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Reshaping the Quinquennial Plan for Indigenous Peoples: Dialoguing with a Gnöbe Community Leader

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Abstract

In this paper, we engaged in dialogue with a Gnöbe community leader, who was also a teacher of English, so to analyze how the Quinquennial Plan for Indigenous Peoples in Costa Rica (QPIP) caters to the needs and goals of the indigenous students enrolled in the Bachelor's in English Teaching at Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus. The efforts made by the university authorities and the associate faculty during the implementation of the QPIP had previously been scrutinized—unraveling that the objectives of the plan have partially been met and that more courses of action are required to ensure successful outcomes (Fallas & Brand, forthcoming). By examining the interview conducted with the participant of the study, based on tenets of the Narrative Approach, we shed light on the hardships faced by Gnöbe students in the education system, the circulating discourses held by First Nation Communities regarding education and bilingualism, and the solutions proposed by the community stakeholder to alleviate the problems encountered by QPIP students in their college life. We finish this paper by translating the leader's voice into applicable suggestions that may help professors of the English Department and the administration of the university retain indigenous students by promoting more culturally relevant pedagogies geared to their academic success and development of their cultural identity and affiliation.

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Resumen

En este artículo, entablamos un diálogo con un líder comunal Gnöbe, quien es también profesor de inglés, para así analizar cómo el Plan Quinquenal para Pueblos Indígenas en Costa Rica (PQPI) responde a las necesidades y metas del estudiantado indígena en el Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés de la Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto. Los esfuerzos realizados por las autoridades universitarias y el profesorado durante la implementación del programa habían sido ya previamente escudriñados, lo que reveló que los objetivos de este plan han sido parcialmente alcanzados y que se requieren más acciones para asegurar resultados exitosos (Fallas y Brand, en evaluación). Al examinar la entrevista efectuada con el participante del estudio a través del enfoque narrativo, indagamos las dificultades que enfrenta la población estudiantil Gnöbe en el sistema educativo, los discursos circulantes con respecto a la educación y el bilingüismo, y las soluciones propuestas por el protagonista para aliviar los problemas con los que deben lidiar los estudiantes del PQPI en su vida universitaria. Para finalizar el estudio, traducimos la voz del líder en sugerencias aplicables que podrían ayudar a los profesores del Departamento de Inglés y la administración universitaria a retener de mejor manera a los estudiantes indígenas, mediante la promoción de pedagogías culturalmente relevantes orientadas a su éxito académico y el desarrollo de su identidad y afiliación cultural.

Palabras clave: equidad, justicia, educación indígena, EFL, enfoque narrativo

Introduction

In a study we conducted about the implementation of the Quinquennial Plan for Indigenous Peoples (QPIP) at Universidad Nacional (UNA), we found that said project is far from meeting its three overarching objectives (Fallas & Brand, forthcoming). While the attraction of Gnöbe students to various majors the institution offers has been successful (goal 1), their retention until graduation and the creation of culturally relevant pedagogies (goals 2 and 3) have not been possible yet. Open-ended interviews with three Gnöbe English teaching majors, their English instructors and one of the administrators of the QPIP provided relevant information to understand the plan's partial success. On the one hand, Gnöbe students claim professors do not provide sufficient support for their success in the learning of English. Likewise, faculty assert that catering to the needs of this population is a daunting task given their lack of familiarity with their language and culture. The administration, on the other hand, ascertains that administrators have done what is within their reach to lead the QPIP to its success and that faculty should be more committed by finding ways to better serve this population. Beyond this lack of consensus, little knowledge of Gnöbe culture/language, derived from no apparent participation of Gnöbe

leaders in the QPIP's implementation have largely contributed to its present state of stagnation.

Given the above, this study constitutes a first step toward building communication bridges between UNA and the Gnöbe community for the purpose of initiating critical transformations necessary for the retention of Gnöbe students and the meeting of their educational needs in culturally relevant ways that strengthen their identity and cultural affiliation (as intended in the QPIP). With that in mind, we conducted an in-depth, open-ended interview with a Gnöbe community leader to examine how we can draw on his perspectives to reshape the QPIP in ways that respond to the educational needs of the Gnöbe English Teaching majors at UNA. As we interrogated the leader, patterns emerging from the data started to shed light on ways the QPIP can be reconfigured to better support the Gnöbe English teaching majors at UNA. Based on this experience, we sustain that a balanced amalgamation of non-aboriginal and aboriginal views on what and how to teach not only benefits the implementation of the QPIP but also makes way for alternative pedagogies of social justice and equity for culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Literature Review

Here we survey literature on aboriginals' ways of knowing and being, with attention to the danger of assuming these to apply across aboriginal groups. We also briefly refer to the out-of-school teaching and learning that takes place First Nation communities and the tensions arising from political agendas on ethno-education, academics' advocacy for the rights of aboriginals, and indigenous movements' struggles to create *una educación propia*. Subsequently, we discuss the importance of Elders' participation in the planning and execution of educational programs that serve their youth. We finish by outlining higher education programs that serve aboriginal communities and how these are similar to or different from the QPIP.

Aboriginals' Ways of Knowing and Being

We concur with Hernandez (as cited in Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010) that "Increased knowledge of the philosophies that underpin Native students' perceptions and actions in school is necessary if research is to move beyond the level of description and ascription to a more accurate representation of Indigenous students and the role culture plays in their schooling experiences" (p. 3). In light of this, we claim that indigenous students' ways of knowing and being should, therefore, become a cross-curricular theme in programs that aim at authentic inclusion of these populations.

