Keys to Indigenous youth and adult education in Latin America: Lessons learned in the pursuit of social literacy[1]

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Abstract

The article summarises a study on the situation of the education of indigenous youths and adults in Latin America. Although its scope pretends to be regional and comprehensive seven case studies are taken as points of departure for the analysis; those of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico, traditionally regarded as the 'most indigenous' countries of the region, in contrast with other two – Brazil and Nicaragua –, where the presence of indigenous populations is less influential in everyday social life. The lessons learned through the implementation of youth and adult literacy programmes in these countries open up possibilities for an analytical display of relevant issues and conditions that ought to be taken into account in youth and adult educational programmes and by extension in the education of Indigenous populations in general, at a point in time where, as a result of their struggle towards social emancipation, Indigenous individuals and collectivities are gradually becoming subjects of law, and the times when they were merely considered as objects of Latin American public policy are being overcome. It is argued that in such a context a further step needs to be taken where the education of Indigenous populations becomes a national issue and thus implies the concern of everybody. This move would imply the interculturalisation of all Latin American nation-states and consequently of their educational systems.

Points of departure

In spite of the long history of intercultural bilingual education in Latin America, the education of Indigenous peoples has been considered as marginal to the construction of national education systems. To date the education of Indigenous students is seen mostly as compensatory and thus detached from the education for all other sectors of society. Furthermore, intercultural bilingual education (IBE) is seen mainly as transitional and Indigenous languages are regarded as useful only for

the first stages of elementary education (López, 2013a; Hammel, 2008; López & Sichra, 2008).

Indeed, the trajectory and fate of IBE are closely connected to the history of the construction of the nation-state in Latin America, and hence to the modern ideals of linguistic and cultural homogenisation of society in pursue of equality, development and progress. For at least the last three decades, Indigenous movements have stood up before the State and pushed for legal transformations inspired in a more plural understanding of society. Similarly, the transition from modern to postmodern thought brought about renewed interest in the culturally diverse nature of society and numerous questions arose on the transformation of the state in order to account for such differences, although guaranteeing unity and indivisibility. In that context, laws on education relevant to Indigenous culture, language and identity have been enacted, but hardly implemented. As we shall see down below, there are widening if not yawning gaps between IBE policy and practice (López, 2013a), since such legal transformations most generally constitute purely symbolic forms of recognition and nothing more than lip service.

One of the problems for the above mentioned mismatch is that contemporary Latin American history was heavily influenced by economic neoliberalism and by the concomitant political conditions of the new world order demanded by globalisation. Hence, Indigenous demands and defence of their cultural and linguistic legacy and of their rights to diversity and difference have become counter-hegemonic. So, for the sake of safeguarding internal governance, particularly in those countries where the presence of Indigenous population is demographically or politically more influential, the nation-state was forced to adopt economic and social policies that many times oppose one another.

Such is the case, for example, of the contemporary discourse on quality education which gives pride of place to efficiency and effectiveness rather than to cultural and linguistic relevance, social importance and the comprehensive education of learners (Hammel, 2009; López, 2009a). In spite of the enormous difference that exists between corporate thinking and social engineering to where educational policy and practice belong, contemporary Latin American discourse on quality education most generally focuses on efficiency and effectiveness, emulating entrepreneurial discourse. Undoubtedly, this is a by-product of the influence of neoliberal thought in the region. "[This] economist view of education uses quantitative measurable outputs as a measure of quality, for example enrolment ratios and retention rates, rates of return on investment in education in terms of earnings and cognitive achievement as measured in national or international tests" (Barratt, Chawla-Duggan, Lowe, Nikel & Ukpo, 2006, p. 2). Furthermore, standardized testing privileges language and math in detriment of other curriculum areas and topics neces-

sary for all humans to know who they are, make sense of the world they live in and also learn to live together. Hence, other equally important learning dimensions are now being left behind, such as those associated to the comprehensive education of committed citizens who are consciously aware of social injustice, inequality, cultural oppression, racism, discrimination and all other iniquities that impinge on the construction of a new socio-cultural order in which those almost 40 million Amerindian individuals that have survived to date could fit in.

Hence, the notion of education quality, borrowed or mechanically transposed from the world of liberal economics, ought to be revisited in order to account for cultural and linguistic appropriateness and social and economic relevance in a context of historical multiethnicity, multiculturalism and multilingualism. Such reassessment must also reconcile the current notion of education quality with a rights approach to education, and establish indicators based on human rights, Indigenous people rights and specific cultural, linguistic and education rights.

This issue becomes even equally excruciating – or perhaps even more so – when discussing cultural appropriateness and social relevance in connection to the education of Indigenous youths and adults, since it is not only a matter of quality but mainly a question of rights. In this specific case, achieving education quality implies taking into account the distinct knowledges, values, beliefs and languages of people who have grown up and thus been educated in a system – totally or at least partially – different from the mainstream one. Educational planners and implementers should become aware that these severe differences related to divergent worldviews, ways of life and social organisation persist and are therefore significant and meaningful for Indigenous societies; consequently, they play a determining role in the acquisition of new knowledge and techniques. In other words, Indigenous peoples' knowledge, values and beliefs cannot be possibly ignored in the social construction of interculturalism. Therefore, Indigenous youth and adult education curriculum design ought to account for specific Indigenous cultural content as an indispensable point of departure on the way to the cultural and knowledge negotiation envisaged in IBE; and hence, to interculturalism.

Additionally, education equity in Latin America is still an issue at stake since regional economic growth has not necessarily resulted beneficial for the underprivileged sectors of society. Income gaps have increased and become more difficult to breach. In this general context there is an educational gap in terms of inputs as well as outputs and outcomes between learners from most privileged homes and those belonging to the underserved sectors of society. Indigenous learners, especially girls and women in general, still have limited access to and drop out of schools before completing their basic education (UNESCO, 2010). In general, there are still insurmountable inequalities between education in urban and rural areas.

Nonetheless, in the past decades efforts have been made to improve the educational situation by focusing on basic general education of children and young people. Unfortunately, the emphasis placed on education for all since the early 1990s has privileged the formal education of children and adolescents to the detriment of adult education and alternative ways of learning and teaching. The above mentioned problems occur in all Latin American countries, albeit with differences of detail.

The point is that, after more than two decades of educational reforms in Latin America, it is necessary if not indispensable to take stock of accomplishments, particularly in regard to the education of Indigenous youths and adults who have not had any access to education or have been expelled early from the public school system. In these reforms, countries have laid emphasis on formal education and, in particular, on children, often concentrating exclusively on reading and writing in the hegemonic language and on elementary arithmetic while responsibility for all other matters has been reassigned to the family and society; for example, Indigenous youth and adult education (IYAE). Hence, IYAE is most generally provided by civil society through NGOs and under projects supported by international cooperation agencies and donors.

IYAE is not only a technical endeavour, but also a political undertaking. The non-neutrality of education has been largely acknowledged since the political nature of education was postulated by Paulo Freire (Freire, 1970), if that is true for education in general, non-formal youth and adult education becomes even more political, and it is precisely this character that moves and involves both civil society and governments in its implementation. Hence, IYAE has become a political act and governments are most certainly aware of it. In this general context, the education of youths and adults has recently been at stake in Latin America and a number of countries have been declared 'illiteracy-free'. Such are the cases of Venezuela (2005), Bolivia (2008), Nicaragua and Ecuador (2009) and Peru (2011), and of regions of other countries like El Salvador and Guatemala (2012), where governments invested in massive literacy campaigns, in most cases following the Cuban inspired 'Yes, I can' methodology. Nonetheless, critical appraisals of such illiteracy-free declarations have pinpointed numerous flaws in the evaluation of reading and writing competencies supposedly mastered, and hence academic discussions on what youth and adult literacy implies cast doubt on the reliability of these outcomes and declarations (RPP, 2013; Zúñiga, 2011).[2] Some of these objections are closely connected to national literacy averages and rates that at times conceal Indigenous illiteracy. The fact is that recent analyses of illiteracy established by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) seem to contradict these illiteracy-free statements – many times with involvement of

UNESCO officers in the field (http://noticias.com.gt/departamentales/20101106-declaran-libre-de-analfabetismo-a-tres-municipios-de-sacatepequez.html), and determine the persistence of important levels of illiteracy among Indigenous peoples, as we shall see further down in Table 1.

In what follows, keys to reflect upon Indigenous illiteracy and IYAE planning and implementation are presented. To identify such keys the author has resorted to a variety of strategies and sources. Firstly, he builds on a regional research project in which he participated, that drew up a state of the art of indigenous literacy programmes in seven countries – Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru. This study organised by the UNESCO Institute for Life Long Learning (UIL) and the Guatemalan GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) Education Quality Support Programme (López & Hanemann, 2009) provided basic information, useful insights and lessons learned in Latin American through the implementation of literacy programmes with Indigenous populations. To complement and update the information given in the country studies referred to,[3] additional data was collected by the author through interviews and dialogues with Indigenous leaders and intellectuals as well as with government education officers in various countries. Relevant literature was also reviewed; and lastly, the author's involvement both as an IBE analyst and practitioner in the region and his participation in academic seminars on the topic helped him reflect upon the trajectory, present problems and potentials of IBE and particularly reflect upon what has been done in IYAE in Latin America. On the analysis of this manifold data particular attention was given to the existing correlation between the views of IYAE planners and implementers and those of Indigenous leaders and intellectual in the present context of Indigenous political involvement and participation in nationwide discussion.

