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Report for the IRIS Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award (2019)

With the help of IRIS Graduate Fieldwork Award, in August and September of 2019 I traveled to Ecuador to gather and analyze documents and textbooks related to my dissertation research. My study in Ecuador focuses on rural education in the 1960s and 1970s and looks at the iterations of the idea of fostering “good living” for the Indigenous population and the Ecuadorians more generally. The idea that there is such thing as a particular way of living that is *good* and that people should strive to learn how to get it, and more importantly the consequences these might have for the population of an entire country, makes it important to understand how did this idea became so normal and pervasive. The research is also directed at understanding how aid and development programs articulated education for “betterment” of the life of people in rural areas to better understand how entanglements of ideas and worldviews make possible to think of a world system were certain countries and populations overrepresent their lifestyle as *the* good way of living and the lives of others as in need of betterment.

My time in Ecuador and the conversations that arose with many teachers and intellectuals involved in education for people living in rural areas expanded my understanding of the topic. I was able as well to confirm the availability of sources, get copies of important materials, and get a better sense of the direction and scope of my research. My experiences and conversations in the field and the texts found at the Library of the Ministry of Education and the Archive of the Ministry of Culture made visible a greater role of religion than what I had expected. This led me to the Salesian Archive, the Jesuit Archive and the Archive of the Diocese of Riobamba. I had access as well and found important materials in the Archive of the Andean Solidarity Centre. I am thankful as well for the help I got from the Foundation Mariana de Jesús and the Institute Jatari Unancha. In the archives I had access to photos of some of the schools and students in Morona Santiago, in the Amazonia, and, Pichincha, Chimborazo and Azuay, in the Highlands. I was also able to collect textbooks and activity sheets used in rural schools and in rural normal schools. In these institutions there was an emphasis on Spanish language

proficiency (Castellanización) and the transformation of the relation to the land from an Indigenous appreciation and knowledge towards a “scientific”, free of “superstitions” knowledge. In the Amazonia the 1960s schooling happened in boarding schools that functions in a similar way than in the United States. Children were more often than not abducted to be “transformed” through Christianization in rational men and women. A difference is that the language was studied and used for evangelization. In the 1970s on the other hand the missions helped to form one of the first Indigenous organization of the country and started the first bilingual education projects. Letters and newspapers show the practices of missionaries in some of these areas aligned with the intention of the government to expand its reach and a way of living that would make Indigenous communities and territories readable by the state. They also facilitated the entrance of oil and mining companies as well as U.S. military in the Amazonia. Conversely, the transcripts of one of the radiophonic school’s program in the Highlands as well as school and national newspaper article show the link between Liberation Theology priests and Indigenous organizations in proposing a kind of education that was talked about as “one’s own education” (educación propia). This kind of education contested the meaning of “good living,” development and of education itself seeking to put forward the values and priorities of the Indigenous communities in education and forming Indigenous teachers.

All of these developments gave grounding to what in the 1980s and 1990s became the Intercultural Bilingual Education initiatives that in the 2000s were discursively claimed as a beacon of the integration of the “Good Living” (“Buen Vivir”) to the national curriculum and education policy.

In terms of the articulation of the Ecuador case study with a transnational trend on education for development and the impulse international funders gave to such projects, United States was involved in several projects through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Alliance for Progress and Andean Mission. USAID participated in funding vocational education for Indigenous people in rural areas across the country after a treaty signed with the Ecuadorian government in 1962. USAID funded the Alliance for Progress programs and the programs of the Andean Mission together with the InterAmerican Bank. This

latter institution also used religious communities for their activities as the local priest in parishes were often able to open the door towards work with communities in rural areas. Both institutions put forward projects dedicated almost exclusively to informal education in the form of Spanish literacy campaigns as well as training in agriculture, carpentry, metallurgic, building work as well as family budget management including use of banking and how and where ask for loans. All of these projects sought “the promotion of private activity to achieve economic development, absorb labor... and take their place among the modern industrialized nations” (USAID, 1962). The “inclusion” of Indigenous peasants in the national economy was escribed as necessary for the well-being of the nation and its participation in the global economy. USAID also partnered with Massachusetts University and the Ministry of Education to deliver non-formal game-based education focused on literacy, numeracy and family planning. The University of Massachusetts report shows the frustrations of the educators with the limited scope of the programs and practices that the funders allowed.

UNESCO was also active in the production of curriculum for non-formal education mainly focused on family planning and family economics. The curriculum, “motivational” didactic materials and game-based lessons where similar across many countries of the South including Ecuador, Bolivia, Thailand, Philippines, India, Pakistan, among others. These curriculum and materials where also directed at the “mejoramiento de vida” life betterment of Indigenous people and peasants of these countries.

Thanks to the generosity of the IRIS, my summer trip to Ecuador has allowed me to have a better sense of the relationship between events, programs and practices in the 1960s and 1970s in rural education and the construction of the “good living” as a ‘common sense’ idea an transversal axis in Ecuador’s public education today.