

An Interview with
Alberto Andrango
**BILINGUAL INTERCULTURAL
 EDUCATION IN ECUADOR**



Photo: Courtesy of DINEIB

A long-standing objective of Indigenous organizations is to rejuvenate and preserve local culture. Fortunately, there is an increasing movement towards bilingual intercultural education which aims to promote and develop Indigenous languages and cultures and make them part of the national culture in their respective countries.

Born of this movement are a number of efforts in Ecuador attempting to develop the country's Indigenous education through new pedagogical techniques suitable to the 13 Indigenous peoples. This project has a considerable history developing outside of any official protocol, but it has recently gained official status as the Intercultural Bilingual Education Initiative, el Proyecto de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (EIB).

In the fifties, the SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) and the Andean Mission developed projects involving Indigenous education. However, the

principal objective of these projects was to proselytize the Indians. By the 1960's, under the direction of Mr. Leonidas Proano, bilingual education was addressed by Ecuador's Public Educational Radio Program which had audiences into the Sierra. In the seventies the Shuar System of Radio Education (SERBISH) was implemented in other Indigenous schools in the Bolivar, Cotopaxi and Napo provinces.

The experiences gleaned from these predecessors made way for the creation of a formal Indigenous educational program. The Intercultural Bilingual Education Initiative, was established in 1986 with the signing of a contract between GTZ of Germany and the Ecuadorian Government. They elaborated a tentative curriculum, didactic materials in Quichua for primary schools, and designed programs providing training and support to rural organizations for the purpose of educational and cultural promotion.

The following is an interview we conducted with the director of the National office of Bilingual Intercultural Education, (Direccion Nacional de educación Intercultural Bilingüe-DINEIB), Alberto Andrango. Mr. Andrango is a Quichua and has had considerable experience working in the field of education. He also was the vice-president of what is now the National Federation of

Indigenous and Black Workers of Ecuador (FENOCIN).

In what year was the DINEIB created? Why was it necessary to create the DINEIB? What are some other confederations and organizations that participate in and contribute to the political activities and administration of the DINEIB? How is the DINEIB structured?

The DINEIB was created in November of 1988, but local, regional, provincial and national Indigenous organizations had been demanding its formation for years. In 1988, CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) played a very important role by launching a proposal for the education of Indigenous peoples. It was a proposal generated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous professors and educational specialists but was strictly tied to plans made for the enhancement of the Indigenous nations in Ecuador. An agreement was made between the Minister of Culture and Education and CONAIE to implement the DINEIB according to local directives concerning bilingual intercultural education.

Long before DINEIB, organizations, principally the FENOCIN and also the ECUARUNARI (affiliated with the CONAIE), had continuously struggled to

make the government recognize the Bilingual Intercultural Education movement (EIB). For example, I remember between 1981 and 1982, prior to the existence of the CONAIE and the DINEIB, there was an massive national march calling for the recognition of the EIB by the government of Jaime Roldos Aguilera. At this time, there was a constant demand for recognition from every organization. This also helped to precipitate the creation of the national office. Local and regional experiences were compiled and used to create an all-encompassing proposal presented to and recognized by the government. By the time Rodrigo Borja took office the national Bilingual Intercultural Education program was institutionalized in Ecuador.

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Two of the most significant goals of the Indigenous movement have been to encourage multiculturalism and participatory democracy. In what sense is the DINEIB a realization of these goals?

The DINEIB is a state institution, but we are also an institution of the Indigenous communities of Ecuador. For this reason, the DINEIB is subject to the control, support and the direction given by the Indigenous nations. As a formal state institution we are administratively, financially and technically decentralized. Therefore, we are dependent on the directives generated by all of the individuals working within the DINEIB. The DINEIB is a conglomerate of individuals, Indigenous for the most part but also non-Indigenous, that participate on behalf of all the national organi-

contribute to the operations of their bilingual education program, by organizing a budget, infrastructure, teaching materials and any other form of support necessary to the realization of the EIB.

What would you say are some of the successes of the DINEIB and some of its failures or shortcomings?

One success of the program is that we have managed to bring together six major organizations in a conversation concerning bilingual and intercultural education and have also generated a dialogue dealing with other important issues of the Indigenous-campesino movement in Ecuador. Previously, although these groups were ideologically on the same path, they sparred often in the political arena. With the EIB as a foundation, these groups are united...while, of course, they continue to respect one another's diverse experiences and objectives.



Once the DINEIB was formed, the rest of the Indigenous and Campesino organizations, like the FEINE (Federation of Evangelical Indians), FENOC (Federation of Campesinos), FENACLE (Federation of Free Campesinos) and FEI (Federation of Ecuadorian Indians), came to participate; at first they were suspicious but eventually they evolved sufficient trust to participate within all levels of the EIB. I believe the EIB has actually facilitated a dialogue among our national organizations; a dialogue that concerns not only crucial issues put forth by the EIB, but also other issues concerning these organizations. The organizations I mentioned have supported this process, some with considerable fortitude and dedication and others with somewhat less. But by all means these six major participants have significantly contributed to the development of the EIB.

zations previously mentioned. In this way DINEIB recognizes the objectives of each of these diverse organizations.