As regards ways of knowing, Ottmann and Pritchard (2010) explain that for Canadian First Nation peoples' knowledge is contextual, experiential, holistic and personal in nature and requires inward exploration. Likewise, they explain that Canadian aboriginals continue to have a strong oral tradition and that *storytelling* still constitutes an important part of the educational processes within their communities, by way of which customs and traditions

are taught. They go further to explicate that the type of learning that derives from storytelling "...is often indirect as the lessons that emerge are left for the listener to discover. Learning in this way requires active listening, an engaged mind, and higher-order thinking skills" (p. 29). In traditional western schools, however, written literacy and direct teaching are the norm to which indigenous students have to adapt. Regarding ways of being, they establish that First Nation peoples of Canada value cooperative behavior and the greater good of the community over individual desires (p. 27), which stands in opposition to the individualistic nature of most western societies. Ottmann and Pritchard also reported that Elders play an important role in aboriginal communities and claim that, therefore, educators of indigenous students should find ways to invite Elders to the schools to facilitate understanding of aboriginals' ways of knowing and being (p. 28).

In the case of Australian Aboriginal groups, Barnhardt and Kawagley (as cited in Santoro, Reid, Crawford & Simpson, 2011) sustain that "Indigenous people have their own ways of looking at and relating to the world, the universe, and each other' (p. 67), reason why teachers should leverage on the funds of knowledge indigenous students bring with them and adopt a pedagogy that is culturally responsive. This implies understanding and having direct experience of the experiential learning and teaching that takes place between children, parents and Elders (p. 68). In their study with indigenous teachers, Santoro *et al.* (2011) related how participants were concerned that while teaching and learning were compartmentalized, discrete and bound in schools, aboriginals' ways of knowing were de-compartmentalized and fluid (p. 68). While for Barnhardt and Kawagley (as cited in Santoro *et al.,* 2011) education for Indigenous peoples should be through "demonstration and observation accompanied by thoughtful stories in which the lessons were embedded" (p. 68), Nakata (2003) warns that assuming this is applicable to all aboriginal groups is problematic because it reduces diverse indigenous communities to one homogenous group. That is, knowledge about indigenous peoples' ways of knowing and being has to be taken with a grain of salt because these have been produced through discourses of whiteness (Santoro *et al.,* pp. 71-72).

Guido, García, Lara, Jutinico, Benavides, Delgadillo, Sandoval and Bonilla (2013) conducted a series of studies documenting the experiences of indigenous education in Colombia. In their work, they provide accounts of how legislation on ethno-education, scholars' advocacy for the rights to education of culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and indigenous movements' struggles to create *una educación propia*, have come together and created heterogeneous and irregular reifications of an alternative education for Colombian aboriginals. Specifically, they explain that the Ambaló community does not conceive education as happening only inside the school premises; instead, they think of education as happening in and for the community: a community-based pedagogy that seeks to commit their youth to their own life projects and to an understanding of the duality of their own worldviews and others (pp. 65-72). In the particular case of the region of San

Antonio Morales, for the Wampia aboriginals much of the teaching takes places around the *fogón* in an attempt to deconstruct the school as the only place in which knowledge is constructed (p. 94). In the Escuela Normal Superior Indígena de Uribia, which services Wayuu indigenous students, there is an emphasis on using the two languages, understanding the two cultures without prioritizing one or the other, and allowing the Elders to participate in the educational processes, to support the affirmation of their linguistic and cultural identity (p. 137).

Although a description of aboriginals' ways of knowing and being runs the risk of being taken to be static and overshadowing the diversity that exists within and across indigenous groups, there are some characteristics that they seem to share (Marchant, 2002). For instance, they value respect for each other and nature and have a deep sense of community and reciprocal learning (learning with and from each other). They are also characterized by a deep sense of interconnectedness of all things; reason why they value sharing, non-competitiveness, politeness, not putting themselves forward in a group, and letting others go first. Likewise, they have a present, rather than future orientation, are reluctant to speaking out, and have a predominantly an oral tradition in the teaching and learning of community values and worldviews (pp. 8-11). As regards learning styles, Pewewardy (as cited in Marchant, 2002, p. 12) ascertained that they do have tendencies such as, "strength in the visual modality, and preference for global, creative, and reflective styles of learning" (p. 37). In this sense, Marchant highlights indigenous students prefer to look at the big idea before examining the details. Similarly, Jacobs (as cited in Marchant, 2002) point out that aboriginal students seem to value "...more opportunities for personal reflection, critical thinking, observation, experience, and autonomy" (2003, p. 12) and learning through observation and doing within which individual autonomy is respected without neglecting interdependence.

As evident in this brief recounts of aboriginals' ways of knowing and being, they seem to share similar characteristics that hold true regardless of their geography. What is also evident is that many of these—knowledge as contextual, experiential, holistic and personal; the value of indirect learning through storytelling, observation and personal reflection, cooperation and mutual help in learning with and from each other; the de-compartmentalized and fluid nature of learning; community-based pedagogies of learning with and for the community in an environment of non-competitiveness; and connection to the land-stand in opposition to what seems to be the norm in westernized schools. An inclusion of the aforementioned traits into already existing pedagogies is then a prerequisite to creating ways for authentic inclusion of these populations that have been historically marginalized, neglected and othered in westernized educational systems around the world. In this sense, we sustain that efforts must be exerted to find ways to embrace these indigenous ways of knowing and being into pedagogical strategies, with close attention to the particularities of each ethnic group. One important step forward in this endeavor is creating spaces for the participation of indigenous community leaders in the planning and execution of inclusive education programs.

Indigenous Communities' Participation in Curriculum Planning and Delivery

According to Hart, Whatman, Maclaughlin and Sharma-Bryner (2012), schools in Australia perpetuate Eurocentric beliefs and practices, which has largely complicated the agenda for social justice for the aboriginal students who navigate thescurricula, they claim, "A key indicator of successful reform they identified has been the formalisation of Indigenous community participation. Genuine 'engagement' occurs when the processes for that engagement have been mutually developed and agreed upon" (p. 707). Further, they present a critique of the general practice of talking about indigenous knowledges, without the input of the indigenous peoples that are spoken about in the classrooms. Likewise, they problematize how inclusion of indigenous knowledges into curricula normally orbit around learning about indigenous knowledges, rather than learning from them (pp. 708-718).

