

The EIB program at UARM: formation of indigenous Quec

Rossana Mendoza explains how the development of a pedagogical plan and the positioning of Bilingual Intercultural Education (Educación Intercultural Bilingüe, EIB) in the university were fundamental in managing the EIB program at Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University.

La carrera de EIB en la UARM: formación de jóvenes indígenas quechuas

Rossana Mendoza da a conocer cómo el desarrollo de la propuesta pedagógica, el posicionamiento de la EIB en la universidad fueron prioritarios en su experiencia de gestión de la carrera EIB en la Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya.

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This article is a personal account based on her experience managing the EIB program and not an institutional document.

hua youth

In 2014, Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University (*Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya*, UARM) opened its doors for the first time to young scholarship students from the southern Andes, so they could study Bilingual Intercultural Education (*Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, EIB), with specialties in early childhood education and primary education. A year earlier, the university had received young beneficiaries of the Beca 18 scholarship program, who chose from the options already offered. For the EIB scholarship students, however, it was necessary to create the EIB academic major in the Department of Education That was done under the direction of Susana Helfer.

The first decision was to offer the EIB specialties only to Quechua students. The second was to design programs based on the experience of the Pedagogical Institutes, which had pioneered EIB in the country. With support from Digeibira-Minedu, an education plan was designed in keeping with the Ignatian spirit, the Jesuit intercultural tradition, the history of the Department of Education, and the challenges posed by the formation of future teachers who would be responsible for educating the country's Quechua children.

THE EIB STUDENTS

The education plan is a construct that is gradually shaped on the basis of students' input and demands; it is therefore flexible, as is its management. It is important to introduce the students in this article and to deconstruct some prejudices or beliefs about the young people and what their presence in our university has meant.

The students have some common characteristics: Quechua as a mother tongue, coming from rural districts, belonging to households targeted because of their poverty level, and having maintained a certain grade point

average throughout secondary school.¹ The greatest richness, however, is the heterogeneity of the students because of their districts and communities of origin, the varieties and uses of Quechua (Collao and Chanka), their personal and family histories, and the diverse levels reached in their secondary studies.

In managing the EIB academic program, it has been crucial to know and understand these particularities, because that has made it possible to gradually adjust university services and establish mechanisms for better personal and collective support, so that their university experience is satisfactory and ends successfully.

UNIVERSITY LIFE

For all young people, the transition from secondary school to university life is a process that can be more or less complex, depending on the competencies achieved in basic education and the social skills developed during childhood and adolescence.

For some of the Quechua youths, this process has involved greater effort, because secondary education in their home districts was not of the highest quality. It meant traveling long distances, displacing their Quechua language in favour of Spanish, and achieving in two main areas: communication and mathematical logic, because of the sector's requirements for competing in well-known exams, which reflect little or nothing of the what young people have achieved as life learnings.

¹ These are some of the requirements for receiving the Beca 18 scholarship under the EIB option. They include belonging to families living in poverty that are registered in the Household Targeting System (*Sistema de Focalización de Hogares*, SIS-FOH).

The two preliminary semesters that EIB students must spend in what is now called the University Skills Strengthening Program (*Programa de Fortalecimiento de Capacidades Universitarias*, FCU) partly compensate for deficiencies in their secondary education and help prepare them for the studies that are called “humanities” at UARM. Our students must complete a total of four semesters before beginning studies in their academic major and area of specialisation. The FCU is insufficient for most of the young people, however, so the first university semesters require greater effort. In addition, they must deal with Lima, a city that is often hostile and discriminatory, but which is also full of diversity and novelties. These adaptive processes are complex, but once they have integrated into life in the university and the big city, the students take maximum advantage of what it means to be a Quechua student in Lima, joining collectives of interest to them, connecting with young people and students from their home regions at other universities, creating their own autonomous organisations, displaying their knowledge and cultural practices. In other words, they pleasantly take over the city and conquer us.

CORE AREAS FOR MANAGEMENT

When the EIB academic major was established, it was impossible to foresee how it would develop. The EIB specialties were opened with an academic coordinator, which is unusual within the university structure.² Over time, we learned that the first core strategy was the development of study plans, which were implemented, semester by semester, for the first time (and which I will describe in the next section). But that was not the only task; it was also necessary to create other conditions in the university so that the young EIB majors could finish their studies with a stronger identity and with recognition in this new space of conquest that is the UARM.

A second core strategy for management, therefore, was to position the major program inside and outside of the university, because as one teacher said, if the field of education bears a historical social stigma, EIB will suffer even more, because implicitly it is accompanied by several prejudices: being an indigenous

student and forming oneself to become an educator of indigenous children.

