

Building curriculum proposals from indigenous peoples:

The case of Kukama-Kukamiria and Tikuna

While the Ministry of Education has a national proposal, regions, municipalities and indigenous communities feel the need to develop their own in a participatory way, incorporating local knowledge to make their education more relevant. There is a quest to build intercultural education proposals that affirm their identity and respond to the logic and the way families teach and children learn.

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Few experiences of regional and local curriculum diversification have been developed in Peru and less of curriculum construction. However, educational experiences deployed in recent years in different regions evidence that more relevant pedagogical and curricular proposals should be built and reflect much more clearly the individual and collective aspirations of a human group, region or community. Proposals to consider not only the skills required by all citizens of Peru, expressed in the National Curriculum Design, but which provide those other skills and values that children, men and women in each region need in order to strengthen personal and socio cultural identity and contribute to the development of their region or community.

From this perspective, the Bilingual Teachers in the Peruvian Amazon Training Program (FORMABIAP) directs his work not only to preschool and primary school teacher training, but also offer the future teachers direct experience of educational curriculum construction based on the culture and the language of their people, using an intercultural approach.

In 2008, students from the preschool and primary specialities from the Kukama-Kukamiria and Tikuna groups began a process of curriculum construction with the participation of various types of stakeholders in their regions: preschool and primary school teachers, young students of high school and school graduates, community authorities, leaders of indigenous organizations, mothers and fathers of the community, preschool and bilingual specialists from the UGEL (Local Educational Management Unit) of the area.



As it is shown below, these curriculum proposals seek to be cross-cultural for they have made a great effort not only to incorporate the knowledge of these two populations, but to respond to the logic and the way families teach and children learn. Hence the changes that have been considered include not only the content (skills or achievements, capacities and attitudes) but also the structure and organization of these in the curriculum.

However, it is important to note that the concept of curriculum comes from the Western pedagogy, so it will always be an academic tool, an educational technology tool that allows implementing a concept of education in a systematic and organized way. It would therefore be wrong to say that there is an «indigenous curriculum», since there is no such concept in indigenous knowledge. It is actually an intercultural pedagogical tool that uses a technology education tool (curriculum) and recreates, rethinks and gives it a different organization structure and much more consistent with the way the Tikunas and Kukama-Kukamirians organize their knowledge and develop their learning processes.

THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS OF THE CURRICULUM

As a process, the construction of the intercultural education curriculum for preschool has gone through

different stages and strategies, and the participation of different stakeholders has been promoted in each stage. Below there is a brief description of each of these steps:

1. Elaboration of a baseline

In October 2007, a study that allowed us to have basic information for curriculum development began. It covered four main areas:

- a. The state of preschool education in the Kukama-Kukamirias and Tikunas, and in Peru in general.
- b. A systematization of innovative experiences of early childhood education in Peru and other Latin American countries.
- c. An approach to the styles of socialization and parenting practices of children in Kukama-Kukamiria and Tikuna groups.
- d. The collection of demands of various community stakeholders about the education they need for their children from 0 to 5.

2. Creating a task force group

A task force group was required for conducting this participatory process, and was formed by a group of

stakeholders: preschool staff of FORMABIAP, Tikuna and Kukama-Kukamiria indigenous specialists (wise) of FORMABIAP, representatives of the three indigenous organizations of those groups and preschool or bilingual specialists of UGEL Nauta (Kukama-Kukamiria area) and Caballo (Tikuna area).

3. Defining a curriculum approach (worked with the task force group)

It was important that the whole team who was going to lead this process - in which there were not only teachers but also indigenous leaders - had minimum knowledge and seek a consensus on how to understand curriculum and why its construction must be a participatory process. There were brainstorming sessions in which eventually the concept of curriculum as a participatory social construction was assumed.

We started stating that we not only have the right to receive a quality education, but also to decide what kind of education we aspire as individuals and as people. From this perspective, the consensual concept of curriculum comes from the critical pedagogy approach, which considers that a curriculum is an expression of the educational aspirations of a group of people, therefore synthesizes the cultural elements of a political and educational proposal, and always represents the interests of a group or social sector. The discussion reflected a lot how the whole curriculum construction always involves selection and prioritization of certain content, of certain "knowledge" at the expense of others, and that this selection is not neutral but responds to a worldview, an ideology. It is therefore important to have a meaningful representation for decision-making in the selection and formulation of a curriculum.

4. Realization of community workshops in Kukama-Kukamiria and Tikuna towns

Taking into account the curriculum approach assumed, various stakeholders took part in these events: community leaders, parents and mothers, youth, preschool and primary school teachers, PRONOEI (Preschool programs) promoters. During those events, we managed to define:

- a. What is a good person and what is "to live well" (the ideal of individual and society) for Tikuna and Kukama-Kukamiria people.

- b. What are the features that a girl and a boy should have at the age of 5 when finish preschool (a preschool profile of a child).

- c. What knowledge, skills and attitudes children from 0 to 5 years old need to develop/learn in early childhood education (curricular content).

- d. What knowledge, cultural practices and strategies used by Kukama-Kukamiria and Tikuna mothers and families to raise/educate their children from 0 to 5 should be used in early childhood education (content and strategies of Kukamiria Kukama and Tikuna cultures).