In a similar vein, Nakata (as cited in Harrison & Greenfield, 2011) identify a problem with non-aboriginal teachers representing aboriginal perspectives and knowledges in class as this runs the risk of depicting said perspectives and knowledges in stereotypical ways that resemble westernized understandings of aboriginals ways of knowing and being. Along these lines, Harrison and Greenfield (2011) expose that to avoid this risk, it is pivotal:

> […] to weave Aboriginal knowledge into the fabric of the curriculum through careful negotiations with Aboriginal Elders and the community generally. Quality teaching in these contexts is governed by strong collaborations among teachers and the community. Mick Dodson (2007) adds that one of the key elements of every successful model of Aboriginal education is "intense community involvement" (p. 3). This community involvement positions Aboriginal knowledge in the school as alive, performative and reflective of the place where it is produced (p. 72).

One way to do this, they claim, is to reach out to indigenous parents and involve them in the design and implementation of their children's education and everyday learning experiences. For this to be possible, however, articulated efforts must be made to transform the school into a safe space in which indigenous parents feel their knowledges/perspective are valued (p. 73).

Carey and Prince (2015), however, warn against pitting indigenous knowledges against the demonized western ones and denounce "[...] the inadequacy of valorizing the indigenous knowledges as an antidote to the apparently ever-present imperialist imperative in western knowledge production" (p. 272). Instead, they acknowledge the value of Nakata's cultural interface (2002, 2011) as a useful conceptual tool in moving away from binary and overly simplistic views of the interactions between western and indigenous knowledges. That is, far from prioritizing indigenous knowledge over that of the demonized western other, they purposefully advocate for the problematization of dichotomous views of these allegedly mutually exclusive epistemologies. They go on to explain

that this cultural interface, as a space where two cultural and epistemological systems collide, helps explain the ambiguity and contradictions inherent to how aboriginals know themselves through their own views and those of the west (p. 272). Drawing on Nakata's interface and standpoints theory, they managed to structure the Indigenous Studies major at their university in ways that have rendered effective for students, despite the unavoidable tensions arising from the implementation of such views.

In this paper, we sustain that programs that aim at fully including indigenous students and reshaping the curricula to cater to the specific needs of this population, it is important to build bridges between the institution and the indigenous communities. These bridges should allow for interactions for learning about and from aboriginals' ways of knowing and being, which in turn should nurture the curriculum in transformative ways. As Harrison and Greenfield ascertain, "An understanding of this interaction can be produced between Aboriginal parents and Elders and children and teachers in the classroom and through their mutual planning and negotiations to include Aboriginal knowledge in the curriculum" (2011, p. 74). Following Carey and Prince (2015), the idea should not be to pit western and indigenous knowledges against each other but to allow them to interact at this cultural interface (Nakata, 2002, 2011) in which students can discuss how these two can co-exist, with the precaution of not prioritizing one over the other or depicting either one as static and finished.

Higher Education Programs that Serve Indigenous Communities

The courses of action underpinned in the QPIP for those students majoring in English Teaching at UNA, Coto Campus, do not parallel those followed by universities in Australia, Mexico, and Perú. Australia is certainly well-known for the their research on indigenous rights and education, which has led their local education system to exert efforts to include those underserved and underrepresented communities. A conspicuous aspect about their research-based initiatives is that they are aimed at solving the low retention and graduation rates that indigenous students show in higher education in particular. Mexico and Perú, on the other hand, despite reported limitations, have also implemented initiatives to create a more inclusive education system for First Nation communities. These efforts should allow us to put into perspective how education institutions have responded to the needs of these populations.

The Australian Center for Indigenous Knowledges and Education (ACIKE) conducted a study aimed at academically supporting first year Indigenous higher education students in this country by devising "[...] a culturally safe environment that recognizes and values student learning styles and the need to build Indigenous student capability" (Rossingh & Dunbar, 2012, p. 62). To create this environment, they proposed an Academic Enriching Program (AEP) whose aims are: student support, valuing of indigenous knowledge, contextualized flexible teaching methods, and social justice. The program incorporates in its core

appraisal of one's own culture, life experiences, and history to guarantee that everyone's rights and cultural wealth are embraced. The program started its implementation in 2012 and no further research was found in this line (pp. 61-74). Notwithstanding the above, the program sets an antecedent in which indigenous students' goals and needs are considered to bridge the existing gaps that place these underrepresented groups at a disadvantage.

Cortés, Mendoza and Dietz (as cited in Olivera & Dietz, 2017) reflect upon the case of access to higher education in Mexico and found that, despite having endorsed the establishment of intercultural universities since 1994, the number of academic programs adapted to the needs, rural background, and cultural and linguistic diversity is still limited (p. 10). In the same vein, Olivera and Dietz (2015) recognized that some public universities and institutions in Mexico are generating affirmative actions to accompany, support, and make the indigenous students visible and, in this manner, augment the population of First Nation students on campus. These authors also contrast this situation with that experienced by indigenous students in Perú and ascertain that the efforts made in this country to provide indigenous students with higher education are fairly more recent and thus entail fewer initiatives. Notwithstanding this, as in the case of Mexico, the dialogue held between the government and the aboriginal communities gave way to the creation of intercultural universities that, since the year 2000, cater to the needs of indigenous students nationwide.

To understand the way in which these universities serve the indigenous communities, we put across the case of the intercultural educational model at the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo) in Mexico. In this context, the indigenous Yucatec Maya population live under poverty and conditions that make them lag behind the rest of the society. The intercultural model followed to create the UIMQRoo is flexible; that is, it entails the comprehension and attention to the needs portrayed in the structural, functional, and cognitive backlog in the indigenous territory, which should be tackled to facilitate and boost a greater sustainable development (Rosado-May, 2017, p. 219). Following this premise, the model implemented to educate the people in these communities has to be congruent with the type of development required to give shape to fully competent, necessary professionals for the context where they are destined to work. In the end, the expected outcome implies improving the social conditions of the aboriginals by recognizing, redefining, reassessing, relearning, and readapting cognitive processes that lead to generating knowledge based on the interaction between the native culture and the scientific method (p. 221). To achieve such aim, the university hires professors with no formal education, the *sabios*, and elderly tutors, the *nool iknal*, who assist the lecturers and students in the teaching learning process (pp. 219-230). This has brought about satisfactory results for the indigenous students in this university, most of whom actually manage to finish the eight programs offered.