Since this article draws on principles, considerations derived from practice and lessons learned through the implementation of IYAE programmes in a culturally and linguistic diverse region of the world, the results of this study might be of use in other multiethnic and multilingual contexts. The study also aims to contribute to academic discussion on topics such as social literacy, bi- and multilingual literacies, the politics and socio-linguistics of policy as well as the social construction of literacy in multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual societies whose leaders and intellectuals struggle towards their peoples social emancipation.

Frame of reference

In Latin America there are at least 40 million Indigenous persons, nearly 500 different languages and 600 distinct Indigenous peoples (López, 2009b). With the no-

table exception of Uruguay, there are Indigenous populations in every Latin American state, including the seven countries of the regional study referred to.

In Latin American demography Bolivia and Guatemala constitute by far two paradigmatic cases since their Indigenous populations constitute real majorities and not ethnic and linguistic minorities as usually regarded in the literature, and more so in governmental publications. Indigenous populations in Guatemala and Bolivia amount to approximately 40 to 60 % of the national total population. At the other end of this demographic continuum, in Brazil and El Salvador only 0.4 and 0.2 % of the national total population is registered as Indigenous (Sichra, 2009).

As we can see, the countries selected for the regional survey referred to (López & Hanemann, 2009) reflect the diversity that characterises Latin America. The Indigenous population density is high in one group of countries comprising Bolivia and Guatemala, whereas, in the other group, including Brazil and Nicaragua, the Indigenous population is demographically less influential in general national life. In the study, the latter two countries constitute cases of contrast or comparison with those that have historically been marked as national societies in which Indigenous populations have always played a determining role, namely, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru. Nonetheless, the above statement must be qualified somewhat for, in the provincial areas where Indigenous peoples traditionally live, they may very well constitute the majority population group. It does not suffice therefore merely to analyse and determine the national situation disregarding the situation of specific provinces, municipalities and even communities.

Nonetheless and as we shall see further down, in all of these seven countries as it is also the case for Latin America as a whole, these politically minoritised and subaltern Indigenous populations are now undergoing complex socio-political transformations which are indeed contributing to a gradual modification of the socially constructed imaginary and the ethnic configuration of the countries they now live in (Varese, 2007). Since the late 1970s the region has been experiencing a gradual but undeniable *return of the Indian* (Albó, 1991) phenomenon that has decisively marked its overall political scenario. The fact is that for about four decades processes of ethnogenesis have been underway and people of Indigenous ancestry or belonging have rediscovered and socially and politically positioned themselves as Indigenous even when they may live in urban areas. Although not as distinctively as in other countries, Uruguay has been also marked by this phenomenon since in the 2004 population census, 3.5 % of its national population for the first time self-redefined as Indigenous descendants (López, 2009b).

Table 1: Basic reference information on seven Latin American countries

Country	Bolivia	Guatemala	Mexico	Peru	Nicaragua	Ecuador	Brazil
Aera in km²	1,098,581	109,127	1,984,375	1,285,215	129,494	256,379	8,514,877
Date of most recent census	2001	2002 Projection 2013	2010	2007 Projection 2013	2005 Projection 2010	2010	2010
Population	10,389,913	15,438,384	117,409,830	30,135,875	6,071,045	14,306,876	190,732,694
Indigenous population	66.2%	40.2%	14.9%	13.9%	8.6%	7.3%	0.4%
Indigenous peoples	36	24	67	43	9	12	241
Indigenous languages	33	24	64	43	6	12	186
National illiteracy	13.2% (2001)	21.4% (2011)	9.2% (2010)	7.2% (2007)	22.2% (2005)	6.8% (2010)	13.6% (2010)
Indigenous illiteracy	17.1% (2001)	32.4% (2011)	27.1% (2010)	15.5% (2007)	24.0% (2005)	20.4% (2010)	No data available
Political status of Indigenous languages	All are official (2009) and should be used in education and other public services.	Legally recognised as national languages (2003) and should be used in education and other public services.	Legally recognised as national languages (2003) and should be used in education and other public services.	All are official in the regions where spoken (2003) and should be used in education and other public services.	All are official in the regions where spoken (1989) and should be used in education and other public services.	All are official in the regions where spoken. The two most widely spoken are recognised as languages of inter-cultural and inter-ethnic communication (2008) and all should be in education and other public services.	Can be used as languages of education.

Country	Bolivia	Guatemala	Mexico	Peru	Nicaragua	Ecuador	Brazil
Status and availability of intercultural bilingual education (IBE)	Abandonment of EIB after two decades of implementation. Now in pursuit of plurilingual education.	Long history of early-exit transitional IBE, persistence of vast gaps between rhetoric and practice.	Long history of IBE but persistence of vast gaps between rhetoric and practice.	Long history of IBE but persistence of vast gaps between rhetoric and practice.	Legally recognised autonomous education system for the Atlantic Coast, of which IBE forms part.	Long history of IBE but persistence of vast gaps between rhetoric and practice.	Indigenous education sub-system that is intercultural but not always or necessarily bilingual.
Availability of intercultural bilingual literacy	Long history of adult literacy programmes in Indigenous languages now under risk by the adoption of a centralised Spanish-only national programme.	Long history of adult literacy programmes in most Indigenous languages.	In most Indigenous languages. Recent introduction of national Spanish-only programmes in some Mexican Sates.	Mostly in Andean languages, although now a national Spanish-only programme is also under way.	In all Indigenous languages of the Atlantic Coast.	Mostly in Andean languages, although now a national Spanish-only programme is also under way.	Mostly in Portuguese, although in some areas of the country Indigenous language literacy is also implemented.

Sources: Personal elaboration. The Indigenous population data comes from recent censuses: Peru (2007), Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico (2010); or from the latest information available: Bolivia (2001), Guatemala (2011) and Nicaragua (2005). Other data has been taken from the country studies in López & Hanemann (2009), from López (2009a) and from the *Sociolinguistic Atlas of Indigenous Peoples in Latin America* (Sichra, 2009).

López: Keys to Indigenous youth and adult education in Latin America

It is interesting to note that in their self-reaffirmation, Indigenous leaders and intellectuals often make use of the intercultural competencies they have developed in the many times conflictive and asymmetric interethnic exchanges they have historically been part of. Undoubtedly, their schooling and academic trajectory, although problematic and many times frustrating, contributed to their lived interculturalisation.

In this context, Latin American politics is being questioned by Indigenous leaders and intellectuals who now resort to their own epistemic categories and socio-political constructs in order to challenge the existing hegemonic racially-and-culturally-determined social order. In so doing, they claim their right to self-rule and self-determination and demand national recognition, acceptance and respect for their knowledge, belief and value systems, languages and ways of life.

Socio-political processes such as these are seldom taken into account for the design and implementation of youth and adult education programmes. Thus, in spite of what the anthropology and socio-linguistics of literacy have made it evident (Street, 1984), more than often educational programmes and ministries of education perceive literacy merely as a set of isolated and autonomous decoding skills to the detriment of literacy as a complex social construction, frequently determined by interaction with the ruling social order and the populations' everyday activities and socio-cultural practices. Ministries of education most generally emphasise the technicalities of these programmes and do not pay sufficient attention to the contextual conditions that repeatedly determine their success or failure. A limited understanding of the socio-political complexities of literacy and/or the short term perspectives adopted by educational planners and programme implementers may very well be responsible for these shortcomings.

The first general observation that needs to be made is that no one can state clearly the exact number of Indigenous people who live in the continent or even in any of its individual countries. This is mainly due to continuing flaws in the design and implementation of national population censuses, particularly in regard to remote areas, as is the case in many of those inhabited by Indigenous peoples.[4] There are also innumerable obstacles, such as the persistence of a colonial mind-set that creates attitudes of ethnic shame and thus of self-negation among Indigenous individuals (López, 2009b). Silence, camouflage or outright denial of their differentiated ethnic status could be understood as signs that they unintentionally accept atavistic policies designed to assimilate them into the criollo-mestizo mainstream (López & Sichra, 2008). It is now internationally acknowledged that *being Indigenous* is primarily a political act of self-determination and self-recognition of an inherited status that is simultaneously assigned and adopted.

While it is still difficult to determine exactly who is Indigenous, one must imagine how much more complicated it is to establish the percentage of Latin America's population that is wholly or partly unfamiliar with the hegemonic national language and the number of those that still live in a historically oppressed and thus socially stigmatised language. The fact is that Indigenous people, whether they identify themselves as such or not, belong to historical and social groups recognised as subaltern communities (Spivak, 1988), with little access to the benefits of full citizenship. Moreover, the notion of citizenship and its construction and attainment have developed without regard to our region's inherent status as multiethnic, plurilingual and multicultural societies (Alfaro, Ansión & Tubino, 2008). Neither have social and economic inequality and atavistic racism and discrimination been seriously considered.[5]

As the information given in Table 1 shows, the Indigenous' collective and individual rights now internationally sanctioned (ILO, 1989; UN, 2007) do not enjoy the same status across the seven countries studied. For example, subtle legal prescriptions establish important differences between some languages and others: some are recognised as official (Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Peru), others as only national (Guatemala and Mexico) and in cases there is a legal vacuum (Brazil) but some Indigenous languages are partially used in education only for the early stages of formal schooling. But even at the most advanced stage of legal recognition – officialisation – all Indigenous languages in the region continue to be as subordinate to Spanish, Portuguese, English, French or Dutch. Indeed, the constitutional amendments of the last three decades and that have led to the recognition of the multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual make-up of Latin American societies continue as unaccomplished well-intentioned political desires.