5. Systematization and revision workshops with the task force group

In these workshops the information collected from the various stakeholders in the community workshops was reviewed and systematized, complemented or enriched if necessary and written in pedagogic terms when required. It was possible to refine the technical writing of:

- a. The structure of the curriculum, which was agreed at the community workshops.
- b. The profile of a boy and a girl of 5 years old at the end of early childhood education, considering the characteristics raised in community workshops.
- c. Content (knowledge, skills and attitudes) previously collected in community workshops.

6. Presentation to other institutions and professionals and collection of contributions

Two events were held to collect input from other public sectors and institutions working with early childhood, to enrich the curriculum, including representatives of universities, Nauta and Maynas DREL (Regional Educational Direction) and UGEL, various NGOs, Ministry of Health, Obstetrician Board, Ministry of Women and Social Development, among others.

7. Validation of the curricula

The same preschool graduates from FORMABIAP who participated in the construction of the curricula are responsible for validating them in their own communities,

in which they are already working. This process was developed in 2010.

WHAT ARE THE INNOVATIONS THAT THE PARTICIPATORY CURRICULA HAVE?

8. In the structure of the curriculum (Kukama-Kukamiria case)

After reflecting on what it means to be a good person and what "good life" is according to each indigenous group, and analyzing the elements required achieving this ideal, the representatives of the two groups reached on a very particular structure. For Kukama, which is presented below, the development of identity, autonomy and spirituality are essential for a good formation and a good life, and that this can only be achieved coexisting with nature and spiritual beings in a living space that is the territory. The curriculum should be organized then from these four elements that constitute, or help to achieve the good life.

Indigenous participants also expressed the importance of taking into account the time or times in which we learn, as many of the knowledge and skills of the indigenous world are learned or developed in certain seasons (dry season and growing) and lunar cycles (full moon and new moon, basically). All this is expressed in Figure 1.

• Components

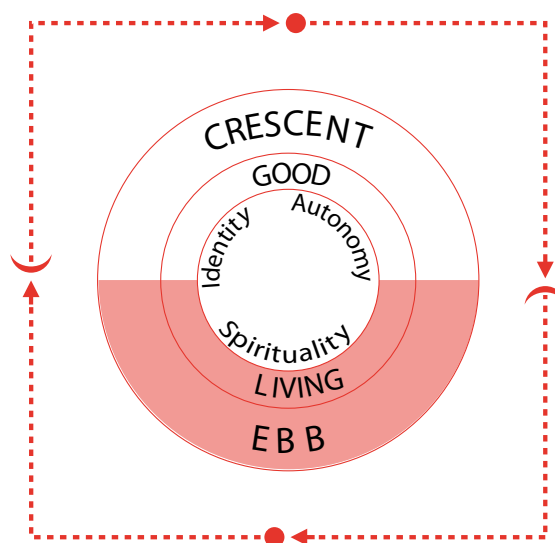
It is therefore concluded that the components of the Kukama-Kukamiria curriculum through which curriculum content is organized (knowledge, skills and attitudes) would be:

- Identity
- Autonomy
- Territory
- Spirituality

• Internal organization of content

In each component, "skills and attitudes" that children should develop are organized, but it also considers the cultural practices that Kukama-Kukamiria mothers and families do to encourage the development of these skills in their children, as well as times in which some of these capabilities should be worked (when the skill or knowledge is required). This is presented in the curriculum as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Territory



2. Curriculum content

It was considered not only the incorporation of some of the knowledge of Tikuna and Kukama-Kukamiria cultures, but also their values, worldview and their own categories. Some examples:

Figure 2. Component: Identity



• Knowledge and practices of culture

"To like music and dance of their community. To participate in the evening meetings and other events accompanying their parents, and enjoying them."

• Own categories

"To handle notions of space used in the community."

"To identify certain time indicators of their own area: dry season, growing, spawning seasons, flowering and fruiting, and so on."

• Worldview

"To recognize that there are entities who protect them and who have to be asked permission to meet certain standards or make payments: mother of the lupuna, the ayahuasca, toe, and so on."



• **Values**

“Share toys and games with peers, following the norms of reciprocity, cooperation and respect of their people.”

The curriculum, then, has such views, which introduce elements of the Kukamiria- Kukama culture, but these combine, coordinate and complement the content (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that children develop in other regions and areas of the country and have been taken from the DCN (National Curriculum) with an intercultural approach.

3. In the methodological strategies

Working with families, especially mothers, promotes the articulation between their knowledge and what preschool teachers provide. Home and community are conceived as places of learning and direct experiences, and classroom or school as space to systematize and consolidate the learning achieved outside.

Finally, it is important to note that although the curriculum is only one element to be taken into account to improve the education of children in our country, it is very important. Having a curriculum that introduces elements of the culture of students and the community, and directs learning to what they regard as a good living, linking them with the learning of more “general” knowledge that all students should learn, is a contribution and a challenge for further progress towards a more relevant, inclusive, intercultural and quality education.

Also, various community stakeholders involved giving their views and putting forward their demands to the education of their children, but above all, to see that their knowledge, skills and cultural practices are valued and brought into the school, is a guarantee that they will be dynamic actors in the management and improvement of education for their children. Therefore it is important to emphasize that it is not only possible to build participatory curriculum proposals, but a necessity. **📌**