The QPIP is, without a doubt, a positive initiative to integrate our originative populations in the higher education system, yet more dialogue with

community leaders, research, and affirmative actions are required to cater to their goals and needs and render more successful outcomes beyond student attraction to the system. Australia, Mexico, and Perú are examples of better but still insufficient initiatives to address pending issues with aboriginals' access to education. Our position in this paper is that an important step forward in strengthening initiatives (such as the QPIP) geared toward the inclusion of aboriginal students is working with indigenous communities' leaders to better understand their ways of knowing and being and transform these into an alternative pedagogy that better serves indigenous youth and secure their success in completing their academic programs while; at the same time, affirming their linguistic and cultural affiliation and endowing them with the skills to navigate spaces where western and indigenous perspectives and knowledges collide.

Research Design

In a previous study we conducted about how the QPIP materialized in the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional (Coto Brus), we documented the voices of three Gnöbe students, three instructors and one administrator, all of whom agreed that the implementation of the QPIP has been only partially successful (Fallas & Brand, forthcoming). Although the QPIP had been in operation for three years at the moment of the study, only the first objective had been met in the case of the English Teaching Major: the attraction of indigenous students. As corroborated in our study, the retention of these students (objective 2) and the creation of culturally relevant pedagogies (objective 3) were far from being met. In this sense, our inquiry pointed to one missed step that may have contributed to the present stage of stagnation of this initiative: albeit in its inception the QPIP had counted on the participation of representatives from the indigenous communities in the country, their involvement had been interrupted at the implementation stage. In this regard, our posture is that close collaboration with community leaders, all along the implementation process, is necessary in working towards meeting the three overarching objectives of the QPIP.

Having realized that the voices of indigenous community leaders have been excluded at the implementation stage of this initiative, we resolved to conduct this follow-up study by way of which we looked for ways to rekindle the participation of the Gnöbe indigenous communities in shaping and reshaping of the curriculum in which their youth are incorporated. Drawing on a narrative research approach, we utilized an in-depth, open-ended interview to explore the goals and needs of the Gnöbe community. The narratives constructed by the community leader shed light on ways the QPIP can be reshaped to better respond to the educational needs of the Gnöbe English teaching majors at Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus, who have historically failed their English courses and later abandoned their higher education endeavors.

As Sikes and Gale expound, individuals construct narratives to explain and interpret their life experiences. As such, narratives are filled with social and cultural meaning

(as cited in Mendieta, 2013, p. 136), which help researchers understand the world of research subjects and the storied lives they lead (Moen, 2006, p. 2). Through narratives individuals structure elements of their experiences that would otherwise be random and disconnected. That is, individuals select aspects of their experiences that they deem important and organize them sequentially to allow their listeners to draw particular meanings. These narratives, she clarifies, are not an objective reconstruction of life but constitute a recount of how individuals perceive their experiences (Mendieta, 2013, p. 137; Moen, 2006, p. 2). An important aspect of narratives for our study is, according to Webster and Mertova (as cited in Mendieta, 2013), that they "do not exist in a vacuum but are shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives" (p. 137). That is, narratives are both personal and collective in that they are shaped by the cultural, historical and institution settings in which they take place (Moen, 2006, p. 5): "through the words and the narrative structures we use in the crafting of our stories and through the very content of these, we identify with other members of society and show our affiliation to a particular cultural group" (Mendieta, 2013, p. 137), thereby, for Dewey (as cited in Mendieta, 2013), allowing researchers to explore "the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (p. 140).

We employed an in-depth, open-ended interview with a Gnöbe leader to collect information about the needs and goals of this population. In the data we collected, we paid special attention to the narratives told to depict aspects of their past, present and future lives that are deemed important. Our purpose here was to select those narratives containing information that could be used to reshape the QPIP. We focused on the content and context and less on the form of the narratives we collected, as we intended to engage in narrative inquiry: using narratives to learn about and from the leader of the Gnöbe community. We interviewed him in the first semester of 2018. The data we obtained are comprised of stories and comments that came from the in-depth, open interview and are complemented by previous findings (Fallas & Brand, forthcoming) and informal conversations researcher 1 held with this participant.

Upon typing, rereading, selecting narratives and interpreting them, we approached the research subject one more time to get his feedback about our interpretation of his narratives and how that information could be used to bolster the QPIP. This technique for establishing data interpretation credibility (Moen, 2006, p. 8) is what Barkhuizen (as cited in Mendieta, 2013) referred to as narrative knowledging: "Narrative knowledging […] is the meaning making, learning, or knowledge construction that takes place during the narrative research activities of (co)constructing narratives, analyzing narratives, reporting the findings, and reading/watching/listening to research reports" (p. 142). All in all, we resolved to utilize a narrative approach, combined with qualitative research tools such as interviews, because stories reflect how individuals socially and culturally position themselves in the world and expose their identities and the values they adhere

to in order to act in the world (Mendieta, 2013, p. 137), which was what we set off to discover about the Gnöbe community in our endeavor of reshaping the QPIP.

In Fallas and Brand (forthcoming), we conducted interviews and focal groups with QPIP students, professors and the administration of UNA's Brunca Extension to unravel the extent to which the objectives of the QPIP were being met in the case of indigenous students' enrolled in the Bachelor's in English Teaching at Coto Campus. Even though we knew that the community had a paramount role in the inception of this program, not taking them into account was one of the delimitations in the previous study. After finishing the aforementioned study, in 2018 both researcher 1 and researcher 2 held informal conversations on the findings and recommendations that we had obtained from the research and came to the conclusion that the phenomenon under study required further exploration.