Table 1 also shows an important reduction of illiteracy rates in all of the countries studied, now ranging from a minimum of 6.8 % (Ecuador) to 21.4 % (Guatemala). Nonetheless, in these two cases, as also in the other five, illiteracy rates are much higher among Indigenous populations. Indigenous youth and adult illiteracy rates range from a minimum of 15.1 % (Peru) to a maximum of 32.4 % (Guatemala). In this latter case there is over a two-to-one difference in illiteracy between Mestizo and Indigenous individuals (32.4 vs. 14.4).

The legal status of Indigenous languages in Latin America has direct impact on the educational models and strategies employed with Indigenous individuals and societies and which are most generally planned and implemented from the top-down, with scarce or limited community participation (López, 2013b). The 2007 United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Rights establishes that Indigenous peoples "have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and litera-

tures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons" as well as to "establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning (UN, 2007, Articles 13 and 14). Nonetheless, in most cases the States through their Ministries of Education continue to think for them and without free, prior and informed consultation organise educational programmes still based on the ideal of homogeneity and cultural assimilation, now even under the contemporary notion of social cohesion. Only exceptional are the cases where Indigenous organisations, leaders and communities participate in decision-making and arrive at educational programmes rooted in their own linguistic, social and cultural traditions and institutions. In such a situation, not always is IBE offered to Indigenous children, youths and adults. Furthermore, not always does official IBE match Indigenous needs, expectations and rights. In fact, IBE is still regarded as a compensatory governmental action and is far from being considered a question of human rights.

Nonetheless, a remarkable political process is under way, in which Indigenous people themselves have organised politically, thus overcoming the historical ethnic shame forcibly learned from the dominant society and publicly self-recognising and self-identifying as Indigenous. This process, coupled with growing critical awareness, has led in recent years to the emergence of demands for the recovery of or *relearning* the heritage language that Indigenous families and individuals were forced to abandon. These new demands have been coupled with other substantive claims to land, territory and to other individual and collective civil and political rights.

Indigenous people seek recognition collectively as real subjects of law, and they no longer want to be regarded only as objects of public policy. Hence they want to be considered as part of the political community and as persons entitled to exercise the citizenship granted to them by law but nonetheless denied or manipulated by government institutions and the dominant sectors of society (Alfaro et al., 2008). This vital new development has not been sufficiently assessed by official education systems, although some NGOs, universities and research centres concerned and/or committed to Indigenous youth and adult education have tried to do so.

As to the socio-linguistic context in which IYAE takes places, an analysis of the approach to languages underlying current literacy and education programmes shows, first of all, that they are based on a monolingual vision, even when they claim to be bilingual. Monolingualism is still regarded as the ideal, even though today's world is becoming culturally more complex and increasingly multilingual and intercultural. Secondly, bilingual programmes generally seem to conceive of bilingualism as the sum total of two monolingual systems rather than as a new complex social reality in which bilingual individuals use two or more languages

creatively and, above all, to solve the communication problems arising in daily life. Thirdly, Indigenous societies continue to be seen as static, frozen and totally unchanging groups. The fact is that

> Indigenous peoples and communities … interact with and borrow from non-Indigenous cultures just as those other cultures borrow from them, in the ever-changing, impermanent reality of life on Earth. Indigenous peoples are part of ongoing history, not stuck in some idealized 'past'. Their ways of life and traditions are dynamic, like those of any other society. The difference between Indigenous societies and industrial, capitalist societies is not that the former are 'traditional' and the latter 'modern', but rather that the content and structures of the former are focused on balance with Earth, while the latter are on a suicide course of imbalance (D'Errico, 2012).

Defining Indigenous culture as static fails to recognise, on the one hand, the changing nature of culture and the dynamism characteristic of Indigenous societies, factors without which these societies would never have been able to overcome 500 years of oppression and exploitation.

It is precisely as a result of such changes that there are fewer monolingual Indigenous societies while, by contrast, the number of bilingual Indigenous people, both literate and illiterate, is growing. Nonetheless, many literacy programmes designed for Indigenous peoples either begin only with monolingual literacy in the mother tongue or do not go beyond this initial stage, and never reach the stage of transferring the competences developed in the mother tongue into the European hegemonic language.

If the prevailing monolingual ideal makes planners and implementers of IYAE less open-minded, consider how much more serious the impact of monolingualism would be if it were the *norm* in societies whose existence is transmitted through not one, or even two, but across languages. Despite the long-standing onslaught of such linguistic *normalcy* imposed through another social practice and on the basis of another paradigm, Indigenous communities, families and individuals who speak more than three different languages have survived in the region. In concomitantly complex and fragile ecological and cultural spaces, such as the rainforests and the Amazonian plains, various peoples and communities not only practise multilingualism, but must also use several languages to enable their society to function. For example, the peoples living in the basins of the Vaupés River in Colombia and of the Rio Negro in Brazil and Venezuela, as well as some of those residing in Xingu National Park in Brazil, maintain the custom of intermarriage – or exogamy –, a social practice that favourably affects the development of multilingualism and multiculturalism. As a result, within the same family, as many as five or six different languages may be spoken, including one *lingua franca* to facilitate communication outside the family and the community, in addition to Spanish or Portuguese today. Owing to

such highly complex linguistic contexts, education in general, including youth and adult literacy education, must devise innovative teaching decisions and practices in which guidance is superseded and multimodal literalisation embraced or, in the same vein, involve learning the written form of a language from a multilingual standpoint. In other words, in such contexts, bilingual literacy falls short of requirements unless it fosters acquisition of writing only in the language that people are required to use in order to communicate and interact with the hegemonic society and State institutions.

Even when Indigenous people claim that they are bilingual and intercultural, literacy programmes designed for them are, in many cases, confined to the acquisition of alphabetic writing in the Indigenous language and, in other cases, the programmes are in a European language and are implemented smoothly because the facilitators are bilingual. Few attempts have been made to develop new forms of bilingual literacy education, and intercultural literacy is a distant possibility. Adopted from an intercultural perspective, biliteracy (Hornberger, 1989) is a notion and an approach that could indeed enrich the present perspective on Indigenous literacy, particularly nowadays when Indigenous leaders and intellectuals postulate alternative epistemologies under their proposal of decolonising education as the basis for the decolonisation of society.

Under this new decolonising ideology, literacy planners should, on the one hand, stress the importance of maintaining and developing active use – both oral and written – of the Indigenous language in connection to their own epistemology, knowledge and value systems, and simultaneously devise methodologies to lead the learners to discover and reflect upon the semantic intricacies of their languages. That way the linkages between worldview, culture and language would become more apparent and the learners would also discover the decolonising potential and *uniqueness* of the Indigenous language. On the basis of this ideological and semantic reinforcement, the learners would be in a better position to appropriate the hegemonic language or to master it in order to develop higher levels of communicative competence that would take them to present and express accurately and effectively, orally and in writing, their positions and claims before the nation-State and its institutions and officers.

The above mentioned complexities make education in Indigenous settings more difficult to tackle, and affect, in particular, IYAE. Nonetheless, in view of the long history of literacy education in Latin American Indigenous settings, there are now a number of shared convictions, derived from research findings. These convictions can guide work in multiethnic, pluricultural and multilingual settings such as those inhabited by Indigenous men and women who have not learned the alphabetical

code and wish to do so because of the growing need to interact with the surrounding socio-cultural environments and practices that increasingly influence their lives.

Indigenous youth and adult education

On the basis of the lessons learned by the seven countries studies referred to, in this section reference is made to some required conditions IYAE programmes should fulfil. Comparing the country studies and contrasting the conditions under which IYAE is implemented, the author identifies five relevant dimensions that need to be considered in any IYAE programme or project: the context, political will, the practices implemented, continuity and sustainability once projects end, and new demands and prospects. These conditions have proved useful to discuss literacy in multiethnic contexts in general, and particularly in Indigenous communities and settings.

The context

As to the conditions in which literacy and Indigenous education programmes are carried out, in Peru, for example, it is difficult to determine who is deemed Indigenous in the current and historical context of ethnic differences being systematically blurred. Partly, such difficulties also derive from the fact that the Peruvian census gives pride of place to language in order to infer indigeneity (Zúñiga, 2009). In the case of the other six countries, national census records collect ethnically differentiated data based not only on the language spoken but also on self-identification. However, many Indigenous people still hide their language-differentiated ethnic identity for reasons relating to social prestige and due to the symbolic pressure exerted by the hegemonic society in the context of a prevailing colonial mindset (López, 2013b).

The lack of assured educational services in Indigenous areas is instrumental in perpetuating Indigenous illiteracy. For example, in Guatemala, the secured provision of State-run educational services is, at best, restricted to only the first six years of formal schooling in most Indigenous rural areas and the provision of bilingual education on an even smaller scale during the first two or three grades of primary school only are both triggers and harbingers of illiteracy (Verdugo & Raymundo, 2009). Accordingly, in Mexico, for example, illiteracy is five times higher among Indigenous peoples (30 % compared to 6 %); with people over the age of 25 and women being most affected (Schmelkes, Águila & Núñez, 2009). Such high levels of illiteracy among Indigenous women are also present in Bolivia, Guatemala and Nicaragua. In Bolivia, Indigenous women account for 91.6 % of the illiterate population (Carrarini, Guillermo & Jiménez, 2009).

