

Creating leaders and changing the world through diversity

Description:

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A life-story of indigenous education in Hñähñu

Building a better world for everyone is possible through the recognition of diversity and culture as main drivers for sustainable development and the use of technology to intensify actions. Mr Damián Silla Palma, a Hñähñu -or Otomí- (one of the 68 indigenous languages in Mexico) professor from an indigenous elementary school in Hidalgo, Mexico, has set a good example of how joint efforts and creativity can help a community achieve “Buen vivir” (well-being).

Bilingual and intercultural program studies are transcendental in indigenous education, whereby teachers in schools with indigenous enrollment must receive enough support and training to teach in their students' native language. However, in Mexican schools, indigenous education is mostly based on translation (from Spanish to other indigenous languages), most of the time the available materials do not correspond to the language or variant of the community, and even families consider that the indigenous language should be transmitted only at home its use is restricted to community private life.

To improve the capacities and skills of Mexican teacher trainers and education in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity, the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE) and the UNESCO Office in Mexico developed the [Guía para docentes de educación indígena](#) (Guide for indigenous education teachers). This handbook involved an extensive ethnographic and collaborative work with indigenous education teachers in different states of Mexico and it is a turning point to the bilingual and intercultural education through the enhancement of the students' linguistic skills, the development of a personal and collective identity, encouragement to participate in community life and the recognition of their own territory.

The methodology seeks ensure the preservation of the linguistic identity that keeps and make possible the dissemination of the ancestral knowledge, the worldview and the culture of the indigenous communities. For example, the people's relations with their environment safeguards a pragmatic expertise against the climate change.

Mr Silla Palma has benefited from the cooperation among the UNESCO Office in Mexico and the SNTE. Now, he is a leader in his community, Huisticola, Hidalgo, where he is leading a new generation of indigenous people proud of its identity, its ancestral knowledge and the fraternal way of life, aiming to revitalize and promote cultural diversity.

The teacher and his students developed several digital contents in Hñähñu (video and pictures) which they share through [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#), to promote their activities based on the SNTE- UNESCO Guide. They have profited from this tool in order to preserve and promote their community knowledge (“saber es comunitario”).

In December 2019, the *Dialogue of teaching experiences of indigenous education* carried out as part of the activities of the Guadalajara International Book Fair (FIL Guadalajara) and the International Year of Indigenous Languages where professors like as Mr. Silla Palma presented their experiences on implementing the Guide.