The idea of embarking once more in a dialogue with a Gnöbe was to depict the needs and goals of the indigenous in the QPIP from a stance that could narrate and explain the motivations to study English that these students generally find in their communities and the way in which their first and second language learning process takes shape. Fortunately, we were able to find a person that could serve to provide us with the information that we needed to fulfill this study. Besides being a Gnöbe leader for the Conte-Burica Indigenous Movement for more than 2 years, the participant is an English teacher in the rural high school of this territory. With respect to his academic background and teaching experience, he majored in English teaching at Universidad Latina and has been working at El Progreso Rural High School since 2014. At the moment of the research, the participant was being trained in the course Pronunciation and Oral Expression in English, who was being offered to those teachers that still required to pass the TOEIC test requested by the Ministry of Public Education to teach English in the country. In his remarks, he mentions that he has been appointed by governmental entities to discuss initiatives for indigenous students.

As in Brand and Fallas (forthcoming), this study examining the challenges and issues facing the teaching of English to those underserved and underrepresented populations. Insofar as the present study relies on information coming from only one participant, by no means do we intend to present broad claims on the problem. Instead, this paper constitutes a qualitative look on the narratives of our participant in terms of these challenges and issues and solutions for those whose aim is to research and tackle the problems facing QPIP Gnöbe students learning English at UNA, Coto Campus.

Findings

In this section, we present the findings that arouse from our data collection by way of an in-depth, open-ended interview with a Gnöbe community leader. Our research participant was key in that he played multiple roles: a Gnöbe community leader and a teacher of English in a Gnöbe high school. Herein, excerpts from his interview are used to illustrate three main patterns: (1) hardships, (2) circulating

discourses/ideologies framing hardships and (3) possible key actions. As established elsewhere, this is a qualitative study that draws on a narrative approach in that we analyze the aspects that the participant deems important, as he recount his stories for the us to draw particular meanings. Here we do not claim objectivity in the traditional sense. Instead, we are aware that the individual's accounts constitute the storied lives he leads and the sense he wish to make out of them. This, however, we sustain, does not invalidate the arguments that we make within this section.

Hardships Facing Gnöbe Students

- "La educación dentro del territorio ha sido difícil, puesto que hay que caminar largos caminos a veces para venir a estudiar. No hay luz (electricidad). El Gnöbe no tiene recursos económicos, no tienen transporte, no tiene muchas cosas y eso afecta un poco en sí el proceso educativo. El colegio donde yo estoy, hay que cruzar ríos y esos ríos se llenan tanto que usted no puede salir de ahí. Además en las aulas de secundaria, no hay infraestructura, está en pésimas condiciones. Entonces desde secundaria se empieza a limitar la educación para el Gnöbe".[1]
- "Ustedes aquí afuera tienen internet y toda la tecnología que se pueda tener y el Gnöbe no la tiene. Inclusive, un bachiller de colegio sale con el contenido, pero no tiene la habilidad de manejar tecnologías".
- "Entonces, ahí es donde está la situación, el tipo de comunicación con ellos porque yo sé que hablan español, pero usted a veces les hace una pregunta muy técnica [lenguaje académico], por lo que se les va dificultar a veces entender. Es importante conocer cómo se comunican ellos".
- "Como que son muy tímidos a la hora de expresarse. Inclusive, a veces tienen recelo de trabajar con la misma gente latina. Usted ve un grupo de Gnöbes y está por allá y el otro grupo aunque no los aíslen, pero el Gnöbe siempre se va a aislar, siempre busca estar solo… A veces les da miedo comunicarse, usted sabe que el Gnöbe no se comunica bien en español. Ese es el miedo que tal vez se rían o hablen mal de ellos. Algunos Gnöbes me han dicho que por vestir mal a veces mejor prefieren aislarse o por tener menos conocimiento porque ellos saben que no es lo mismo estudiar en un colegio rural que estudiar en un colegio de aquí afuera".

As perceived by this informant and evident in his accounts, Gnöbe youth face an array of hardships, most of which coincide with those found in studies in other countries, and all of which are detrimental to Gnöbes' education. First, the participants makes reference to Gnöbe youth's difficult access to schools (having to walk long distances and cross rivers that overflow in the rainy season), which is worsened by their difficult financial situation (little to no resources), the lack of electricity in the territory, no public transportation, and poor infrastructure of the Gnöbe school and high school. All of these conditions, he rightfully asserts, limit the quality of education Gnöbes have access to.

Second, he states that having no access to technology hinders not only their k-12 education but also their performance in college, given that Gnöbe students do not even know how to use the technology required to study and complete college assignments. Third, he references Gnöbe youth's difficulty in understanding technical language [academic language], which in his opinion requires that alternative forms of language be used while teaching. Finally, he ascertains that their shyness and mistrust of what he calls "*Latino*" students hinders their learning and incorporation into the college culture, resulting in practices of self-isolation. He explains that this situation arises from three conditions: Gnöbes' lack of proficiency in Spanish, their 'inadequate dress', and their poor-quality high school preparation.

And we coincide with this participant that a difficult financial situation, a poor high school education, no skills in technology and little control of academic language, can surely have a negative impact on Gnöbes' performance in college. The danger here lies in blaming Gnöbe students for issues they have no control over and turning a blind eye to the fact that k-12 education must be strengthened and that it is our responsibility at UNA to collaborate, by way of the QPIP, that these students are given support so that they can succeed in college. Equally dangerous it is to assume that these students will gradually adjust to the college culture at Universidad Nacional (UNA), which in fact gives great importance to academic language and within which technology is an indispensable skill/resource. Turning a blind eye to these issues would be taking an assimilationist approach to the inclusion of Gnöbe students at UNA and engaging in systemic micro-aggressions that lead students to segregating from spaces, in which their ways of being, doing, thinking, and learning are not the sought-after cultural capital.

