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TITLE PAGE

A pilot project to design culturally-relevant curriculum for Movima indigenous students in the Bolivian Amazon

By Cristina Afán Lai

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

University of Sussex

January 2010

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'H' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that curves upwards at the end.

SUMMARY

University of Sussex

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Doctor of Education

A pilot project to design culturally-relevant curriculum for Movima indigenous students in the Bolivian Amazon

The legacy of a colonialist, assimilationist educational system in countries such as Bolivia is the under-representation of the indigenous in the large sphere encompassed by the schools - knowledge, teachers, and modes of instruction. Many indigenous students feel alienated from schooling and experience limited academic success. The calculated intervention of transforming traditional knowledge into culturally-relevant curriculum material has been suggested as a way to fortify their identities. Once students are solidly grounded in their indigenous selves, they may have a greater chance to perform better in the academic indices of formal schooling.

This thesis describes a pilot study aligned with the mandates of a UNICEF project (EIBAMAZ) to bring intercultural bilingual education to schools in the Bolivian Amazon. Applying the principles of Participatory Action Research and adopting an anti-colonial stance, I explored the traditional knowledge of the Movima indigenous people and codified some of this into culturally-relevant curriculum material. The material was trialed in schools and feedback was obtained from all the participants. Results, implications and reflections from the pilot serve as recommendations to a larger scale indigenous education project.

The investigative stage of the pilot revealed story-telling by community elders to be a natural method for them to exchange information. They saw themselves recording the narratives for their children from whom they felt a widening generational gap. When creating curriculum material in the second stage of the project, the needs of both student and teacher were kept as the focal point. Accessing students' prior knowledge and catching their interest were of utmost importance. The culturally-relevant lessons were 'put to the test' in classrooms in semi-urban and rural schools. Differences between the two groups with respect to participation structure and interaction were noted. Teachers discovered their need for more professional training and cultural congruence between teacher-student to be important in imparting such curriculum. The last stage of the project heard voices from different segments of the population on the topic of culture and culturally-relevant curriculum.

The study concludes that it is not possible to create an idealised indigenous curriculum because the Movima people are no longer living in a way that makes it possible to identify a singular culture which is outside and separate from the dominant national culture of Bolivia. Traditional knowledge is difficult to characterise. Rather than being fixed, it is mutable. It derives not just from the knower but from the interaction of the knower and the inquirer. It is dialogic and the research has shown that bringing it into the curriculum might involve a process of dialogue.

Indigenising curriculum is possible to do but it requires full community participation which is precisely what makes it difficult. It is not possible to have a place-based curriculum prescribed from the centre. Because it is context based on the locale, it becomes less the role of the Ministry and more the role of the teacher and the community. Though local epistemologies and culture are

domains that influence the content and purpose of schooling, there are other complex relationships (political, cultural, religious, social and organizational) involved in educational development.

Top-down and bottom-up cooperation and reinforcement are necessary for the provision and sustainment of a culturally-relevant indigenous education. The research suggests that the success of an indigenising project such as this would depend on the extent to which communities can be facilitated and enthused, whether it can offer sufficient development to teachers to reconceptualise their practice and whether these teachers would have the motivation to persist.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Motivation – Why am I compelled?	9
1.2 Thesis statement and Research questions	10
1.3 Methodology	11
1.4 Structure of the Thesis	13
1.5 Definition of Terms	13
1.5.1 Indigenous People	14
1.5.2 European/Western/Southern Schooling	14
1.5.3 Intercultural Education	14
1.5.4 Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)	15
1.6 Concluding Remark	15
 Chapter 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW	 16
2.1 History of Education for Indigenous People	16
2.1.1 Assimilation for Nation Building	17
2.1.2 Assimilation to modernise	18
2.1.3 Indigenous Control of Education	19
2.2 Current Education Situation	21
2.2.1 Theories	22
2.3 Contemporary Approaches	23
2.3.1 Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE)	24
2.3.2 Culturally-responsive Curriculum	24
2.3.2.1 Indigenous knowledge system	25
2.3.3 The Dilemma	27
2.3.3.1 Education and Development	29
2.4 Concluding Remark	31
 Chapter 3 – BOLIVIA NATIONAL CONTEXT	 32
3.1 Population Demographics	32
3.2 The town: Santa Ana de Yacuma	32
3.2.1 The Indigenous Movima people	34
3.3 Bolivian Education	35
3.3.1 Indigenous Education	36
3.3.1.1 IBE and curriculum development	39
3.3.1.2 EIBAMAZ	34
3.4 Concluding Remark	41
 Chapter 4 – DESIGN and METHODOLOGY	 42
4.1 Methods and Methodology	42
4.1.1 Why Qualitative Research?	43