It was important to change these views and to immediately facilitate the integration of young people in the EIB major into the rest of the UARM student body. This involved a phase (necessary, in my opinion) of intra-cultural adaptation —of strengthening themselves as a group that shared the Quechua language and culture, which led them to gather every Thursday in the gardens (Tinkuy) to share food placed on their blankets, while they talked in Quechua about current events or recited poems, told fables or sang songs. Later, without losing this cohesion, the program promoted activities and events in which these young people integrated with others: Intercultural Homage to Vallejo (April), celebrations of Inti Raymi and San Juan (June), student encounters called Tinkunakuy (October). All of these, which were initiatives of the students themselves, were accompanied by other activities that the major program had to support and facilitate.

The third core strategy for management involved coordination with various areas of UARM to sustain exchanges and agreements that made it possible to design the education plan, considering the profile of the students, adapting some educational services and fostering a slow process of development of an intercultural approach. Tutoring, which is characteristic of the Jesuit university model, is intensive until the end of the first year of humanities. The students are assisted by a tutor who meets with them individually and in groups of seven, alternately, every 15 days.

To assist students who may need extra academic accompaniment, a volunteer system was implemented with upper-level students who accompany the young people each week and provide them with support in courses that they find more complicated.

Both services, tutoring and accompaniment, were offered through the Student Life Office (*Dirección de Medio Universitario*); during the FCU program, the Minedu Scholarship Office is responsible for them.

With the Humanities Department, it was determined from the outset that EIB students would share classrooms with other students in their humanities courses, which is conducive to integration. With the Communications Area, signs in the areas most visited by EIB students have been modified to be bilingual. This was an initiative of one professor, Gavina Córdova, and her

² The EIB major is offered in the Professional Department of Education, in the School of Philosophy, Education and Human Sciences. The Professional Department of Education offers several areas of specialisation, of which only EIB has an ad hoc coordinator.



students in Original Language I. So far, 14 signs have been modified, in clear recognition of the Quechua population and the value of the second most-spoken language in the country.

THE PEDAGOGICAL PLAN

I am going to pause in this section here to describe how the pedagogical plan, which focused on developing study plans for Early Childhood Intercultural Bilingual Education and Primary Intercultural Bilingual Education, was designed and implemented. As with the other areas of specialisation, the study plans in effect in 2014 (the year in which the EIB academic major was created) shared core themes: humanities, teaching skills, pedagogy, research, practice and specialty; the courses were organised around these core themes. EIB requires teachers with a stronger linguistic and cultural identity, however, so the plans included a series of courses that give it a particular stamp. We will mention three of them:

Original language Quechua, for six consecutive semesters. This is a continuum of courses designed in a language and culture program, which is adjusted periodically by the teachers based on the experience of each semester. Initially, the program included only four courses, but on the recommendation of Minedu, two more were added. We have learned, with the help of experts, that fluency in the language will depend on how it is used in all spheres, particularly the academic. This has led us to promote the use of Quechua in courses for

Spanish-speaking teachers, encouraging that the students use their bilingual abilities when they participate, do group work, speak or make presentations.

Historical Processes of Indigenous Peoples, for three semesters. These courses are organised in an ad hoc program as a series that allows students to understand the history constructed by indigenous peoples themselves, their role as protagonists in the present and in the past, and the challenges they face in a Eurocentric and homogenising society.

Educational Practicum, from the first year of studies in the academic major. Besides the student teaching that is done in the eighth and tenth semesters, the study plans have included a month-long educational practicum in the second, fourth and sixth semesters, in early childhood and primary EIB schools in Apurímac, Cusco and Ayacucho. This is undoubtedly the greatest challenge for management, because it means establishing partnerships with various institutions that contribute to EIB in provinces, so that they build bridges to early childhood education and primary schools that are willing to receive our students and contribute to their formation, just as the students contribute to the schools with dedication. The practicum has allowed them to get to know EIB schools in different scenarios, where they find teachers who work tirelessly and with dedication to help their children learn. Now they know the reality of EIB schools in district and provincial capitals, as well as single-teacher and multi-grade schools in small communities. The practicum enables them to encounter

various meanings in their vocation, as well as to return to communities similar to their own with new eyes, enriched by their university formation. These encounters with children, parents and communities have been decisive in strengthening their identity as teachers and have tested many of their skills. As a result of the practicum experiences, every year UARM publishes the magazine *Ruraspa Yachanchik* (Learning by Doing), which contains fieldwork, analysis of experiences, essays, testimonials, etc., which later are shared with the schools that were visited.