Discourses/Ideologies Framing Gnöbe Students' Hardships

- "La educación de los Gnöbe se ha ido por el desarrollo, por buscar un mejor trabajo y seguir adelante. Pese a esto, las creencias son casi que las mismas, usted sabe que el Latino ha influenciado mucho y eso ha llegado a cambiar las creencias del territorio".
- "Más que todo se basa en eso y en que el indígena se prepare cada día más en el área que está. El Gnöbe tiene que ir buscando un perfil más elevado, más preparados, para lograr que nuestros jóvenes logren ser mejor educados".
- "Costa Rica está enfocada en ser bilingüe y ya nosotros no seríamos bilingües sino seríamos, no sé cómo se diría, polilingüe, algo así creo que es, porque aparte de que manejamos el idioma local, manejamos el español y no nos vamos a quedar botados porque Costa Rica eso es lo que busca, que ya todo el país sea bilingüe, que todo el país aprenda un segundo idioma y que lo manejemos, entonces cómo nos vamos a quedar botados así…".
- "Usted sabe que para aprender una segunda lengua usted tiene que esforzarse el doble y tengo entendido que el Gnöbe no es de esforzarse mucho (risas). Ellos, trás que a veces son tímidos, no sé, yo ya me he

encontrado compañeros y "qué es lo que sucede?" "Es que la universidad es muy difícil", pero qué en esta vida es fácil? No hay nada fácil, yo sé que a ellos les está costando la parte tal vez de poner de parte de ellos, de poner un poquito más de esfuerzo para que logren".

- "'Busque la estrategia usted (dirigiéndose a otro Gnöbe), el profesor está ahí para ayudarle, tiene que preguntar más'. Ellos se aíslan y entonces, ellos al aislarse, van a preguntar muy poco, van a participar muy poco…".
- "[…] porque para aprender un tercer idioma usted ocupa mucha tecnología para lograr capturar esa información que se requiere y eso es lo que a algunos Gnöbe se les dificulta".

All throughout the interview with this participant, he directly and indirectly (and mostly unconsciously) revealed some of the discourses and ideologies framing the hardships facing Gnöbe students who engage in higher education endeavors at UNA. First, he refers to how *los Latinos* have influenced their Gnöbe culture, to the point that Gnöbe education has been shaped to fit a global trend of economic development, which dictates that individuals should get "a better education," to get "a better job" and thus be able to "move on." This, we could say, might be pushing or motivating more and more Gnöbe youth to choose to go to college, as it fits the global logic of economic development. Similarly, he states that for Gnöbes, it has become more and more urgent to aim at a higher or more specialized professional profile. However, who gets to define that profile? Ideally, Gnöbes should have a say in defining this professional profile, but the trend seems to be that Gnöbes adapt to nationwide trends. Third, he references the nationwide initiative to strengthen bilingualism in the country. In this regard, he is aware that he is already bilingual in Gnöbe and Spanish, but he is also aware that his bilingualism is not the type of bilingualism that the country is aiming at. He knows that English has been made mandatory in K-16 education and come to understand that bilingualism in our country implies English. And thus, the teaching and learning of English has become an industry and a source of jobs for many and, it seems, Gnöbes are not exempted from the temptation of choosing to major in English or English teaching, as they try to fit the global logic of economic development (Block, Gray & Holborow, 2013; Block & Cameron, 2005; Duchene & Heller, 2013).

Another discourse the participant referenced was the deficit view that Gnöbes are lazy and do not try hard enough, which he thinks is partially the reason why many abandon college. He states that learning another language requires double the effort [in comparison to learning other subjects] and that Gnöbes' laziness and tendency not to apply themselves can be causing them to leave their college endeavors unconcluded. While many would agree that this characterization of Gnöbes is accurate (even Gnöbes themselves), few would dare to even hint that Gnöbes' failure in college is triggered by the fact that they do not fit the mold of college education, as their views of learning are nurtured by othered ways of being, doing and thinking. Unfortunately, Gnöbes walk into college with this deficit view,

the assumption being that if they do not adapt to the demands of higher education, they will fail because they did not try hard enough [assimilate hard enough?]. Similarly, the participant implied that it is Gnöbes' responsibility to find ways to be successful in college. This statement, however, disregards that Gnöbes are uprooted from their culture and language and put in a position of disadvantage [given the low quality of their high school education] in comparison to their non-indigenous peers whose English proficiency and academic formation is higher since the beginning. Also, such position does not consider the QPIP's objectives of inclusion, retention and success.

Further, another recurrent theme in this interview was that the learning of English cannot be disconnected from technology. In hindsight, as professors at UNA, we can attest to the importance of technology skills in the learning and teaching of English and all other majors as well. This does not mean that English cannot be learned unless there is technology, as we will discuss later. However, UNA has decided to give technology a great deal of importance, to the point that professors are encouraged to use virtual learning environments and all possible technological devices in their teaching. The importance of this skill at UNA can be seen in that the practice of using technology for teaching is even included in the teacher-evaluation survey students complete every semester for each of the courses they take. As was discussed earlier, however, Gnöbes come to college without these technology skills that are necessary at UNA.

Finally, the participant constructed the Gnöbe students as the in-betweens. Words such as "nosotros", "ustedes-ellos", "aquí" [Gnöbe territory] and "allá" [UNA] were frequently used to make sense of the Gnöbe experience in college. These words point to the fact that Gnöbes have to navigate spaces in which self-isolation accentuates the "nosotros" versus "ellos" understanding of their interactions with professors and non-indigenous peers. Likewise, the constant reference to "aquí" and "allá" offer evidence that the Gnöbe are not fully included in the educational system at UNA more specifically. That is, UNA still represents this in-between space that Gnöbes have to navigate from a position of disadvantage, as they try to fit in the global logic of progress and economic development at the expense of being uprooted from what feels like home and familiar to them. This only points to a conclusion that we reached in another paper: that the QPIP has been only partially successful and that further efforts ought to be made to ensure the retention and success of Gnöbes in their academic endeavors.

