

The importance of girls' education for indigenous peoples

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The Constitution of UNESCO (1946) states that its principal purpose is to:



Contribute to peace and security by promoting collaborations among the nations through education, science and culture in order to promote universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and for the fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world without distinction of race, sex, language or religion.



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is one of the fundamental international standard-setting instruments in this regard. It assigns two basic functions to education that are particularly relevant to education for indigenous peoples : it stipulates that « Education should be directed to the full development of the human personality » and that it shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace » (Article 26, paragraph 2).



Background:
Indigenous Education's link to "Education for All"



Dakar Framework for action Goal N. 2:

“ Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality ”

Gender Parity and Education for All



Dakar Framework for action Goal N. 5:

“ Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015 ”

Why is girl's education such an important issue for indigenous peoples?



Studies have shown the benefits of girls' schooling include:

- One extra year of education beyond primary boosts economic returns for women by around 10%;
- Educating girls leads to more sustainable families: greater agency and lower fertility;
- Educating girls leads to healthier families;
- Educating girls ultimately reduces child mortality;
- Educating girls fosters democratic citizenship.



Girls' Education Worldwide:

- 104 million children are not in school each year: of these 60 million are girls;
- 150 million children currently enrolled in school will drop out before completing primary school – at least 100 million are girls;





What do we mean by quality indigenous education?

Key elements of Quality Indigenous Education include the following:

Participation and decision-making

Pedagogy and methodology

Indigenous knowledge

Curriculum

Languages of instruction

Teacher training

Materials

Assessment and evaluation.

Participation



- Participatory processes to elaborate and determine teaching methods, curricula, material and school calendars as well as to appoint teachers;
- Free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- Indigenous peoples' involvement as consultants and teachers, particular in mother tongue instruction in early childhood and primary education;
- Meaningful positions for indigenous representatives in school boards and curriculum-making committees as well as in institutions of the state education system;
- Supporting the implementation of indigenous peoples' own educational programmes, curricula and materials and the establishment of their own educational institutions to enhance responsibility and ownership of indigenous peoples over educational practices and contents.



Pedagogy

A cooperative, interactive and reflexive learning-teaching process is promoted based on all aspects of knowledge and the experience of learners whereby:

- Education is seen as connected to all aspects of life, the well-being of learners and the environment/land;
- The situation of indigenous communities is the starting point for identifying the potential of learners and communities according to their own values, values, priorities and aspirations;
- Both formal and non-formal, traditional and modern teaching methods are used based on the study of traditional teaching methods at home and in the community.

Indigenous Knowledge



Quality indigenous education offers innovative solutions to the complex issue of incorporating indigenous knowledge, and values indigenous knowledge systems as equal and complementary to western systems.



Quality indigenous education means developing curricula which place emphasis on and are connected to indigenous culture, knowledge and language. Such curricula:



- Are designed with the active involvement of indigenous communities;
- Gradually integrate indigenous and western forms of knowledge and ways of knowing;
- Are place and culture-based;
- Include seasonal-environmental curricula and the use of local flora and fauna;
- Reflect the interrelation of subjects;
- Promote positive attitudes to indigenous languages and cultures also among the non-indigenous population in order to promote understanding, tolerance and solidarity between different cultural groups.



Languages of Instruction

Quality indigenous education supports the use of indigenous languages while encouraging fluency in the national language and access to international languages by:

- Recognizing that language is not only a tool for communication and knowledge but also a fundamental element of cultural identity;
- Teaching and learning indigenous knowledge and curricula through indigenous language and the use of locally researched and produced material in indigenous languages;
- Teaching and learning of and through the mother tongue in initial instruction and literacy and moving on to learning other languages in a culturally appropriate and gradual way according to learners capacities and needs;
- Involving native speakers of indigenous languages as teachers;
- Learning other languages as basis for cross-cultural understanding and tolerance.



Teacher Training →

Quality indigenous education involves competent and qualified teachers who are:

- Familiar with indigenous culture and language as well as the national culture and language;
- Respectful to indigenous concepts and values regarding education and engage in an interactive process with indigenous communities and students;
- Using and creating responsive and experiential teaching methods and involving cooperation and consultation with the indigenous community;
- Trained in bilingual teaching methods and language training methodologies;
- Open to continuous assessment of their work and teaching practices;
- Trained in teacher training programmes and facilities organized in cooperation with indigenous peoples' organizations and communities.



Learning Materials

Quality indigenous education makes use of and produces innovative and culturally adequate teaching material based on indigenous and western educational concepts, including:

- Material based on respect for the cultural values and scientific relationship with nature of indigenous communities;
- Material which provides an accurate picture and fair information on indigenous cultures and ways of life.



Assessment and Evaluation

Quality indigenous education uses multiple assessment strategies involving elders, parents and learners, teachers, researchers and school leaders in a collaborative process to assess and evaluate:

- teaching methods and practices;
- teachers' performance;
- programmes as a whole with regard to the incorporation of indigenous culture and language.



“The education sector is for the most part , people. They are not the numbers through which number crunchers and bean counters routinely portray education but people endowed with human dignity. Fully integrating all their rights in the parallel processes of teaching and learning is an ongoing process, worldwide.”

Katarina Tomasevski
UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