More difficulties are encountered in implementing educational programmes in Indigenous areas when the members of an Indigenous people are few in number and live in villages scattered over the country. For instance, the existence of more than 240 different Indigenous societies in Brazil (Sichra, 2009) whose members constitute less than 0.5 % of the national population highlights the complexity of the task.

Nor is the Indigenous situation homogenous. Indigenous peoples can also vary among themselves in terms of their levels of illiteracy and written language acquisition. In Nicaragua, for example, illiteracy among Miskitos is lower than among Garinagu (28 % vs. 49 %) (Cunningham, 2009). Likewise, in Guatemala, the illiteracy rate of 50 % among the Chortis drops to 20 % for the Kaqchikeles (Verdugo & Raymundo, 2009). It goes without saying that the differences observed are not related in any way to the character of the group or to its wish to abide by the ancestral oral tradition, but rather to its history of oppression and exclusion as well as to the contact and conflict with the mainstream. In Nicaragua, despite living in an area far away from the capital, Miskitos acquired written language quite early in their own language as a result of the educational efforts made by the Moravian Church beginning in the mid nineteenth century,[6] and also due to the strong ethnic and linguistic loyalty that characterises the Miskito society. At the other end of the continuum, the Kaqchikeles of Guatemala live in areas near the seat of national political power – Guatemala City –, which has historically facilitated access to formal education and other public services. Contact and conflict with the mainstream, however, have led to gradual loss of the ancestral language by a large proportion of people who although identify themselves as ethnically different no longer speak the heritage language (López, 2009b).

Owing to the diverse historical, socio-demographic and socio-cultural conditions in which IYAE programmes are run, policies and strategies that promote diversity in education, and hence advocate for IBE need to adapt or propose alternative methodologies for every specific situation. Indigenous education is complex and needs to be politically and culturally situated; it must be context-specific in contrast to the official educational approach that tends to generalise and, therefore, to simplify otherwise complex situations based on ideals of cultural and linguistic homogenisation. In that connection, although the programmes implemented in Guatemala have been designed to teach linguistically and culturally relevant content, they must be reformed to take account of the distinct forms of present-day monolingualism and bilingualism (Verdugo & Raymundo, 2009). This requires different but appropriate methods to be used in each socio-linguistic situation. First, though, the socio-political and socio-linguistic characteristics of each context must be identified.

Lastly, the repeated Indigenous assertion of other ways of understanding well-being, development and progress (Chirif, 2002) must be analysed and discussed by the education system. If such scrutiny is set in a context of commitment to and defence of human rights and if the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is taken as the reference point, then there will be an unprecedented opportunity to move forward towards Indigenous social emancipation and self-determination as well as to the interculturalisation of the Latin American society. These socio-political processes should be grounded on the basis of acceptance and positive recognition of the factual ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity that makes up each of the countries of this region.

Political will

The seven studies referred to highlight the existence of laws on Indigenous peoples and on the provision of IBE, and also, in some cases, many regulations that could be described as politically correct and geared to improving the quality of life of Indigenous peoples (see also Hammel, 2008; López & Sichra, 2008; López, 2013a). However, such laws have no real influence or sufficient impact to change educational and social practices for, although the law is not broken, it may not be implemented.

One lesson learned is that there are widening gaps between policy and practice (Lopez, 2013b) owing to insufficient political will, as it was the case in Peru between 2006 and 2011 (Zúñiga, 2009). In addition, as the Guatemalan study reveals, the body responsible for literacy, the National Literacy Committee, does not receive the funds constitutionally allocated and, as a result, literacy education is provided by volunteers, remuneration is low and the required levels of quality and continuity are not attained (Verdugo & Raymundo, 2009). Conversely, the Brazilian study shows that new educational policies implemented in Indigenous communities have yielded encouraging results, as the Indigenous school population increased by more than 40 % in only four years (Menezes de Souza, 2009). Yet the gap between primary and secondary education continues to exist, as few Indigenous pupils reach this level, which is also characteristic of Guatemala.

In all of the situations examined, politically correct rhetoric has been adopted. Nonetheless, legislation takes a long time to be applied or never quite transforms the social reality of the specific group to which it refers or, even less, of the national society as a whole. This is true, for example, of the regulations in force in all of the countries studied that have declared all Indigenous languages official (López, 2013b; Sichra, 2009). Yet, the question is not merely one of insufficient resource allocation, but rather, and above all, of the detrimental effect that perpetuation of the homogenizing ideal, the prevalence of the colonial mindset and the ideal of a

homogeneous mestizo society and therefore monolingual and monocultural nation have on genuine acceptance of diversity. These are factors that trigger exclusion, racism and discrimination against ethnically differentiated populations, particularly Indigenous and African-descendants, and currently cause the educational under-achievement of Indigenous peoples.

For almost four decades now, Indigenous leaders and intellectuals and committed academics have been postulating the notion of interculturalism and the need to establish cross-cutting public policies to this respect. Governments and political communities reacted accepting the countries' diversity and many times introducing legal changes mainly in the education and health sectors. But while Indigenous intelligentsia aimed at a comprehensive transformation of the State and of the liberal ideals that inspired their construction, governments and the hegemonic political community reacted with sector specific public policies, creating Indigenous-affairs agencies and hiring Indigenous officers to represent them (López, 2013a, Moya, 2013,). All of these policies were inspired in the neoliberal multicultural doctrine developed mostly in a predominant capitalist Anglo-Saxon context (cf. Kymlicka, 1995).

Thus, transformative and critical interculturalist demands were neutralised through these neo-liberal multiculturalist responses (López, 2013a), thus worsening conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous sectors of society. Once again an epistemological discrepancy regarding the nature of democracy and governance in multiethnic societies is at stake.

Continuity and sustainability

As to the continuity of policies and the sustainability of action in the field, Bolivia is widely known for the large number of proposals designed for and with various Indigenous peoples as direct participants. However, given the policy options adopted by the current Bolivian government, proposals are once again likely to be standardised and homogenised (Carrarini et al., 2009). While it is generally agreed that the current Bolivian government has indeed paid particular attention to youth and adult education (ibid.), it is somewhat paradoxical that it has not heeded lessons learned from past initiatives and is thus likely to adopt future policies with no regard for its own past.

In its desire to teach illiterate people to read and write as quickly as possible, the Bolivian government, in much the same way as others in the region, in 2008 ended up adopting a uniform strategy, focused only on the Spanish language, as an outcome of the general adoption of the Cuban programme 'Yes, I Can!'. Initially, to avoid problems with users of this programme, NGOs, the historical allies of Indigenous and illiterate people in Bolivia, chose to suspend their efforts or to concen-

trate on post-literacy activities. As such, they left the field open for the State to be the sole conductor of initial literacy training throughout the country. For a while illiterate persons were doubly beneficiaries, being taught to read and write on a monolingual basis in Spanish by the State and on a bilingual basis by NGOs (ibid.).

Indeed, to promote self-assertion, the reaffirmation of a distinct identity, the appropriation of rights and the construction of ethnic citizenship, NGOs delayed or neglected the appropriation of Spanish as a second language in their literacy programmes. They failed to implement literacy programmes based on a real bilingual or multilingual and intercultural standpoint, and put all the efforts on the appropriation of the written code in the learners' first acquired language. Current State education plans seem to go to the other extreme and promote Spanish-only literacy, thus losing sight of the strategic importance of Indigenous languages for the decolonisation process Indigenous leaders and intellectuals promote. First language literacy ought to be viewed, at least in part, as means of ensuring reading comprehension, meaningful writing and the genuine appropriation of written language. Nonetheless, on that basis, developing reading and writing competencies in Spanish cannot be avoided.

This situation is not confined to Bolivia. In the second half of 2008, the Guatemalan Government also adopted the 'Yes, I Can!' adult literacy method for use in Indigenous areas (Verdugo & Raymundo, 2009), but it restricted its implementation to rural Spanish speaking areas. Initially, however, they tried to adopt this strategy without taken into account the wealth of experience also gained in this country from using Indigenous languages to appropriate written language, through joint efforts by NGOs, international organisations, universities and government-dependent institutions.

A solution might be to seek creative ways of ensuring that the various methods are complementary to one another. If the Cuban proposal shortens the process and generates a sense of achievement among participants more quickly, then so much the better. If, however, in order to consolidate learning achievement and ensure its durability, effective practices already tested and tried in various countries in the region must be recovered, then this will have to be done.

It must be clear, however, that the intercultural bilingual and biliterate approach does not imply working firstly and only in the learners' Indigenous language. Flexibility is required even more pressingly at present, particularly in contexts as sociolinguistically varied as those of Indigenous-Latin American countries, in which a growing number of Indigenous youths and adults use their ancestral language and a local variety of a European language in their daily exchanges, both within and especially outside the Indigenous community.

Literacy training practices

It has been observed that literacy training is generally restricted to the coding and decoding of messages using the component symbols of the alphabet that limits learning to mechanical reading, which is then lost as time passes since it has no functional value associated with everyday work and culture. In that regard, the Mexican study highlights the need to move beyond this approach to literacy training which should be regarded, rather, as a social function or practice (Schmelkes et al., 2009).

