The Challenges of Bilingual/Bicultural Education in Mexico: Are Pluralism and Assimilation Necessarily Mutually Exclusive?

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Abstract

In this report, I will undertake an overview of current bilingual education policy in Mexico, focusing on current federal, state and local government policy toward including local indigenous languages and cultures into primary and secondary education. I will survey the impact that present education theories (functional, critical and phenomenological) have had on government policy and what this means for the future of indigenous culture and language in a broader context. I will also look at the programs and services provided by NGOs, who play a large part in community development in Mexico. My argument will be along participatory development lines: that minority or ethnic group participation in the formulation of bilingual education programs is essential for their success, and will explore the possibility of encouraging mutual respect amongst the dominant (Castellano) and indigenous languages through a policy that encourages bilingualism for both groups. This could also be part of a broader program in cultural appreciation and understanding which could potentially reverse the current trends in Mexico which undervalue the importance of indigenous culture to national identity building.