4.1.2	Why Case Study?	43
4.1.3	Why Ethnography?	44
4.2	Theoretical Framework	45
4.2.1	Participatory Action Research (PAR)	45
4.2.2	Anti-racist Education	46
4.3	Design	47
4.3.1	Why UNICEF connection?	47
4.3.2	Why the town of Santa Ana?	48
4.3.3	Why the villages of Mapajo and El Peru?	49
4.4	Data Collection	49
4.4.1	Stage One – Gathering TEK	49
4.4.2	Stage Two – Creating lessons	53
4.4.3	Stage Three- Implementation	55
4.4.3.1	Researcher-led	55
4.4.3.2	Teacher-led	56
4.4.4	Stage Four – Feedback and Reflection	56
4.5	Interpersonal Relationships	56
4.5.1	Researcher-subject	56
4.5.1.1	The Subjects	57
4.5.1.2	The Researcher	58
4.6	Ethics	60
4.7	Concluding Remark	61
Chapter 5 – EXPLORING AND CODIFYING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE		63
5.1	What is Traditional Knowledge to the Movima?	64
5.1.1	The Knowledge Quest	64
5.2	How does Traditional Knowledge relate to the current state of society in the Movima’s homeland?	67
5.2.1	Elders’ Perspective	68
5.2.2	Parents’ Perspective	69
5.2.3	Teachers’ Perspective	70
5.2.4	The Children	71
5.3	Production of Curricular Material	73
5.3.1	Current curricular materials	73
5.3.2	Curricular Material to be created	76
5.3.3	Process of creating Literature	77
5.4	Reflections on Curricular Construction	79
5.4.1	What is lost? What is gained?	79
5.4.2	Whom is it written down for?	80
5.4.3	How is it represented? Whose voice is in it?	80
5.5	Concluding Remark	81

Chapter 6 - PILOTING LESSONS	82
6.1 Reconnaissance	82
6.1.1 The schools	83
6.1.1.1 Lourdes/6.1.1.2 Mapajo	83
6.1.2 The teachers, pedagogical style, instructional material	83
6.1.2.1 Lourdes/6.1.2.2 Mapajo	83
6.1.3 The students	86
6.1.3.1 Lourdes/6.1.3.2 Mapajo	86
6.1.4 Reflection on the Reconnaissance	86
6.2 Implementation	87
6.2.1 Researcher-led lessons	87
6.2.2 Teacher-led lessons	93
6.3 Concluding Remark	96
 Chapter 7 – FEEDBACK	 97
7.1 Stakeholders' feedback	98
7.1.1 Community and Elders	98
7.1.2 Indigenous Parents	101
7.1.3 Non-Indigenous Parents	104
7.1.4 Primary School Students	105
7.1.5 Secondary School Students	108
7.1.6 Teachers	111
7.2 Concluding Remark	116
Chapter 8 - DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION	117
8.1 Summary of the Findings	117
8.2 Discussion of Issues and Implications of the Research	119
8.2.1 Hybridisation of Culture	119
8.2.2 Schooling versus Education	120
8.2.3 Community Commitment	122
8.2.4 Training teachers and teacher-trainers	124
8.2.5 Local Curriculum Developers	126
8.3 Methodological Reflection	127
8.3.1 The Choice of PAR	127
8.3.2 Listening to stories	129
8.3.3 Constructing Knowledge	130
8.3.4 I, coloniser?	131
8.3.5 Time	133
8.3.6 Language and Data Analysis	134
8.3.7 Researching back to myself	135
8.4 Claims to Knowledge	136
8.5 Final Thought	138
BIBLIOGRAPHY	140

Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

For this thesis, the investigations conducted consisted of a pilot project on creating and implementing a culturally-relevant curriculum for the Movima indigenous students of the Bolivian Amazon. In this introductory chapter, several topics will be presented including: my motivation, thesis statement and research questions, terminology, structure of the thesis, and the place where this thesis fits in the field of education and current research.

1.1 Motivation – why am I compelled?

My interest in education for indigenous people was originally awoken through my professional experiences as an educator in two indigenous¹ settings: a primary school for Mayan children in Guatemala and a high school in a Cree reserve in Northern Ontario, Canada. Though these experiences were different with respect to the country and the political situation, there were several notable similarities. This led me to suspect that there could be universal challenges in terms of the education experienced by indigenous students.

In the first instance, I classified my observations of what I perceived to be problematic under two headings: school (curriculum, language, and teachers) and surroundings (family, socio-economic status, geography). In both settings, students exhibited high truancy and drop-out rates. This was partly due to traditional activities, familial obligations or simply because not attending was an acceptable practice. School was there as a place to go to if they had nothing else to do. It was not a priority. For the secondary students in Canada, there was also chronic depression, characterised by lack of enthusiasm and a self-defeatist attitude (“we are ‘Injuns’”) with respect to everything they undertook. In terms of the school, both in Canada and Guatemala, the students were studying in a language that was not their own, the curriculum was unmodified from that taught in schools of the dominant national culture and the teachers were ‘imported’, temporary and transient. These schools in Guatemala and Canada were located in villages that were geographically isolated and to which there was limited transportation access. In Canada, many students lived with extended families who were recipients of social welfare from the government. In Guatemala, the families were similarly extended with both parents working for protracted

¹ By using the term indigenous, I mean to refer to those people who identify with the original or longstanding occupants of the places where they live, which are now dominated by the descendants of more recent settlers. This definition is obviously a simplification of a more complex issue which is discussed in more detail below.

periods of time away in the city. Lamentably, I felt a blanket of poverty envelop both places, perhaps less bleakly so in the primary school where the boisterousness of younger children was more apparent.

These experiences and observations raised some questions in my mind, questions to which I could find no simple answers. What do indigenous people understand education to be? How can education be improved so that it is more effective and provide for their needs? It seemed that indigenous education was a multivariate problem linked to factors of political, historical, societal and economical complexities. My curiosity for the seemingly universal plight of indigenous student was aroused. I wondered what could be done to ameliorate this situation, particularly when education is being looked at as providing the way out of poverty afflicting most indigenous people.

1.2 Thesis Statement and Research Questions

From the Critical Analytical Study (Phase 2 of the EdD) in which I reviewed literature on indigenous education, I had learned that the lack of continuity between the indigenous students' home and academic lives is a contributing factor to the difficulties they experience in school. A culturally-relevant curriculum based on the student's indigenous background might reinforce and fortify their identity. In doing so, students would enjoy a more rewarding and meaningful educational experience, which in itself, has many positive repercussions (Ignas, 2003). Not only would such a specialised curriculum establish linkage between the worlds of home and school, it would also validate indigenous knowledge by incorporating it into the sphere of the academic institution. It is as McCarty (1995:2) found:

...some indigenous communities are strengthening their education programs by basing them on local language and culture resources to directly improve schooling for their students.

This aroused my interest so I was able to respond to an opportunity to attempt an interventionist pilot project creating and implementing a culturally-relevant curriculum. It led to three months of field work in 2007 in the Bolivian Amazon.

