**XIII Simposio Interamericano de Etnografía de la Educación**

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**Título de la sesión/Title of the sesión:** Escolarización y juventudes indígenas. Transformaciones socioculturales y reposicionamientos identitarios y políticos./ Youth and education: Sociocultural transformations and the repositioning of identities.

Jóvenes indígenas:

Transformaciones intergeneracionales y nuevos proyectos educativos

*Gabriela Czarny[[1]](#footnote-1)*

1. **Study´s references**

This work is part of the research I have been developing about the meanings related to schooling that indigenous youths acquire at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN, a public university), in Mexico City (2009-2011).

The UPN has a particular program -created in 1982- for indigenous students called: Licenciatura en EducaciónIndígena (LEI). Although there are also indigenous students in other programs at the UPN, students who are studying in this program are from different entities of the country and had migrated to Mexico City and others cities previously to be able to complete high school.

Aproximately 120 students make up each generation of which 50% are women and the rest men. These students can be recognized as indigenous through different criteria: indigenous language (that can include reading and writing an indigenous language, or only understanding but not speaking), and auto -adscription to some indigenous community eventhough they don´t live in their native territories. To complete their undergraduate studies at LEI-UPN, they need to stay at Mexico City for 4 years.

**2.Study´scontributions**

1. **Indigenous people and higher education (university)**

In debates presented in South America, including indigenous leaders, academics, students and civil organizations (Bello, 2009), the issues pointed out have to do with the responsibility of the university as a bridge in the construction of different kinds of knowledge that include indigenous knowledge. For this, they say, “we need reinvent school” –meaning that we need to go beyond what is now called intercultural education- which requires a mental and material des-colonization. Among many actions it implies breaking with history as the universal one; the reformulation of the citizenship notion –heritage of the liberal Eurocentric and American society of XIX century-. The last idea is central for Latin American societies which consider themselves as mestiza, denying indigenous civilizations.

1. **Indigenous and migration**

Talking about this relation –indigenous-migration- implies rethinking images still present in the academy and society more generally in which indigenous people who have left their communities and towns –in Mexico means rural and indigenous zones, characterized in this way by the state-, and migrated to the cities and other countries are considered to be non indigenous and that they have lost their culture. They are identified and talked about as “migrants”. For some indigenous organizations, for example in Mexico City, being named “migrant indigenous” is not accepted. The problem is recognizing the causes of migration: militarization of indigenous regions by the government, economical and religious problems, and extreme poverty. In this analysis presented here it is important to recognize indigenous –individuals or communities- as such, and to identify and understand multiplies cultural processes that are taking place in different parts of modern-day Mexico.

1. **Co-participative and reconstructive research**

Through the narratives produced by indigenous students during one year, working in a “taller”(workshop) of writing productions about their reflections on schooling life –including university-, I learned about and recognized the heterogeneous point of view they have incorporated about what is “a good school” and the complexity of the forms that racism takes. The experience of producing a written text that was then commented on, analyzed and revised by the group in this “taller” experience, provided an opportunity to reconstruct social and cultural *memory*. The act of reconstructing history allowed them to “denaturalize” personal, family and community histories that are forgotten because of pain and frustration.

This way of producing knowledge form refers to what some academics call “decolonizing methodologies” (Tuhiwai S. 1999), or “co-participative research” (Vasilachis 2007, Rivas 2010).

**3. Indigenous schooling in cities**

Research done on indigenous schooling in rural zones in Mexico, called Indigenous Education, has been carried out for decades, but studies of Indigenous education in cities started only 15 years ago. In a review of the recent educational research in Mexico (2002-2012), in one chapter called “Multiculturalism” it is noted that research of indigenous schooling in cities has increased (Czarny and Martínez, 2013). This chapter points out to the inequality of the learning process in regular public schools (not only in schools that belong to the Indigenous education system run by the state, but also in regular public schools).There are different reasons for this inequality (cultural differences, language as Spanish only, and econmic desadvantages because their ethnic adscriptions), but in some cases the school experience for Indigenous children and youth nevertheless is successful. Even though what is shown in this research refers to discrimination and racism that the indigenous population suffers at the hands of their teachers or classmates.