Possible Key Actions

- "La mayoría del Gnöbe habla otro idioma o habla otra lengua [...]. Yo enseño en inglés, pero entonces si los muchachos entendieron, no me dieron ninguna señal. Entonces les pregunté en español, entonces unos cuantos me dijeron que sí, y ya cuando pregunto en el idioma, porque yo hablo Gnöbe, entonces ahí todos dijeron que no. Entonces, ahí es donde está la situación".
- "Los profesionales que se requieren deben manejar el idioma porque usted tiene que comunicarse con

esos niños. A veces ellos traen poco español; entonces, el perfil es ser indígena, conocer de la cultura […]".

- "Lo importante sería conversar con ellos porque tal vez yo podré hablar de la timidez de alguno de ellos, pero tal vez podría ser otra cosa, otro problema que podrían enfrentar ellos".
- "No sé, tal vez dotarlos, no darles tecnología a ellos, sino buscar un espacio donde ellos puedan ingresar a internet y darles un espacio para que puedan hacer sus trabajos, ya que cuando ellos regresan a sus hogares, va a ser muy difícil que tengan acceso a una computadora. Tal vez capacitarlos en tecnología porque el estudiante puede tener la compu, pero no sabe cómo usarla".
- "Yo tengo amigos Gnöbe que no tienen ni secundaria y han estado aprendiendo inglés porque entra turista dentro del territorio. Pero no son personas preparadas y ya lo han tenido que adoptar porque es un medio de trabajo, usted sabe, a veces van turistas y ocupan de un guía Gnöbe porque dentro del territorio hay mucha naturaleza y entonces los americanos llegan y buscan que el mismo Gnöbe los guíe y usted sabe que el Gnöbe va a saber más y hasta [los turistas] aprenden del idioma Gnöbe también… Pero sí conozco Gnöbes que solo escuela tienen y me sorprenden a veces".

Amidst what was described above, the participant seems to see key elements or actions that we agree should be taken into consideration to ensure the success of Gnöbe youth in college. First, he acknowledges that the Gnöbe language plays a role in the EFL class. As he narrated, students were more likely to say whether they understood the teacher's explanation or not if they were addressed in Gnöbe. Likewise, he believes that those who educate Gnöbe youth should know not only about the language but also the culture. Second, he advises that we [professors] speak with Gnöbe students because they might be facing a problem that is not related to the shyness that he refers to. Third, he thinks that Gnöbe students should be provided with both spaces where students can have access to computer and training on how to use computers. This is important to address given that the participant depicted Gnöbes' lack of skills with computers as a tremendous disadvantage all throughout the interview.

Finally, and to our surprise, Gnöbe students have been learning English outside of UNA to find a job as tourist guides, given the tourists that enter the Gnöbe territory to experience its abundant nature. What is interesting here is that while those Gnöbe students who major in English Teaching at UNA have historically failed the first English course time and time again and not been able to continue with their studies, other Gnöbes who only completed elementary school are learning English and creating their own jobs for themselves in their communities. This situation leads us to wonder: (1) what is it that these Gnöbes are doing to learn English that we cannot do for those Gnöbes who major in English teaching (even with the support of the QPIP initiative)? (2) for what purposes does the Gnöbe community really need English? (3) Are we ready to give them what they need in terms of learning English for making a living and helping their community? These questions

need serious consideration and we believe that the Gnöbe people working as guides in their territory have the potential to inform and redirect the QPIP and bolster its impact.

In sum, interviewing this community leader and English teacher has been illuminating and constitutes an important step forward toward securing the success of Gnöbes at UNA, as intended by the QPIP. This dialogue provided important information to better understand the hardships facing Gnöbe students and the discourses and ideologies framing those hardships. Likewise, it has directed our attention to possible actions to take in the near future. Most importantly, this interview has given us a glimpse into the Gnöbes' needs (better infrastructure, higher quality K-12 education, more access to technology, spaces for strengthening their cultural and linguistic affiliation) and goals (ways to find or create jobs that are relevant for their communities and that allow them to face the economic difficulties they are currently facing). That is why we concur that UNA representatives should not only have more dialogues like this one but also invite Gnöbe community leaders to enrich, nourish and guide the QPIP all along its implementation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In Brand and Fallas (forthcoming), we proposed to carry out another study to shed light on alternative approaches to EFL teaching that could align more with Gnobes' views of education, teaching, and learning. Such study required to be conducted in cooperation with indigenous community members; reason why we worked with one key participant. Given that it is pivotal to voice the concerns of those who have been neglected and subordinated, this time we aimed at facilitating communication between UNA and the Gnöbe population. By doing so, we expect to aid the retention of Gnöbe students in the program and tackle their educational needs by means of culturally relevant pedagogies that reinforce their identity and cultural affiliation. Such objective, we claim, in agreement with Ottmann and Pritchard (2010), would not be possible to achieve if indigenous students' ways of knowing and being do not become a cross-curricular theme in programs that aim at the inclusion of these populations. With the aforementioned premise in mind, through a careful and systematic analysis of the narratives in the interview conducted with the participant of the study, in the next sections, we offer different an analysis of the hardships faced by Gnöbe students at UNA, the circulating discourses framing those hardships, and the courses of action to follow, which according to the participating community leader, would assuage the problems encountered by QPIP Gnöbe students.