The curriculum design process began with an initial period of immersion in villages in order to partake of traditional Movima culture with elders. Following this consultative period, the task

came to transcribe this oral history and hands-on traditional activities into curricular material. With the assistance of two local guides, select cultural facts and features materialised as classroom lessons. The third stage consisted of implementing the culturally-relevant lessons in urban and rural classrooms. These opportunities allowed me to gain valuable insight on the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons created. They also gave teachers the occasions to identify their needs when imparting material with cultural content. The final activity was to get feedback from the stakeholders about the intervention and to initiate open dialogue about the place of culture in the Movima's contemporary lifestyles. This was not an evaluation as no outcomes had been outlined against which the pilot would be calibrated.

I worked in collaboration with indigenous Movima people to investigate three main research questions:

1. How can traditional knowledge be incorporated into a culturally-appropriate curriculum for the primary schools in the Movima people's traditional homeland?
2. To what extent might it be possible through curriculum development to value and sustain traditional cultural knowledge of the Movima people?
3. How can we learn from this pilot study about the process of developing a culturally appropriate curriculum for indigenous people?

1.3 Methodology

The methodology which guided the research was participatory. In order for a project of this type to enjoy any degree of success, every member in the community has to feel like they have been given the chance to input. All in the community participate in expressing their concerns as well as share the responsibility for finding solutions. The population itself, in contemplation of the state of its culture and traditions, takes the reins to do something for itself, and not merely be recipients of initiatives. The intention in applying the participatory *modus operandi* to the pilot is to contribute to its prospects for surviving into the future. As members of the community have been heard and engaged in the process, a sense of empowerment may be gained (Okri, 1997).

The study employed mostly ethnographic techniques and qualitative methods which are often said to be ideally suited for purposes of pilot research (Cohen et al, 2001). Participant observation, in-

depth/semi-structured formal/informal interviews, life stories, document analysis and reflective research journals formed the primary data sources. Spindler (1987:54) is of the opinion that

...educators are not doing ethnography because they do not seek or intend to employ cultural interpretation; rather, they are linking descriptive research to short-term efforts at change and improvement.

I sought culture however, not only for the curiosity factor but to develop a more integrated picture of the Movima people and their situation. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:44) state:

By entering into close and relatively long-term contact with people in their everyday lives we can come to understand their beliefs and behaviour more accurately, in a way that would not be possible by means of any other approach.

This I thought would be necessary in the creation of a culturally-relevant curriculum. I did not want to use the data gathered by others as I felt that other investigators' lenses might reflect different realities from mine. For this reason, I chose to do the investigative field work myself in the villages, and use participatory methods to allow for voices to be heard and recorded.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

There are eight chapters to the thesis. The second chapter reviews literature dealing with education for indigenous population. It gives a global historical overview of formal education, theories of academic underachievement and approaches such as Intercultural Bilingual Education and Place-based Pedagogy which have resulted in improved academic performance. The third chapter provides information specific to Bolivia in order to illustrate the context (political, geographical, societal, and historical) of the location of the study. The fourth chapter details the methodology assumed for the pilot project. Participatory Action Research was chosen as the most fitting approach to guide this investigation with the marginalized indigenous Movima population. The fifth chapter is titled exploration and codification of traditional knowledge and presents both data and analysis for the two activities carried out. Chapter six reports on the implementation of the created curricular material and examines the process and the results. In chapter seven, feedback from various stakeholders is presented. The final chapter titled Discussion and Conclusion looks at issues raised by the research, summarises findings, contributes my original claims to knowledge and makes suggestions for future investigations in indigenous education.

1.5 Definitions of terms

In the writing of this thesis, it is imperative that some definitions be established. In this section, I will clarify certain terms used when referring to indigenous people and education.

