

VALUES-BASED COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROPOSAL BY AND FOR THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF MICHOACÁN¹.

Local 18 – Mexican Education Workers' Union - Michoacán



BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The federal government's structural reforms are legal mechanisms by which to impose goals set by international organizations, which are unconnected to the lives of Mexican people, yet backed by business and most media which is at their service .

Within such a context, the right to education, as established by Article Three of the political constitution of 1917, is currently being extinguished both in its implementation and its full enforcement of such guarantees by the imposition of education reform at a national level. The right to education, rather than being a service rendered to the population in general, is now in the process of privatization through the 10 lines of action proposed in the so-called Alliance for Educational Quality, (Alianza por la Calidad Educativa, a recent Mexican government initiative that extends standardized testing and competition among schools).

One of the sectors that has been most heavily affected by these neo-liberal policies is indigenous education, a part of the national education system and whose purpose is to support the native people of the country, but whose results to date have been negative. Only "castellanización" – (i.e. making Spanish the official language), and the massive loss of identity have been achieved, proving that this does not solve the educational and integrated development needs of individuals and communities that arise from the specific characteristics of each culture and language. Instead it has brought about the systematic weakness and cultural disappearance

of several groups through education policies that have been applied in the past and in the current century.

Of the four most well-known indigenous languages in the state of Michoacán, the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture, UNESCO, has established that the Purépecha language is vulnerable, Mazahua is at risk, and Náhuatl and Otomí are in serious danger. This is according to the 2009 edition of the World Atlas of Languages at Risk of Extinction, based on census data from 2009, (www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00136).

This is a significant and concerning trend, in spite of UNESCO's recommendations and the Accords of San Andrés Larrainsar on indigenous cultural rights signed between the Mexican State and the Zapatista National Liberation Army, and despite increased interest in native cultures and languages. Currently there are isolated initiatives and efforts, but to stop this trend and achieve real change, it is essential to implement the education proposal by and for the indigenous peoples of Michoacán developed by a joint working group made up of the Section XVIII of the National Education Workers Union (SNTE)- member of the National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE)², communities, schools and other groups committed to indigenous education in the state of Michoacán.

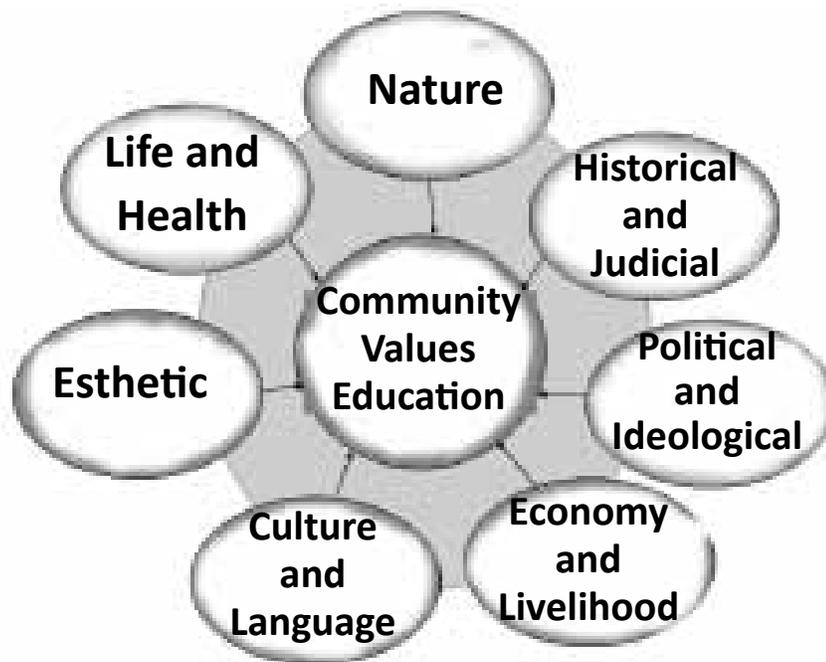
RATIONALE:

In these times of overall crisis, it is necessary to search for alternatives to rebuild the social context with a harmonious

1. Michoacán is a state located in the central-west region of Mexico. It has a long tradition of popular, campesino, worker and teacher struggle and a significant indigenous population. Editor's Note

2. Mexico's National Education Workers Union, the SNTE, is the largest in the Americas with 1,800,000 affiliated members. However, its national leadership

DIMENSIONS CONTEMPLATED BY THE PROPOSAL



relationship between human beings and nature, where there may be peace with social justice.

We must re-build an ethical code of conduct, of values, of civilized life in society, in it and from it. We have the huge task of generating the objective and subjective conditions that will allow us to satisfy our basic needs.

The Mexican State must assume its social responsibility, based on the political constitution of 1917, in Articles 3, 27 and 123, among others, by taking responsibility for the creation, strengthening and growth of educational spaces for the development and self-management of indigenous peoples according to their autonomy. To recognize cultural plurality seriously and deeply, and develop spaces of true dialogue, we cannot continue to ignore the voices demanding the full exercise of the rights of the native peoples of this country in particular and all social rights in general.

The community school aspires to be emancipating, humane and socially just, in conjunction with a more critical, reflexive, analytical, democratic, equitable and supportive society. It aims to enable development that uses the potential of culturally diverse native peoples and promotes, from every social and natural context, a holistic education in individuals that serves the interests of its peoples and society and is not at the exclusive service of the interests of private enterprise.

For these reasons some teachers in Michoacan have set themselves the task of developing an alternative kind of education, counteracting the neo-liberal reforms imposed by the government and trying to implement projects with resources obtained through the organizing and struggles of section XVIII.

for decades has been in the control of forces that not only support neo-liberal reforms that privatize education but even worse, promote them. This is why, starting three decades ago, a huge democratic teaching movement of unionists and advocates of public education as a social right emerged from within the official union; this movement is represented by the CNTE.