As for the communities, is there a way in which families or local groups are able to participate in the Bilingual Intercultural Education system?

There are local Educational Advisory Councils (CEC) that have been established in some provinces and some communities. Through these community councils, local peoples are able to participate directly in the bilingual intercultural education efforts. The local Educational Advisory Councils are comprised of delegates from parent's committees and community organizations, student and teacher representatives, and delegates from other local institutions.

So, these boards are local and participatory by nature. They are obliged to

I believe another accomplishment of the DINEIB is institutional decentralization. We have attained a degree of autonomy that enables us to advance objectives of the EIB. This decentralization also allows us to select our own candidates for administrative positions. The only remaining power of the central government is to give legitimate title to the candidate elected by Indigenous organizations. Otherwise, the electoral process occurs in the selection of provincial directors. They are elected by local organizations following a public debate. This election system is unique, distinct from the tradition of appointments dictated by the ministry and government which are commonplace in other state institutions.

As to our educational model, we have been able to develop our own prototype without the intervention of the central government dictating this or that model. We are creating materials for each of the

Indigenous nations, and are able to elaborate our own budget for the items that we require.

What has been the attitude toward the DINEIB of different administrations over the years? Have they voluntarily supported the DINEIB or have they tried to undermine the initiatives of Bilingual Intercultural Education?

We have chiefly had financial problems. The government does not allocate sufficient funds to sustain Bilingual education. In the last year the government did not give us a single cent to invest in

tion—the lack of a willingness to support Indigenous education on the part of the government. Of course Ecuador doesn't have an enormous budget, but nevertheless, there ought to be enough funds available so that we might work somewhat normally developing the EIB.

What types of projects are proposed for the schools?

With the EIB we do not want to work solely with children and young people. We also want to establish development projects... considering the poverty of our Indigenous people, we need to fight against this extreme poverty... to prepare individuals for work, arming them with the tools necessary to be productive, so they may benefit their families, their communities and the entire society.

We would like to strengthen our development projects for agriculture, animal husbandry, mechanics, carpentry and craft production. Some groups have begun to work on realizing these projects but they are limited by a shortage of financial support. We need funds for basic materials, tools, etc.

Have you proposed that non-Indigenous people learn an Indigenous language?

Indeed, in our institutes of bilingual education there are non-Indigenous children, students, professionals who would like to learn an Indigenous language. In Quito we are setting up a language training program for the children of DINEIB employees, the children of directors of national organizations and anyone else who would like to learn. We will begin the program with Quichua, then Spanish, and then English.

Last year I had the opportunity to visit a bilingual school in the province of Imbabura. We spoke with a teacher, who told us she was worried that some parents did not want their children to learn Quichua in school. What is being done to deal with this problem?

Some parents are opposed to having

their children learn Quichua. We continue to think that the white/mestizo, Western world is better and that our own Indigenous society is worthless. We have been inculcated with this attitude prohibiting the use of the Indigenous languages by Hispanic professors. Our own youth have faced this when they have attended college and have been prohibited from speaking their native tongue. We have experienced and endured the Spanish invasion that tried to crush our cultures.

We have suffered through colonialism that has tried to make us feel ashamed of ourselves. Some families continue to believe that our culture and traditions are without value. Local and regional organizations need to raise people's consciences, convince them otherwise, that our culture is eminently worthy and... we have to develop our identity, preserve our language in order to better confront other cultures. This way we will be well prepared for any situation.

Then, it is still necessary to combat colonialism?

Certainly, it is crucial that we erase this mentality. We have to confront the lack of self-esteem. We must foster self-worth and counter the low self-esteem which still persists in some of our communities.

Introduction to this interview was taken from a paper written by Sami Pilco (Quichua) of the DINEIB

Alberto Andrango, the director of the National office of Multicultural Bilingual Education (DINEIB) is a Quichua from Ecuador. SAIIC friend, Robert Andolina who has lived and worked in Ecuador interviewed Alberto Andrango in Quito for Abya Yala News. He is currently working on his dissertation on the politics of the Indigenous movement in Ecuador.



our projects, or to train our professors and administrators... nor did we receive a single cent for teaching materials for our various Indigenous communities. Nor have they supplied us with the necessary tools or technology.

This is a considerably serious problem for us. We have been able to make a little progress with the financial support of the GTZ of Germany, but by no means does this suffice.

Is this lack of support a result of a shortage of resources within the government or their unwillingness to help?

I believe it is more the absence of voli-