According to the lessons learned, literacy programmes designed for Indigenous peoples do not always take socio-cultural and socio-linguistic heterogeneity into account. For example, three decades ago in Nicaragua, literacy training for Indigenous people was guided by an unsuccessful attempt at linguistic and cultural assimilation, as Hispanicisation was the central objective of the first literacy training experiments. Today's literacy programmes take into account the Indigenous and ethnic languages spoken on the Caribbean coast (Cunningham, 2009). The question is whether all IYAE for Indigenous youths and adults acknowledge the need to begin with appropriation of the written code in their own culture and language.

It does not suffice, however, to take the language spoken by most learners into account; attention must also be paid to the diversity inherent in Indigenous languages themselves, since, as with Spanish, languages differ to varying extents, depending on the area or region in which they are spoken. In that regard, Schmelkes et al. (2009) show that no consideration was given to the heterogeneity of Indigenous languages in the educational proposal, which became an obstacle to the implementation of the literacy programme at the primary level.

However, as the studies reveal the need to take into account dialectal variation within Indigenous languages so too is further reflection on Spanish or Portuguese social and regional variation advisable to get close to the person who is appropriating the written language. To draw on learners' previous communication experience, opportunities must be provided for recourse to the language variety of the group being taught to make the appropriation of written word a meaningful social and cultural experience, and from then on to advance towards the appropriation of the written standard of the hegemonic language. In that regard, one must also recall that there are cases in which Spanish is the mother tongue of some Indigenous populations today (Sichra, 2009). In such situations, consideration must be given to local variants of Spanish or Portuguese with an Indigenous substratum. Accordingly, a culturally and linguistically relevant and culturally responsible literacy programme inevitably takes a stand on the use of local ways of speaking, and thus becomes bidialectal.

In Bolivia, it has also been highlighted that if the communities' culture, needs and interests are taken into account in the teaching of reading and writing, effective and lasting results are achieved (Carrarini et al., 2009). Accounting for linguistically and culturally relevant content seems to be mandatory. Programmes must use of methods adapted to each socio-linguistic situation, and therefore participation by the 'beneficiaries' themselves. The Brazilian study stresses and supports the need for joint participation of official, civil and community sectors, so that community realities are taken into account, the opinions of individuals directly involved are heard and the methods are more relevant and appropriate to each specific context, thus making learning meaningful (Menezes de Souza, 2009). Furthermore, the participation of those involved contributes to strengthening self-esteem, social recovery and empowerment and the assertion of individual and collective rights.

The studies analysed also reveal resistance to the use of Indigenous languages alone and greater acceptance of bilingual methods. In Nicaragua Indigenous peoples appreciate and accept literacy programmes that begin with the mother tongue and then continue with Spanish. In Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru, the bilingual component is clearly established at the very beginning, and the courses offered are self-defined as biliterate, or in Mexico, as bilingual literacy for life and work. It is clear that any literacy programme or project implemented for Indigenous peoples must allow for initial learners' potential resistance to the use of their own language, and time and effort must be devoted to awareness-raising, to the people's social and political recovery of the value of their own language and culture, and to using the mother tongue advisedly to achieve more meaningful but also more effective learning. In addition to having different streams reflecting the extent to which the people concerned master the languages, namely monolingual for an Indigenous language, incipient bilingual and bilingual with passive knowledge of the Indigenous language.

The studies also underline the urgent need to pay better attention to the training of literacy tutors or facilitators. It has been shown that inadequate attention is paid to the vocational training of tutors, which is proof of a lack of a professional approach to literacy training, since reading and writing are taught in many cases by volunteers, promoters or sponsors simply to save money or because of insufficient resource allocation by States. For example, according to the Mexican study, not all of the trainers and teachers in one of the programmes analysed could read and write Maya, and so the project results fell short of expectations. The Bolivian and Ecuadorian studies point out that teachers must know their language and culture thoroughly, and be capable of transmitting and renovating them (Carrarini et al., 2009; Yánez, 2009); they also stress that material designed and written in Indigenous languages must be available.

New demands and prospects

The studies analysed report that Indigenous people currently wish IYAE and particularly literacy programmes to be more comprehensive and to provide work-oriented training, which is the case in some programmes currently under way in Mexico (Schmelkes et al., 2009). It was found that in Ecuador literacy training does not in itself create development and future prospects; it must be incorporated into a community undertaking, as a genuine tool for improving the communities' economic situation. Literacy training should therefore be associated with work, production and the continuation of studies up to the secondary level (Yánez, 2009). This point is also made in reference to Guatemala, where IYAE must build capacities and provide opportunities for access to a better standard of living. In any case, the way in which literacy training can have a better impact on local economic development must be analysed.

The link between literacy training and education for life is highlighted in all of the studies, since it is considered that the greatest progress in illiteracy reduction is achieved only when the process is rooted in the participants' culture and identity and only if it provides tools for individual and community socio-economic development. However, the liberal view that underlies the concept of development must be revised and discussions with IYAE programme participants must lead to uncover their shared understanding of development. It must be recalled that the economy of most rural Indigenous societies is not based on the accumulation of wealth.

It is also important to take the gender approach into consideration because women and girls have less access to education and also because men and women have different expectations and interests.

If literacy training takes territory, culture, language and critical reflection into account, as stressed in Bolivia (Carrarini et al., 2009), then progress is achieved in the recognition and strengthening of people's Indigenous identity (intraculturalism) and in the construction of equitable and sustainable relations between different peoples, views, cultures and languages (interculturalism). From this dual standpoint, much more is achieved than mere language learning; self-esteem and dialogue in a complex society are enhanced and IYAE prepares for a better distribution of power. It is then worth focusing IYAE within a framework of the appropriation and excercise of the rights enshrined in current national and international law. Biliteracy thus becomes an empowering tool.

Keys to Indigenous youth and adult education

The lessons learned through the implementation of literacy programmes in Indigenous settings (López & Hanemann, 2009) make it evident that much more reflec-

tion is needed on Indigenous literacy and IYAE programmes, particularly at this point in time when Indigenous societies are undergoing profound changes resulting from internal and external motivation. To contribute to such critical reflection in this section we provide a set of keys that result from the analyses carried out by the author on the trajectory of IBE and IYAE and also on the historic and present demands of indigenous societies vis-à-vis the formulation and implementation of public policies regarding the multi-ethnic composition of Latin American states and especially the Indigenous presence in the region. Such keys relate to socio-economic, socio-political, socio-cultural and -linguistic, and also to socio-pedagogical and politico-pedagogical factors that ought to be taken into account in IYAE planning and implementation. Above all, these keys draw attention to the non-neutrality of IYAE and its profound political nature.

Socio-economic keys

In Latin America, IYAE participants belong to the most disadvantaged sectors of society, not only politically and economically, but also socially and educationally. Economic and educational inequalities generally go together: Indigenous areas record the highest illiteracy repetition and drop-out rates, resulting partly from the questionable socio-cultural relevance of education. Elementary education may now be universal, but the adult illiterate population, whether measured according to absolute or functional illiteracy rates, is highest in these areas and women, whose activities and influence are vital to their children's education and health, are affected worse.

Further inequalities result from international comparative studies on remuneration and income. These have made it evident that marked wage differences exist between non-Indigenous and Indigenous workers and professionals, to the detriment of the Indigenous labour force (Atal, Ñopo & Winder, 2009; Hall & Patrinos, 2005). These differences cannot always be explained by educational attainment gaps; moreover, it has been found that Indigenous workers in the region "are confronted with 'glass ceilings' or access barriers while trying to obtain high-paid positions" (cf. Atal et al., 2009, p. 45). Bolivia, Brazil and Guatemala are among the four countries where wage gaps seem greater.

Similarly, in a series of surveys conducted in Peru, employers' prejudices favouring non-Indigenous professional applicants were found, even in cases when their credentials and academic qualifications were similar to those of their non-Indigenous peers. This same study also found that 'physical appearance' was a significant factor determining success in obtaining a job. In job interviews in Lima physical appearance is a factor that influences employers' decisions (83 %), colour of the skin (59 %) and sex (34 %). Wage gaps between Indigenous and non-

Indigenous workers increased between 1997 and 2009, from 49 % to 53 % (Galarza, 2012). Undoubtedly, these situations are an outcome of prevailing racist and discriminatory policies firmly entrenched in Latin American societies.