1.5.1 Indigenous people:

A number of terms have been used by industrial societies to refer to indigenous peoples. Many are place-specific and reflect common usage over time. Such terms as Amerindian, Eskimo, Aborigine, Indio, Scheduled Tribes are culture-specific, and are generally not used by indigenous peoples to refer to themselves. In many cases, pejorative connotations are associated with these terms. Several generally accepted and non-derogatory terms have emerged over the years; such as Native/Autochthonous Peoples, Tribal/National/Ethnic Minorities, are commonly viewed today as being politically correct. In recent years, the terms First/Native/Founding Nations have gained increasing acceptance among many indigenous groups as they attempt to define themselves semantically to the dominant societies in which they live (Hughes, 2003). Depending on the country, there is a term that is more popularly used than others. For Bolivia, the appellation is indigenous, though the term has connotations for the indigenous people themselves.

Defining an indigenous person is a difficult task as indigenous peoples themselves, like all broad groupings, exhibit a range of significant inter and intra-group differences. As suggested by Todal (2003:187): “first and foremost, it is the historical situation and international legal agreements which bind indigenous people together”. For the purpose of this thesis, I will adopt both a) and b) of the definition set out by the International Labour Organization (ILO). In Convention 169, Article 1.1, formulated in 1989, this definition of indigenous peoples serves as a useful point of reference:

- a) tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;
- b) peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

In fact, it is the identification with the land which distinguishes indigenous peoples from ethnic minorities, who do not necessarily have such a relationship to the land. Matthews (1999) points out that indigenous people face a unique contradiction by being defined as a minority group in their own country. As Friesen (2005:17) puts it:

Indigenous people did not have to immigrate to a different cultural context thinking they might have to change their ways in order to fit into the new environment. In fact, the very country in which they originated suddenly became foreign to them.

And being indigenous, finally, is something people subjectively identify and experience within themselves. Hughes (2003:46) emphasises that “from an indigenous point of view, the right to self-identification is a fundamental right, which constitutes the foundation for a wider recognition including the culture, the land, the language and religion”. This is backed by Article 1.2 of the International Labour Organization’s Convention 169 which says that “self-identification as indigenous or tribal is a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which these criteria apply.”

1.5.2 European/Western/Southern schooling:

The terms European/Western/Southern used to refer to schools foreign to indigenous people are different pending on the geographical and political referencing. Regardless of the term, they are all used synonymously to mean schools and education systems which function in the dominant culture and which have proven to be disadvantageous to indigenous students. For this paper, I will refer to them as schools of the dominant national culture or mainstream schools.

1.5.3 Intercultural education

In the 1980s in Latin America, the term intercultural education was increasingly used to describe and label educational projects for indigenous people. Aikman (1997:473), speaking in the South American context, says:

Interculturality was defined as a process, a search for a dialogue which will lead to more equal relations in economic, social, and political terms between the actors of different cultural universe. Interculturality is to be the guiding principle of an education which fosters equality through an articulation of different knowledge and value systems.

This has emerged as the preferred type of education for indigenous people, one that would equip them with knowledge and skills required for equal participation in the mainstream society, at the same time as maintaining the connection with their traditional culture. This is due to the fact that

very few indigenous peoples today live isolated from the wider society and its encroaching cultural influences. A pertinent, quality education about the surrounding society is seen as very important for defending their interests and rights as indigenous peoples and citizens.

1.5.4 Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)

Terms such as ‘primitive superstition’, ‘empirical practical knowledge’ and ‘ancestral wisdom’ are used to characterise the knowledge of indigenous people. Cruikshank (1984:78) says:

Late 20th century recasting of ideas formerly dismissed as superstition and now reincarnated as knowledge produces strange juxtapositions. In northern North America, for example, ideas once dismissed as ‘animistic’ are now transformed to iconic status as ‘indigenous science’ or traditional ecological knowledge (TEK).

In this paper, I use a variety of terms such as traditional knowledge, indigenous knowledge, traditional customs, and cultural knowledge, to mean TEK.