ALTERNATIVE PROJECTS IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION:

These projects are taking place at schools in different municipalities, with the main focus being “the rescue and strengthening of indigenous language and culture” within the indigenous communities of the state.

GENERAL PURPOSE:

To strengthen and develop the native peoples of Michoacan, starting with the formation of new generations through community education based in their own culture. To raise young people committed to their culture and their community in the different levels and modalities of the education that is taught in the indigenous environment.

SPECIFIC PURPOSES:

To develop, in the next generations, reflexive attitudes and critical awareness of the current situation of their communities and their future.

To build on the immense knowledge of the individual, based on the philosophy and cosmovision of the native peoples.

To see that the individual acquires an awareness of belonging in nature, where he or she recognizes him or herself and takes action for the protection and preservation of the environment and life itself.

To develop in individuals the linguistic skills that will enable them to communicate within their culture and the world in general.

To guide the education of new generations from the extensive knowledge and pedagogy of the native peoples, aware of the universal theoretical contributions that complement such education to achieve the social construction of knowledge.

To enrich the formation of the individual with the scientific and technological advances that help in the preservation and development of his or her people.

THE RULING PRINCIPLE: Community

- a) Life and nature
- b) Values Education (kaxumpikua in the case of p'urhe)
- c) Inclusion
- d) Science and technology

OUR ANALYSIS:

Historical-Social: Native cultures are still being subordinated.

Political – ideological: Indigenous identities are being lost, more and more.

Cultural: There is a cultural transgression.

Economic: Native peoples are subject to the economic power of the state and transnational policies. .

Legal: State laws are not applied in favor of indigenous peoples, and their systems and traditions are not recognized either.

Linguistic: The loss of indigenous languages has accelerated.

Natural: Nature is devastated.

Aesthetic: The arts and trades of indigenous peoples are still regarded as handicrafts and their value is minimized.

NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES AND PARENTS:

To promote the values of the native peoples from the school through practice.

Teaching of and in indigenous languages in schools in a systematic way.

Careful and rational exploitation of natural resources.

To re-value ceremonial rituals (when cutting trees, planting corn etc.).

To recover and encourage the diet of native peoples as part of the preservation of the culture and the health of the population.

CHILDREN'S NEEDS:

The continuity of their cultural practices, traditions and customs at school.

Preservation of the environment.

Learning to speak and write in indigenous languages.

The right to a healthy life.

AREAS OF ATTENTION:

The Indigenous Education Administration handles 44,176 students in 612 educational centers, including pre-school, special education, primary, secondary, boarding schools, Indigenous Teacher Education Schools, and reading and cultural recovery rooms, which are community centers where teachers work extra-curricular time with children and youth in order to revitalize their language and culture.

METHODOLOGY:

The proposal recommends teaching and learning through team work, interdisciplinarity and the transversality of community values and practices, with participation from parents and placing emphasis on indigenous languages.

HOLISTIC EVALUATION: must be qualitative, quantitative, theoretical-practical, and ongoing.

IMPACT OF THE ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL:

Recovery of community values and life: Kaxumpikua, jarhuatperakua, janhanarhikua

Formation of children with awareness of identity and collective work.

Participation of teachers, parents and the community in the education processes of their children through input into educational content that strengthens their culture.

Schools become aware of the problems of the communi-





ties and contributes to their solution, by being a part of them and not an imposition from outside.

Recovery of the traditional ways of production of goods and services to maintain a natural balance.

Consideration of the means and ways of production, science and technology.

Social production for self-consumption and self-development.

Development that comes from the people themselves

STRATEGIES:

Take into account the participation and guidance of parents and elders of the community in school practices.

Use existing social, community and educational spaces and create new ones.

Use communal cultural transfer methodologies to teach.

Set up interdisciplinary teams that systematize knowledge (of society and nature) and validate and reflect the contributions of community actors to the sciences.

Take into consideration the contributions of indigenous teachers and the writings and proposals that have been made by other institutions working on language and native culture.

Revise the content of existing materials and textbooks in indigenous languages as well as their strategic use.

ROLE AND ATTITUDE OF THE EDUCATOR:

Close relationship with the education community (educator-student-family parents-community)

Recovery of the community's identity.

Open-minded and critical attitude

Willingness to work outside the schools.

ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY:

Relationship with and commitment to the school.

Recognition of education as a means for the solution of its problems and its development.

A guide for the education process.

Critical attitude of service to the education system.

Inquiry into local knowledge and the relationship between academic content and universal knowledge.

Facilitator of learning

JOINT COMMUNITY-SCHOOL ACTIONS

Recognition of community problems and proposals for their solution

Revitalization of communal knowledge, arts and trades.

Recovery of traditional clothing and games.

Guidance regarding diet and school health

Formation of the elements of cultural identity (cultural events, paying homage to the flag and native anthems)

Integration of the school into the community through the recovery of materials, community teaching resources and ethno-pedagogy.

This alternative ethno-education project, created by teachers, parents and students in politically organized indigenous communities, legitimizes, in both the discourse and practice of participating families, the need for a "true education" that will respond to their daily demands and problems in terms of learning content with collective value.

Parents and grandparents, who are often illiterate, have shown themselves to be enthusiastic about these plans for an alternative education because, in their eyes, it represents the possibility of revitalizing the language and popular culture that the dominant political and economic system proposes to destroy. Regardless of these attacks, these cultures continue to resist, transmitting themselves generation after generation and creating the spaces to develop educational alternatives based on community work and on a true practice of values.