Thus, it is now generally acknowledged that the region needs to eradicate labour market disadvantages marked by ethnicity and that "policies that are aimed at reducing these inequalities [are needed], not only because of ethical considerations regarding equality but as major strategy to reduce poverty in the region. Even though policies aimed at boosting school attendance … are welcomed, they should also take into account the lower incentives to schooling completion that the labour market is posing to Indigenous minorities" (Atal et al., 2009, p. 46).[7]

Opinions depicting Indigenous people as invariably poor (Hall & Patrinos, 2005) are influenced by indicators based on a predominantly urban understanding of well-being. These primarily urban readings of well-being reflect patterns of civilisation, forms of social organisation and worldviews that differ from those held by most Indigenous peoples, especially those who still live in rural areas and in the rainforests where contact with the Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking mestizo population is not of long standing. These indicators refer, for example, to the provision of basic sanitation, health, education and electricity services or to per capita income from officially-recognised economic activities. It has been asserted that these a priori imposed indicators do not strictly reflect reality in Indigenous milieus (Chirif, 2002). Literacy standards are a good example of this inadequacy since they do not generally take into account the availability of written materials in Indigenous settings nor their quality, failing to contribute to their education and the transmission of values and knowledge necessary for their survival, as indeed is the case of the ancestral oral systems of socialisation. Indeed, the study quoted here reiterates that drinking-water is an indicator which in fact refers to water coming out of a tube and whose quality does not compare to that of pure running water coming out of springs and waterfalls. It has also been remarked that poverty is not a *natural* trait of Indigenous peoples but a by-product of the external aggression their system of Good-life, Living-well or Life-for-the-Common-Good has been subjected to. From an Indigenous viewpoint, important indicators would be the capacity to live peacefully and in any case to solve their own conflicts, share their joys with others, even laugh and the possibility to live in a healthy and sustainable social and natural environment (ibid.). Issues such as these become particularly relevant when discussing formal and non-formal curriculum and methodology since the ontology of IYAE is questioned by such marked discrepancies regarding the readings and understandings of poverty and of socio-culturally relevant indicators of well-being.[8]

Similarly, Indigenous leaders and organisations now openly reject an economy based on accumulation and consumption, and in their claims before the hegemonic society have been re-assessing their own Indigenous ancestral patterns of behaviour and systems of social and economic organisation, that were forcibly hidden or forgotten as a consequence of the imposition of a radically different world view. Particular attention needs to be paid to what sociological and anthropological literature describes as a gift economy (Cheal, 1998), moral economy (Sayer, 2004) or ecological economy; a system based on the redistribution mechanisms of mutual support systems.[9] In this alternative mode of exchange of goods and services the economic activity also contributes to enhance social relationships within family and community. Hence, extended family and community bonds are tightened and a sense of common partnership and belonging is increased and fortified. This alternative understanding of economics is now used as one of the premises in the reassertion of the notion of a Life-for-the-Common-Good, Good-life or Living-well (*allin kawsay* or *sumaq kawsay* and *suma qamaña* in Quechua and Aymara, respectively). *Suma qamaña* and *Sumaq kawsay* entail striving for harmony and balance rather than dominance.[10]

This notion is central to what Indigenous leaders and intellectuals claim as their alternative model of civilisation, and through it they claim to re-establish sustainable relations between culture and nature; that is, between human beings and Mother Nature. Principles such as these were recently included in the new political constitutions of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2009) and of Ecuador (2008), and permeate Indigenous epistemological and political discussions throughout the continent. The notion of *Sumaq kawsay* or *Suma qamaña* is also being used in the redefinition of the concept of development as it is understood from modern liberal politics and policies. Indeed, *Suma qamaña* is now being postulated as an alternative to development and such a position is attracting interest from different academic circles as an effect of the growing disaffection with some of the outcomes of globalisation in the present context of a severe financial and social crisis that affects Europe and the Western world in general.[11]

Once again, the ontology of economics seems to be at stake and a need for a new epistemology of development becomes apparent. In such a context, severe revision is called for IYAE programmes.[12] Nonetheless, such programmes need also to consider that a market economy, consumerism and capitalism in general are slowly but surely penetrating Indigenous families, communities and territories.

Socio-political keys

Due to our colonial legacy, the patterns of interethnic and intercultural relationship are unquestionably determined by the socio-racial structure of Latin American so-

cieties. In spite of the significant social transformations the region has undergone in modern times and of the generally perceived political progress made with regard to democracy and the rule of law, the persistence of a colonial frame of mind is responsible for the continued existence of racism and discrimination. Such historic and well established condition rules the current coloniality of power and knowledge that explains and justifies persistent social injustice and the unequal distribution of power (Quijano, 1992, 2000).[13] This general situation becomes even more excruciating in countries and sub-regions where the Indigenous presence and visibility cannot be easily ignored. Such is the case, for example, of Guatemala where in spite of the official adoption of multicultural policies racism and discrimination prevails to such an extent that for some social scientists and UN officers Guatemala is ruled by subtle and undeclared apartheid.[14]

To understand the Indigenous subaltern condition, one needs to critically revisit the history of colonisation in Latin America and become aware of the severe problems of communication and understanding encountered at the time of the European invasion (Stavenhagen, 2010). This mismatch derived from underlying discrepancies based on divergent world-views and rationalities. Thus, by force and through the exercise of political and military power unknown and exotic local knowledge became socially, culturally and economically hegemonic (Quijano, 1992; Mignolo, 1992). And to this date, Latin American social, economic, cultural and academic elites continue absorbing foreign ideology and knowledge and adopt them without any critical analysis vis-à-vis the epistemological diverse context where these visions are applied.

The racial structure of Latin American society mentioned above is responsible for sustained Eurocentrism and for concomitant denial and repression of alternative systems of knowledge, including the traditional modes of Indigenous knowledge production. The fact is that to this day under Eurocentrism the production of knowledge is assigned only to those that see European knowledge as their legacy.

> Europe's hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony (Quijano, 2000, p. 540).

Hence, Indigenous knowledge, belief and value systems are said to be obsolete and an impediment to development and progress.

> As it is to be expected, this culturally hegemonic understanding bears direct influence on pedagogy and teaching and thus the mission of education is still viewed as one of cultural purge and assimilation, based on the superiority of Christian and Western models (López, 2013a).

The persistence of this racist and discriminatory view has not really changed much since the European invasion and that is why education in Latin America ought to

contribute to the social emancipation of subaltern societies and at the same time to a process of national interculturalism that could lead to the negotiation and reconciliation of these divergent epistemologies and ideologies. IYAE must then advocate and contribute to the construction of an intercultural view of citizenship based on and at the same time leading to a necessary process of mental decolonisation and to a more equitable distribution of power. Hence, youth and adult education in general ought to be closely linked to the notion of agency. The issues of agency development and of fostering, Freirian's consciousness awareness (*concientización*) (1970) and self-pride become even more imperative in IYAE, due to the need to accompany the social emancipation of these groups.[15]

Socio-linguistic and socio-cultural keys

Owing to the political and cultural oppression historically suffered by Indigenous peoples, they do not all speak their ancestral language nor live in the places where their people or language community traditionally established. Even though they may affirm and identify themselves as Indigenous, many of them now speak a particular and substandard variant of Spanish, Portuguese, English, French or Dutch in which the influence of the underlying Indigenous languages can be detected to varying extents. The *Sociolinguistic Atlas of Indigenous Peoples in Latin America* (Sichra, 2009) lists at least 100 peoples out of a total of over 500 who now use only a local variety of a European language in daily life. In other words, due to the continuing influence of a colonial mindset, approximately 20 % of Indigenous societies have relinquished the inherent wealth of multilingualism and have diminished their store of languages in order to speak and communicate in a socially stigmatised variant of a European language. IYAE does not always take this fact of life into account and interventions are planned on an idealised image of the *traditional* Indigenous person and community.

Similarly, as more Indigenous children, youths and adults live in towns and cities, the debate about their education cannot be circumscribed to rural areas. IYAE must be extended to the urban areas, since it is there that alphabetic writing and the hegemonic language are most useful for communicating with the State. For example, 50 % of the Indigenous population of Bolivia live in urban areas, as do 75 % of the Mapuche people of both Argentina and Chile, while Mexico City and Lima can also be defined by the Indigenous presence: practically all the Indigenous languages spoken in Mexico can be heard in Mexico City, while Lima is said to be the geographical district with the greatest number of Quechua-speakers in the whole of Peru (López, 2009a). Accordingly, discussion is needed as to why, for what purpose, how and in which languages (or even in which variants of the hegemonic European language) IYAE programmes should be implemented.

In the diverse and more complex socio-linguistic context described above, appropriation of alphabetical techniques is now recognised as a constant in most Indigenous territories and even features in the desire to recuperate heritage languages, as part of the return to Indian roots (López, 2013b). It is equally true, however, that other forms of graphical representation that differ from the customary alphabetical system subsist in many Indigenous communities and form an active part of current social practices. Examples include sophisticated body paintings and patterns used on clothing in Amazonian societies, complex textile designs in the Andes and Meso-America and motifs used in ceramics. Motifs and patterns hitherto generally regarded merely as graphical aesthetic representations actually convey meaning and represent elements of a worldview that differs from the alphabet-based-Western view. Indigenous peoples have retained aspects of different techniques that, unlike the alphabet, appear to focus on the text and not on the letter and on whole messages rather than their parts. This semiotic re-interpretation of Indigenous communication (Arnold & Yapita, 2006; Menezes de Souza, 2002; López, 2001) has recently led to the view that a multimodal approach to literacy must be developed and adopted in these societies (Menezes de Souza, 2002). Under such an approach, Indigenous forms of graphic communication would be recognised, reappraised and even used as the basis for introducing people to alphabetical writing (López, 2001), which in many cases Indigenous people themselves regard as mostly supplementary to conventional writing (Menezes de Souza, 2002).

Likewise, the persistence of particular systems of communication and knowledge that preserve and develop verbal and cognitive skills through the oral rather than the written medium must be acknowledged. Ancestral orality regulates not only daily communication but also ethics, behaviour and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, values and languages (Sichra, 2008). It therefore constitutes another complex social practice that differs from oral expression as acknowledged in school curricula and taught by schools. In Indigenous settings, it is not enough to develop oral skills for effective oral communication in today's world; it is also essential to recognise, accept and contribute to the development of ancestral orality.