1.6 Concluding remark:

Bolivia is currently in a time of struggle, attempting to define itself as a nation concerned with the interests of its majority indigenous population after many years of being hemmed in by the will of the dominating minority. Because of this, the country is embroiled in internal strife and divisions. It is within this political climate that the project fits in. The questions of whether Bolivia should seek for its young a global education or local pedagogy, and whether they are necessarily mutually exclusive stands in the background to this curriculum development project in the Amazon, the land of the Movima, the ‘Tiger People’ (La Tigre Gente).

Chapter 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is structured to enable the reader to develop a vision of the educational experience of indigenous people, from its historical depth, right up until the present and stepping into the future. The first section is a historical review of indigenous education, outlining three chronological periods: non-involvement by the government, assimilation and indigenous control. The second section has as focus a discussion on the educational performance of indigenous students and theories postulated to explain academic underachievement. The third section looks at contemporary approaches such as intercultural bilingual education and culturally-relevant curriculum as pedagogical philosophies for restructuring indigenous education. Within this, the existence of indigenous knowledge systems is highlighted as a dilemma commonly faced by indigenous parents when choosing the type of education for their children. A link between education and development will also be suggested here.

2.1 History of education for Indigenous people

Initially, the imperial powers did not get involved in formal education and indigenous children were left to follow their traditional methods of knowledge acquisition. Successive nationalist governments then instituted assimilation practices which forced indigenous peoples into public schooling. Matthews (1999:340) contends that for the purpose of nation building and modernisation, they had to “assimilate as speedily as possible the habits and usages of the native to those of the European population”. In the majority of Latin American countries, the prevailing educational system gave “free rein to the civilizing and reproductive work of hegemonic Creole² rule” (Lopez and Kuper, 2000:9).

² Lopez is using the term Creole to mean what Matthews terms European. In its normal South American sense, Creole denotes someone of European origin but born in Latin America, for example, Bolivar was a Creole.

2.1.1 Assimilation for Nation Building

Building a nation state meant the imposition of a uniform national language and culture. *One Nation One Policy*³ was used to justify the assimilation practices of many imperial and post colonial powers from mid-nineteenth to late twentieth century, and the rationale was either national defence or cohesion (Niezen, 2003). The required construction of a national identity demanded of all its constituent members a common language. Language was identified as the main criterion in defining nationality and citizenship. With respect to the indigenous people then, Todal (2003) says that it was believed that if they could speak the language of the dominant society, then they would begin to think and act like the dominant society. In Latin America, Lopez and Kuper(2000:9) is of the conviction that:

The Hispanization campaigns that took place during the first decades of the twentieth century...looked to contribute to linguistic-cultural homogenization as a mechanism that would assist in the constitution and/or consolidation of the Latin American nation-states.

Consequently, the indigenous people had their languages and cultures subordinated to that of the dominant stratum. The acquisition of the language and culture of the dominant group came to be a way of becoming part of the national identity (Young, 2001). Another point of interest is expressed by Brock-Utne (2001:120):

...choosing as the language of instruction an indigenous language, a language people speak, are familiar with and which belongs to their cultural heritage, would redistribute power from the privileged few to the masses.

This was not something the colonisers wanted with respect to the indigenous populations from whom they expected absolute compliance. For the most part, the diversity of indigenous

³ Johnson (2002:142) speaks of the education being provided by the Chinese government to its ethnic minorities as a “political agenda” for “overall defence strategy”, focusing on the pacification of minorities within its borders. One aspect is the maintenance of national cohesion by the creation of a national identity through socialisation in education. Assimilating the indigenous people, meaning to bring into conformity with the customs, attitudes, etc., of a dominant group, a nation, was seen as the easiest way of creating and boosting national identity, to make everyone think that they belonged to the same nation. The One Nation One Policy was used to justify the assimilation practices of many imperial powers from mid-nineteenth to late twentieth century, and the rationale was either national defence or cohesion.(My Critical Analytical Review - phase II of EdD, Lai 2007)

languages was considered to be a problem that needed to be overcome. Formal schooling was then implemented exclusively in monolingual settings. In Latin America in the 1930/40s, Lopez (2000) writes of campaigns executed through 'indigenous culturization brigades' whose educational method was characterised by paternalistic spirit. National governments constructed schools in remote areas to expand their zone of control, thus undermining the usage of regional languages. As a result, an alternative written culture came to replace the tradition of orality within rural communities and indigenous languages became historically ostracised.