Knowing QPIP Students' Hardships

In regards to the hardships facing Gnöbe students, the reality described by the participant of the study is not different from the one accounted by Pernudi Chavarría (2017) nor Fallas and Brand (forthcoming): difficult access to schools, poverty, lack of electricity and technology, limited higher education of some teachers, and poor school infrastructure. It is well-known

that the shortage of resources to provide a good quality of education indeed has negative repercussions on students. The narratives also report that the Gnöbe youth have difficulties to understand the metalanguage used in the classroom and that their shyness, isolation, and mistrust of the non-aboriginal students hinders their learning and incorporation at UNA. Needless to say, it is not within the reach of those who have orchestrated the QPIP to guarantee that these conditions in indigenous territories be eradicated.

However, we are certain that UNA through its teaching, research, and extension projects can devise ways to assist indigenous students and bridge the gaps that place them at a disadvantage. Although some may claim the quality of education received in high school is a determining factor to learn English in college, the participant revealed that some indigenous people have learned the language informally for tourism purposes in other environments. Here is where our meaningful pedagogies in the academy come into play and that we inquire. How can an indigenous Gnbe learn a language to assist English speaking tourists and other Gnööbes not learn it to pass a college EFL course taught by professionals in the field? This might point to the incidence of faculty's not knowing how these students best.

We concur with the participant that the QPIP Gnöbe students' self-isolation may be triggered by: their lack of proficiency in Spanish, their feeling about their "inadequate dress" and their poor high school preparation. Some questions arise from this particular issue: to what extent do professors and the administration really know about these students' levels of Spanish, quality of high school formation and how they feel about their dress? How much could this affect in a class that is allegedly taught in English? Do lecturers and administrative staff really look into their customs and academic background? We highly recommend teachers and the university administration to promote spaces inside and outside the classroom in which students, professors, and administrative personnel engage in dialogue with Gnöbe leaders, parents, and students. This would allow all the academic community to re-orient their pedagogies toward an actual inclusion of those that are underrated and thus bring about more of that genuine engagement that occurs when the indigenous community in fact participates in this processes (Hart, Whatman, Maclaughlin & Sharma-Bryner, 2012).

Questioning the Indigenous Circulating Discourses on Education and Bilingualism

We cannot deny the impact globalization has had on indigenous populations, the education they receive and their views on bilingualism. As a matter of fact, according to our participant, their worldviews on success and the job market seem not to deviate from those in the westernized culture. Moreover, the participant shows that the indigenous people tend to constrain their views on bilingualism to knowing English and Spanish, and at the same time they downplay the relevance of their already existing bilingualism. They also reinforce the assimilationist idea that the Gnöbes are the ones to blame

for their academic failure due to their "lazy attitude." Not only do we stand against these reasoning, but we also invite the stakeholders of the QPIP to do it. Nevertheless, it is not our endeavor to antagonize indigenous knowledge and that of the "demonized" western other (Carey & Prince, 2015), yet some questions cannot remain unanswered. In the first place, what kind of education do Gnöbess need? How relevant is English for their well-being? What restricts bilingualism to knowing English as lingua franca? Who is really lazy? The one who does not perform well in the academy, or the academy who is not able to provide inclusive social mobility as one of its most overarching principles?

Without a doubt, the answer to these questions entails a great deal of sensitization on the on the part of the non-indigenous students, professors and the university's administration. First, it is necessary to change the mindset of those who believe that education serves solely the system, for it most importantly should provide the oppressed with pedagogies to surmount the intricacies of life (Freire, 1970). Following this premise, education in indigenous communities should thereafter be used to maintain the values of its people and grant them the possibility to live a life that contributes to their economic development and well-being. Second, albeit there are few possibilities to reverse globalization, English should be taught not to impose a neoliberal agenda on those that have been the most excluded by the system but to raise awareness of the diversity of languages and cultures and their role in strengthening people's cultural and linguistic identity. This also leads to amplifying the prevailing beliefs on bilingualism in order to, as proposed by Guido *et al.* (2013), offset the dominant views. Finally, pigeonholing Gnöbe students as "lazy" is nothing but an oppressing attitude since this view comes from the Gnöbe students' difficulties to assimilate to the "Latino" culture. Once more, sensitizing is the key because, as made evident by Marchant (2003), aboriginals' ways of knowing and being require alternatives that involve cooperation and mutual help in learning about and from each other—that is, community-based pedagogies of learning that diverge from competition as a value present in westernized societies.

An Outlook on the Solutions Proposed by the Gnöbe

Many of the courses of action proposed in Fallas and Brand (forthcoming) and the present study are pivotal to achieve retention and graduation of the QPIP students. Translating the voice of our participant into concrete suggestions to enhance the program is perhaps the most vehement aspiration of this research. The incorporation of the Gnöbe language, knowing about the Gnöbe culture, training Gnöbes on technological are for both the participant and the researchers of this study still pending issues that deserve the attention of all the people involved in the QPIP to better assist the Gnöbe students at UNA.

Unluckily, unlike the case of the intercultural educational model at UIMQRoo in Mexico (Rosado-May, 2017), professors and the heads of the UNA cannot always bring community leaders to teach a class along with the

professors to know more about what the indigenous students know and need to know. They can do, nonetheless, is to engage in dialogue with community leaders, Elders, parents and students, and thus to allow western and indigenous knowledges to interact and co-exist with each other to unravel the motivations, needs, and values from their own voices (Nakata, 2002, 2011). Understanding the indigenous ways of knowing and being and turning these into an alternative pedagogy is the only way to fully achieve the objectives of the QPIP, uphold their linguistic and cultural affiliation, and bestow them with the skills to move into spaces where western and indigenous knowledges come into play.

Overall, it comes as no surprise the fact that the conclusions and recommendations of this study are, in many ways, similar to the critical transformations delineated in Fallas and Brand (forthcoming). The ones in this study, however, provide further details, examples, and affirmative actions on how these critical transformations can take shape to provide QPIP students culturally relevant pedagogies that truly help them undertake their college endeavors with fewer worries on the face of the cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic challenges faced by Gnöbe freshmen students when learning English at UNA, Campus Coto.

Notes

1. Excerpts from interview are left in Spanish because this study is intended for English-Spanish bilingual audience.

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