Another conflictive aspect that this chapter highlights is the category “urban indigenous” (indigenous people who migrate to cities and live there) that appears in the research. Talking about “urban indigenous” complicates the debate in relation to collective rights that the State recently recognized for indigenous people in Mexico; so indigenous who live in cities, and who are not articulated with indigenous communities are made invisible.

One of the challenges for educative policies is to recognize the diversity that characterizes Mexico everywhere, and that indigenous people not be treated like “minorities” at school, which would imply respecting the education rights of indigenous people in the XXI century.

**4. Some results**

The stories of the indigenous youth show the heterogeneous ways they articulate their lives in the city as well as at the university. This is related to: parental and friendship networks, and the kind of expectations they have to become professionals after they leave the university.

1. **Reasons to go to university**

There are 3 different types of students:

1. A small group who are indigenous teachers and need the certification (Licenciatura en Ed. Indígena). All of them come from different communities and know that the UPN in Mexico City is well known as the appropriate institution for their training.
2. The biggest group is integrated by indigenous youth that come from high school and are indigenous teachers´ sons and daughters, who are motivated by the idea “to have a job in the educational system”, and are supported by their parents (Licenciatura en Educación Indígena).
3. The minority is indigenous youth that come from high school and are students in the programs of Educative Sociology and Education.They are motivated by the idea that coming to Mexico City and to this University (UPN, public) is a better option for various reasons than staying in their states.

What is shared by these 3 groups of indigenous students is that they seek to have a better life than their parents who didn´t go to university and have hard lives in their community have.

1. **Expectations for the community strength**

There are 2 perspectives among the indigenous students about their purpose in becoming professionals, related with the *feeling of belonging to the community;* there is a strong idea that they, *“study to support and in order to serve to the community and indigenous people”:*

1. For youth who didn’t feel strong identifications with their communities, studying at LEI reinforced the ethnical-communities identities.
2. For youth who are close to their communities: for some of them, from the beginning the idea is clear that they study to be able to support the community, and for others this idea is constructed during their studies.

Nevertheless, “study to support and in order to serve to the community and indigenous people”, represents tension/pressure for youth when this implies “returning to community.” The ways in which youth negotiated “the return” with their communities acquire multiples meanings and representations.

1. **Which are the levels for intercultural transformation?**

Beginning with the idea that an intercultural society is an utopia, -like a horizon for construction-implies generating a “third space of expression” (Bhabha in Prada y López, 2009), in which apparently contradicting traditions are articulated and combined from “the margins.”

1. At UPN: the presence of indigenous students for more than 30 years (in LEI) has had little impact in university life reforms. Inside the LEI there are some transformations related to the notions about what it means be indigenous at XXI century; but in the others programs and in the structure of the university as a whole, this presence is invisible. The university is like a “Universal” in which all learn in the same way and comes from life stories that do not need to be considered. For students –like indigenous youth - who have disadvantages (economic, academic…), programs are created to support them.
2. In the agenda of rights of indigenous people (individual and collective rights): In South and Central America it introduces the urgency to transform the State in which “quepamos todos” (we all fit). In this debate the notions of “intercultural citizenship” orient toward new relations for democracy, dignity and sovereignty for indigenous and for all.
3. In their (indigenous youth) communities: men and women indigenous youth experience the pressure of their communities at different levels (between “tradition and modernity”). To return to live there and to accept the traditional roles, for example: get married early, have children and.. Youth have begun –in some cases- to dialogue with community authorities, to “negotiate” a new form of belonging to the community, even while they live in different places outside the community. This binomial, tradition-modernity, has provided new insight for rethinking community, belonging and indigenous people in the XXI century.
1. Profesora-investigadora, Área Diversidad e Interculturalidad, Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Ajusco, Ciudad de México. gacza\_2006@yahoo.com.mx [↑](#footnote-ref-1)