In Indigenous settings education should transcend mere appropriation of the written code and account for all ways and means by which these societies convey meaning and communicate. One should also consider that the construction and transmission of knowledge in Indigenous societies now combine practices inherited from the ancestral sources of their civilisation with those appropriated through contact with the nation-state, schools and alphabetic writing. From this standpoint, the multimodal approach mentioned above ought to be based on an ecological view of

language (Hornberger, 2003) and on a semiotic understanding of meaning and language signification and use.

Incidentally, in the socio-cultural re-interpretation of Indigenous social and communicational practices the different ways in which people learn and teach in Indigenous societies must also be appraised. Various studies carried out by the Programme for Professional Development in Bilingual Intercultural Education for the Andean Region (PROEIB Andes) at Universidad Mayor de San Simón in Cochabamba, Bolivia, have revealed, for example, that Indigenous societies regard observation and involvement in an activity or in a specific task as a more effective way of learning than oral transmission or discussion of a concept or process (cf. Castillo, 2005; García, 2005; Zambrana, 2007). In such contexts in which the learner is required to do something, it is not only reasoning that comes into play but also the learner's own state of mind, tastes, feelings and sensibility, as learning is also considered to involve the heart (Castillo, 2005). In other contexts in which the person also learns to become part of his family and community and where a sense of ethics and responsibility for both themselves and the community is being developed, oral communication may generally predominate, but the learner must, above all, listen carefully and analyse stories and tales known to us outsiders as myths and legends. It is therefore important to recognise that Indigenous societies consider activity-learning as central and the learning process to be social in character, in that it is regarded as a collective rather than merely an individual responsibility. Thus, for example, important community responsibilities are often given to the least knowledgeable or least experienced members precisely so that they might learn, obviously with the support of those who know more. The aim being that everyone should learn and know and be capable of serving, guiding and leading the community, and thus of 'leading by obeying' (Bertely & Gutiérrez, 2008).[16]

Therefore, IYAE programmes need to resort to various pedagogical strategies in order to accommodate to different culturally determined conceptions and styles of learning. In this regard, cooperative and activity based learning might need particular consideration. Similarly, the approach to learning ought to be critical and political in order to train youth and adult learners to reflect upon the situation of their community, and of the Indigenous peoples they belong to. From this perspective, IYAE and education in general must be intertwined with broader issues such as interculturalism and active citizenship in a multiethnic society.

Socio-pedagogical and politico-pedagogical keys

Nowadays, to be leaders of a community and to defend their rights, Indigenous men and women must appropriate the written code, since dealings with the hegemonic society and the State require writing. Due to this, they increasingly send their chil-

dren to school. It must be pointed out, however, that writing is still far from being fully functional in Indigenous communities, especially in rural areas. Although indispensable for communication with the outside world, writing is note seen as quite necessary for communication within the community. IYAE programmes and especially literacy ones in Indigenous settings should then move on to a semiotic perspective, where writing is placed within a wider and ecological framework of representation and meaning. Consideration should then be given to programmes that aim at complementarity rather than to the imposition of a single way of feeling, thinking, signifying, communicating and representing. Let us remember that the ultimate goal of IYAE is the social recovery and empowerment of a socially and historically oppressed group, which requires solidarity and support as it mobilises in its struggle for social emancipation and recognition as a *subject* of law.

The development of agency also requires an analysis of the social and political aims and purposes of IYAE. Appropriation of the written word is linked to the population's various needs, ranging from knowledge and exercise of the individual and collective rights now enshrined in national legislation and international conventions to claims to new group rights emerging as well as the capacity to follow their children's progress at school and to play social auditing roles in formal education. Owing to the Indigenous peoples' many needs, literacy must be regarded as a step in a wider intercultural process leading to a comprehensive education that is radically different from the basic education provided to Indigenous youths and adults. In many cases, content and strategies meant for children's education are merely replicated for adults, without necessarily considering the reasons for which Indigenous youths and adults might wish to appropriate knowledge of the hegemonic society.

In other words and in regard to the written language, there is a need to overcome the present emphasis generally laid on decoding the written word with little or no attention paid to the multiple uses of literacy in everyday life. Such emphasis should move towards the competences the Indigenous person needs to exercise through the written word and the behaviours attached to it. The fact is that written language is still viewed as a code, not as a social practice (Schmelkes et al., 2009).

Furthermore, its appropriation is seen merely as an isolated educational activity and not as a socio-political activity leading towards the learners' empowerment so he could transform the ruling social order. It is therefore not surprising that solutions are often sought to immediate skills and problems such as learning to sign one's name and to copy simple texts heavily influenced by school culture and far-removed from those read by literate persons in real life. In short, literacy remains anchored in coding and decoding and does not attain the level required in a literate society.

Reading and writing as social practices remain a socio-pedagogical challenge, and this might be why functional illiteracy increases. Given this situation, recognised Indigenous leaders express their wish and need to learn the elaborate and complex codes of the hegemonic language in order to communicate not only effectively and efficiently, but also in poetry and the arts (Green, 1996). They wish to disseminate, without recourse to intermediaries, their wisdom, histories, knowledge, values and literature in hegemonic codes, so that the mainstream might re-evaluate its relations with the Indigenous world.

Literacy education should transcend the strict context of language teaching, and socio-cultural considerations – in particular the highly political and intercultural nature of the process – need to be taken into account. As a result, IYAE planners and implementers should promote reflection upon divergent knowledge systems, Indigenous knowledge and skills and the existing complementarity or opposition between Indigenous knowledge and skills and knowledge and skills derived from the rationalist-positivist vision currently regarded as universal.

Conclusions

The situation of Indigenous literacy in Latin America raises innumerable questions that doubtlessly spur reflection on ways and means of tailoring IYAE models and strategies to meet Indigenous learners' needs and desires. It is evident that there is still a need for rigorous and comprehensive studies that thoroughly elucidate the situation of literacy among Indigenous peoples in the Americas. It is particularly urgent to increase and improve knowledge of the social and political conditions under which IYAE programmes are conducted and of the socio-cultural factors that influence the appropriation of alphabetic writing by these socio-historic groups that still resort to an ancestral oral tradition that not only characterises communication in daily life, but also determines the functioning of life in society. From that perspective, it is also desirable to analyse the social and cultural effects of the survival and continuation of forms of graphics other than the alphabet, currently promoted by literacy programmes as universal. Moreover, little is known about the ways and means of programme implementation in practice, methods used by Indigenous youths and adults to appropriate alphabetic writing, their reasons for doing so and the ways in which they use it in their daily lives. In this general context, it remains to be known what it means to be literate in an Indigenous setting.

A solution to respond to the increasing demand of literacy and IYAE seems to be the design and implementation of intercultural biliteracy education models that are based on and seriously take into account the values, views of the world, knowledges, beliefs and practices of those directly involved. Here interculturalism relates

to an epistemological switch in the way literacy and IYAE programmes are now conceived of. It also calls for a recuperation of the symbolic and political meaning attached to IYAE as a means of contributing to the social emancipation of indigenous individuals and societies. It is only by these means and on this basis that the education to be provided will enable them to broaden their horizons and appropriate elements that although alien are nonetheless instrumental to their individual and collective socio-political growth.

But, intercultural literacy and IYAE cannot be seen as the sole responsibility of professionals; on the contrary, community leaders and potential participants must be involved directly in all stages of the process, from design to implementation and evaluation. IYAE necessarily entails a participatory approach, since it ought to recognise the learners as subjects of their own learning.

Therefore, a comprehensive and ecological view of education is called for. Such an approach requires not only a move from a pure linguistic to a more comprehensive semiotic perspective but also deeper cultural and political reflection based on sound knowledge of the roles formal and non-formal education can play in Indigenous societies at a moment of history in which many of them rediscover their specificity and reaffirm their indigeneity and otherness. In other words, there is no longer room for the application or replication of models designed elsewhere and without the active participation of those involved in the learning processes. Participatory IYAE planning should then be considered as an unavoidable initial phase of a process leading to the development of critical awareness.

Specific attention also needs to be paid to the development of critical language awareness (Fairclough, 1992), or to taking a personal and collective stand on the social situation and on societal change (Freire, 1970) in pursuit of greater democracy, equality and social justice. It is crucially important to subaltern socio-historic groups to develop critical language awareness as it is the only way by which they will learn and become stronger in order to support their peers in their endeavour to social emancipation and to actively and more effectively participate in national political life. They will thus build capacity not only to negotiate and manage conflicts inherent in all interethnic and intercultural relations and communication, but also to convince non-Indigenous people in viewing cultural and linguistic diversity as a rich resource, and not as a problem that must be eradicated. In other words, intercultural and bilingual literacy must increase the social importance and cultural relevance of the education provided to Indigenous peoples and bring all peoples, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, closer to an intercultural understanding of democracy and citizenship, which is much required in the situation prevailing in Latin America at present. In such a situation the current notion of education quality must be revisited.

