherent equality of different knowledge systems is acknowledged, with collaborative decision-making and an awareness of learning together towards shared goals. However, the dichotomy between indigenous and non-indigenous (the 'us and them' mindset) is still maintained.

LEVEL 4: FULL PARTNERSHIP – 'LEARNING AS ONE'
Problem-based, change-oriented learning dissolves the 'us and them' mindset, fostering a sense of common humanity and shared responsibility, and generating new knowledge and opportunities for collective social action. Decision-making is fully collaborative and incorporates local stakeholders outside the formal sector.

Source: Burford et al. 2012: 6

APPENDIX 6

Cummins' original framework

Intervention for collaborative empowerment

| COERCIVE RELATIONS OF POWER MANIFESTED IN THE MACRO-INTERACTIONS BETWEEN DOMINANT GROUP INSTITUTIONS AND SUBORDINATED COMMUNITIES | → | AMBIVALENT/INSECURE OR RESISTANT SUBORDINATED GROUP IDENTITY |

EDUCATOR ROLE DEFINITIONS ↔ EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES

MICRO-INTERACTIONS BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

reflecting a

	TRANSFORMATIVE/ INTERCULTURAL ORIENTATION	EXCLUSIONARY/ ASSIMILATIONIST ORIENTATION
Cultural/Linguistic Incorporation	Additive	Subtractive
Community Participation	Collaborative	Exclusionary
Pedagogy	Transformative	'Banking'
Assessment	Advocacy	Legitimation
	↓	↓
	Academically and Personally Empowered Students	Academically Disabled or Resistant Students

Source: Cummins 2000: 46

APPENDIX 7

López's models of IBE

Bilingual education models under implementation in Latin America

Transitional	Indigenous languages and cultures are a threat to national unity.	Indigenous assimilation into the mainstream. Consolidation of the classical homogenous nation-State and of "a" national culture.	Indigenous communities and individuals in rural areas.	Spanishization or Portuguisization. Subtractive bilingualism. Gradual extinction of indigenous languages. Indigenous languages used to translate and transmit mainstream curriculum content. A monolingual and monocultural society.	Spanish curriculum implementation except for the area of language. Mother-tongue is a bridge to European hegemonic languages. It makes hegemonic language learning more efficient.
Maintenance and development	Indigenous languages and cultures are a legacy to be preserved.	Cultural pluralism. Redefinition of the nation-State model through legal recognition of the indigenous peoples and groups that pre-date European invasion. Recognition of some cultural rights.	Indigenous communities and individuals in rural and urban areas.	Additive bilingualism. Indigenous societal bi or multilingualism. Preservation and development of indigenous languages. Indigenous languages to tackle indigenous cultural content in the curriculum. Spanish or Portuguese as languages of interethnic and intercultural communication. A multicultural / intercultural society.	Bilingual curriculum implementation. Indigenous languages as subjects and media of instruction vis-á-vis Spanish / Portuguese. Proficiency in two languages. Cultural sensitivity and language awareness.
Enrichment	Indigenous languages and cultures are political resources to achieve unity within diversity.	Intracultural reaffirmation. Intercultural citizenship. Redefinition of the nation-State, granting territorial rights and levels of autonomic rule to indigenous peoples. A multi-nation State in-the-making.	Indigenous communities and individuals in urban and rural areas. Society at large, including mestizo individuals and communities.	Additive bilingualism. General societal bi or multilingualism. Preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages. Indigenous cultures and languages as rights challenge the ontology of school knowledge. Spanish or Portuguese as languages of interethnic and intercultural communication. An intercultural society.	Bilingual or multilingual curriculum implementation. Indigenous languages as subjects and media of instruction vis-á-vis Spanish / Portuguese. Proficiency in two or more languages. Cultural sensitivity and critical language awareness.

Source: López 2009: 11