Regarding evaluation, a monitoring and evaluation system has been designed that consists of monitoring students who have difficulties in their courses, or who have failed or received low grades. In those cases, the coordinator of the academic major program meets with each student and facilitates a student self-assessment to review their experience and identify the reason for their difficulties. Agreements are then established for the semester and for making up the courses the student failed. The tutors are informed, so the students can receive assistance through tutoring and the tutors can be aware of their academic situation, which often is directly related to personal and family problems that overwhelm or stress them.

Besides the institutional evaluations by the Educational Quality Office, the EIB program promotes a participatory evaluation on three levels — individual, group and plenary — at the end of each semester, to gather the students' assessments of the courses and aspects that should be improved. At the individual level, there is also a self-assessment, which has been helpful for identifying the main obstacles, especially in courses that they consider difficult.³

The results are returned to the teachers and are useful for deciding which professors will continue with the program, what adjustments must be made in the courses, and what warning signs the teachers and tutors should keep in mind. There are also two venues for communication and dialogue that provide feedback for the monitoring: the assembly of delegates of courses,

which meets before and after partial exams, and the assemblies with students, which are held at the beginning and end of each semester.

One challenge for managing the pedagogical plan will be to link the student teaching in the final years with the production of the undergraduate thesis; EIB students are expected to obtain their licentiate by developing and defending an innovative project proposed by the school where they do their student teaching.

EVERYONE WINS

Faithful to its intercultural legacy and the Jesuit tradition, UARM chose to create the EIB academic major for Quechua students without imagining everything that would be required to ensure them an integral, relevant and solid formation. To date, one class is in its sixth semester, another is in its fourth and the last one is in its first, for a total of 112 students. Although some have been lost along the way, the dropout rate is lower than the nationwide percentage for the the Beca 18 program.⁴ The most important thing is that UARM has spared no effort to support the students; rather, it has sought creative alternatives that strengthen them, collaborating among different areas and opening up to new possibilities, as long as they are conducive to the young people's formation.

At the same time, the presence of students from various regions in the university has changed the face of the student body. According to the Minedu Scholarship Office, we have students from 24 regions of Peru. Those in the EIB program, in particular, come from Apurímac, Cusco, Huancavelica, Ayacucho and Puno, and are present with their language and culture, holding representative positions in the student body, inviting the university community to celebrate their ancestral festivals, producing two bilingual radio programs on Radio Ruíz, promoting their language and producing with their own artistic works, which they are able to publish with their own efforts and resources.

³ Thanks to the self-assessment, it was determined that in certain courses, the students participate less, get distracted by social networks or find it difficult to work with other students, especially when the classrooms are mixed and there are students from various academic majors. These aspects are discussed with the students so they can analyze and strengthen skills related to assertiveness, self-confidence and empowerment.

⁴ Of the 119 students who began studies, two requested temporary suspension of their scholarships and five others did not meet the performance requirements. This means that UARM has lost 4% of EIB students, while nationwide the figure is a 15% loss in the scholarship program.



At first it was not easy. In the area of interpersonal relations, there have been discriminatory gestures, words and attitudes from students and teachers, a lack of understanding of the EIB students' identities and particular situations; there have sometimes been difficulties with communication when addressing problems, because of differences in forms of expression and ways of understanding.

Regarding management, it is difficult to find teachers willing to assume an intercultural approach that goes beyond discourse and apply it in everyday practice and attitudes; it has been necessary to make course proposals more flexible so that they are truly formative for future EIB teachers, but without losing quality; and it is not easy to find schools for the educational practicum, when teachers in EIB schools expect students from upper levels who will substitute for them or complement them, rather than young people who go to observe and learn.

The university as an institution has had to change in the presence of a new population, but it has also placed on its agenda the need for an intercultural policy, not only for the treatment of its diverse populations, but for the entire student body, which, like the EIB students, must gain the conviction that our country is richer because we have indigenous peoples; that knowledge does not come only from occidental academic spheres; that we experience terrible discrimination

and marginalisation, which we must uproot from our lives and our societies; that we must — together — build a more democratic country, where all Peruvians can exercise their rights and enjoy a high quality education.

THE FUTURE

The future of the EIB academic major is uncertain. The tendency of the EIB option of the Beca 18 scholarship program is to decrease the number of scholarship students at private universities in Lima, giving preference to Pedagogical Institutes. And although there is continued demand for teachers with an EIB specialty, it is difficult for indigenous young people who are interested in it to attend UARM without a scholarship. Meanwhile, it is unlikely that Spanish-speaking students who have the possibility of studying at UARM will be interested in the EIB major. There are still some avenues to be explored, such as a second EIB specialisation for teachers or for graduates of other specialities, or promoting the major among young people who have a vocation. Whatever the future holds, there is no question that UARM has broken interesting ground toward internalising an intercultural approach, training young people who love original cultures and languages, who are critical of all forms of domination and willing to build a country that is more just and egalitarian. **t**