In such a context, an IYAE model that, in addition to being bilingual or multilingual, is also intercultural and aims at a dialogue of knowledge remains a distant possibility. Such a dialogue also implies an exchange among different civilising models within equally distinct world views. In this respect, the obstinate Indigenous insistence, currently sweeping through Latin America and advocating Life-for-the-Common-Good as a paradigm must be borne in mind. It is on the basis of that paradigm that Indigenous societies' knowledge of their languages and cultures, the role assigned to them and their view and interpretation of perspectives and content learned must be identified and analysed. Hence, the complexity of the Indigenous socio-cultural real-life situation also prompts questions about the epistemological nature of written language acquisition and the dividing line between the acquisition of alphabetic techniques and the analysis of other forms of graphical representation that may exist in Indigenous communities.

If literacy training and IYAE not only facilitate the appropriation and social use of written language but are also intercultural and participatory, they will above all contribute to building effective and participatory citizenship. However, the challenge is building critical intercultural citizenship to empower Indigenous individuals and groups to exercise rights enshrined in current national and international law and to claim additional new rights if the exercise of the existing rights is warranted. Additionally, this intercultural citizenship should enable them to take a stand on the problems and decisions that affect not only their individual rights but also, and above all, their collective rights, including the right to the use and enjoyment of their mother tongue and the right to exercise their own culture. When IYAE programmes contribute to bringing the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Americas into the public sphere, thus superseding the liberal dogma that confines language and culture to the private domain, and prepare Indigenous people so that they can exercise citizenship on a firm ethnic and intercultural footing, these programmes will be not only relevant, but also politically and culturally responsible. Through this perspective IAYE could meet the decolonising aspirations of numerous Indigenous leaders and intelectuals and moreover set the grounds for increasingly better life conditions for Indigenous individuals and societies.

Notes

1. An earlier and shorter version of this paper will appear in 2015 in the *Handbook of bilingual and multilingual education* edited by W. Wright, S. Boun and O. García, under the title 'Indigenous youth and adult education in Latin America'.
2. Evaluating the Peruvian situation under the 'Yes, I can!' programme, Zúñiga remarked that experience and research show that it is impossible for a person to learn to read and write in *only four months* (emphasis by the author), and that in most cases exit tests demand only that participants write their names and read and write a set of twenty isolated words. She stresses

that becoming literate requires one to two years if the aim is appropriation and social use of this new knowledge.

3. The country studies referred to were prepared by G. Carrarini, F. Guillermo, and L. Jiménez (Bolivia); L.M. Menezes de Souza (Brazil); F. Yanez (Ecuador), L. Verdugo and J. Raymundo (Guatemala); S. Schmelkes, G. Águila and M.A. Núñez (Mexico); M. Cunningham (Nicaragua) and M. Zúñiga (Peru).

4. Ironically, national population censuses contribute to the situation described when they change variables between one measurement and another, as in the 1982–1993 intercensal period in Peru or between 2001 and 2012 in Bolivia. Either they focus on only one variable – language – to establish who is Indigenous, as in Peru (Zúñiga, 2009), or they confine questions about Indigenous self-identification to respondents in cities, as in the 2000 census in Brazil (Gesteira & Lindenberg, 2004). This is compounded by factors deriving from the low status of Indigenous peoples, the constraints on the conduct of censuses in remote areas and the attitudes often held and shown by census-takers towards a community or individual perceived as Indigenous. Furthermore, the stated aims of censuses are sometimes doubted, and Indigenous organisations can instruct their people to abstain from or oppose them, as it occurred in Ecuador in the early 1990s. In conclusion, although census figures are incomplete, the information gleaned is necessary and indeed indispensable as a guide to decision-making in various fields, above all in education.

5. In the early 20th century when confronted with multiethnicity, social scientists and politicians referred to *social integration* as central to the process of nation-making. This was a political correct notion which subsumed the historically and politically accepted phenomenon of *cultural assimilation*. Now that ethnic and cultural diversity are being universally recognised and accepted, more than often main-stream political and social scientists resort to the contemporary politically correct notion of *social cohesion*. Although most generally disguised racism permeates Latin American society. In the cases of Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru, for example, racism against Indigenous and Afrodescendant populations is a historical construction resulting from political domination and cultural and linguistic oppression (Bastos, Ardito, Grisales & Rodriguez, 2007). Racism regulates social relations at all levels, justifying the concentration of power and wealth; and it has been so naturalised that it now constitutes an ideology that justifies social and economic inequalities (Quijano, 2000; Stavenhagen, 2010).

6. German reformation Moravian missionaires settled on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua in the mid 1980s under an invitation from the Miskito King, and during the time of the British Protectorate of the north and south Atlantic regions. They organised parishes and schools where Miskito, Sumu and also Creole-English were used; they produced educational and religious materials in these languages and also in standard-English. To date numerous schools and a higher education institution remain under their influence (see http://www.oikoumene.org/es/member-churches/moravian-church-in-nicaragua and also http://www.faqs.org/minorities/South-and-Central-America/Miskito-Indians-of-Nicaragua.html#b).

7. On average, between 63 % and 69 % of the Indigenous population are economically active, and they are overrepresented in the agriculture sector and among the self-employed. Despite increasing levels of labour force participation over time, their salaries are in most countries, significantly lower than their non-Indigenous peers. In the last decade this gap has been found to be narrowing, but also to remain significantly high for some countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala and Chile (ILO, 2007).

8. Using international platforms such as the Latin American and Caribbean Indigenous Peoples' Fund and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Indigenous leaders and intellectuals have been trying to arrive at alternative indicators that could guide international cooperation agencies when working with Indigenous populations in different parts of the world. Initially these efforts were based on the notion of 'development with identity', linking issues of culture and development, and more recently this redefinition is influenced by recent discussions on the notions of Good-life or Life-for-the-Common-Good and of decolonisation.

9. In Spanish this type of economics has been defined by anthropologists as 'economía del don'.

10. Other Indigenous peoples refer to this same notion. Among the Navajo in North America, when elected, local authorities take an oath committing to making life good. In so doing they appeal to their culture, way of life and cosmology, and signal to the world that they are alive and that their model of civilisation enjoys continuity. See: http://indiancountrytodaymedia network.com/mobile/opinion/i-will-make-life-good%3A-an-Indigenous-oath-72164.

11. Take note for example of the discussions that took place at The Beyond Growth Congress, Berlin in 2011, at http://www.feasta.org/2011/06/10/what-could-a-post-growth-society-look-like-and-how-should-we-prepare-for-it/. Reference to the papers presented at the World Social Forum need also be made.

12. For additional information on Good-life or Living-well, from an Indigenous point of view, see the transcript of a speech by Fernando Huanacuni, an Aymara Bolivian intellectual, at the Peruvian Parliament. At http://www.Indigenouspeoplesissues.com/index.php?option=com_ content&view=article&id=3837:the-good-life-of-andean-Indigenous-peoples-transcript-of-ay mara-fernando-huanacuni-presentation&catid=53:south-america-Indigenous-peoplesItemid= 75. See also Alberto Acosta's account of Sumak Kawsay in Ecuador's political constitution. Alberto Acosta, an Ecuadorian scholar and politician, when referring to recent political developments in his country under the influence of Indigenous principles asserts that "the [new 2008] constitution mandates respect for their unique ways of life and community organizing, and a new way of structuring the state in general. The Constitution also commits the country to 'living well', or sumak kawsay, in Quichua, which is an entirely distinct way of understanding development. It's another form of development. It's an alternative to development, an alternative not within development, but an entirely different concept to development. Along these lines, the Constitution guarantees the rights of nature. Nature is a subject with rights in the Constitution. Ecuador's Constitution is the only one in the world with this characteristic", at http://upsidedownworld.org/main/ecuador-archives-49/2586-ecuadors-economy-under-rafael-correa-twenty-first-century-socialism-or-the-new-extractivism--an-int erview-with-alberto-acosta.

13. One needs to take into account that "coloniality is one of the specific and constitutive elements of the capitalist power world order. It is based on the imposition of an ethnic/racial classification of the world population as the cornerstone of that power order, and it operates in each of the material and subjective planes, places and dimensions of everyday existence and also at social scale" (Quijano, 2007, p. 94, translated by the author).

14. In 2001, Gerd Merren, then head of the UN Guatemalan Mission (MINUGUA) described Indigenous exclusion and discrimination as part of de facto apartheid. He then said that "Indigenous communities have been victims of injustice and discrimination because of their origin, cultures and languages. This historical reality continues to affect those communities that are disenfranchised and do not participate in political life despite what was defined in the peace agreement" (translated by the author). Although, the situation then described has in

many ways improved societal structural racism, persists. See http://www.lalibre.be/actu/international/article/36833/les-indiens-du-guatemala-victimes-d-un-apartheid-de-fait.html.

15. Quijano (1992, p. 447) speaks of the need of an "epistemological decolonisation that would give way to a new intercultural communication, an exchange of experiences and meanings, as the basis of another rationality that could legitimately claim some kind of universality. Nothing less rational, finally, that the claim that the specific worldview of a particular ethnicity be imposed as universal rationality, although it is called Western European ethnicity. Because that, in truth, is a provincialism pretending to the title of universality" (translated by the author).

16. This approach is understandably different even from that of liberal democracy, since the aim is not representation by a few but the involvement of all. In Indigenous societies, to be considered worthy of recognition and respect and to be accepted as a valid member of a given community, through his life-span, a person must fulfill different responsibilities and assume roles that benefit the community as a whole.

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