2.1.2 Assimilation to 'modernise'

Another framework used to look at the history of education for indigenous people is the modernisation theory, a Western concept originating in a Western understanding of progress. According to Todal (2003:187):

It is implicit in the modernisation theory the idea that so called traditional societies have cultural deficiencies that should be improved through education. Indigenous groups are often characterized as primitive races, living in sharp contrast to society in the modern western world.

Inkeles (1977) emphasise that exposure to western schooling would result in modern behaviours. They believed that a society could not hope to develop until the majority of its population held modern values, and they supported schools to be the place for this transformation. Young (2001) explains that the underlying assumption of modernisation is that modern values are not compatible with traditional ones. Modern values lead to economic development. The problem also lies in the fact that the discourse of modernisation allows for the dominance of western thought and practice. Tucker (1999) believes that the discourse is constructed on the false polarities of traditional and modern, with traditional society being a myth created by colonial officers to legitimise their actions. The notion of traditional societies as simple and unchanging in contrast with the complexity and dynamism of western societies was a convenient fiction. This authorised the duty of 'modern' societies to transform them in their image. By reducing the vast array of cultures to a single stereotype, modernisation theorists ruled out the possibilities that these societies had anything of value to offer. They were conceived of mainly as obstacles to modernisation.

Because modernisation implied Christianisation, missionary teachers abounded throughout the world beginning in the 17th century. Continuing into the 19th century, it was still common credence that “Indians must conform to the white man’s ways, peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must” (Welton, 2005:102 quoting Morgan, 1889). In South America, Jesuit priests carried out a thorough religious penetration into the continent. In fact, there is a saying common in South America, *“you may not have a home to live in or food to eat, but there will always be a church to go speak to God about that”*.

2.1.3 Indigenous Control of Education

The decade of the 1960s was a time of great social and political transformation. Throughout the world, independence struggles for freedom from colonial rule and mass migration to the industrialised countries were occurring. These and many other movements interacted and sometimes clashed. What they all shared was dissatisfaction with established ways and a desire to create something better. It was inevitable that the force of all these dissensions would spread itself to the indigenous people and awake a call to local control of education, amidst an array of other demands. May and Aikman (2003:140), as an indigenous education proponent, said: “the clear desire of indigenous peoples for local control of education is a product of colonial histories of cultural and linguistic proscription”. Bishop (2003:222) supports this by saying:

Control of educational institutions, and what is taught within its walls, are particularly important given their primary concern with the socialization of the young into society and therefore, the survival of the group.

Finally in 1993, the United Nations drafted the Declaration of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 1993) which stipulated:

14. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.
15. All indigenous peoples have the right 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.

A benefit of reclaiming control of the education system is the possibility for revitalisation of indigenous identity. This would happen if schools became institutions to transmit traditional

languages and culture. Research evidence indicates that a type of education contributing to identity development is the key to the survival of the indigenous people in the modern world (Demmert 2001, Bishop 2003). As Ayounman (1995:185) puts it so succinctly in the North American context:

A First Nations person must first know himself, his clan, his nation, and his responsibilities if he is to function as an Indian. An Indian identity provides a framework of values upon which one views life, the natural world, and one's place in it. Skill development becomes a mechanical acquisition once self-esteem, identity, and confidence have been formed.

In South America, in countries with large indigenous population (over 50%) such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, since the end of the 19th century, there has been demand for indigenous rights to education, as well as inclusion of indigenous people in the education service.

While there is considerable agreement among indigenous peoples about the necessity for indigenous control, consensus on the nature and substance of indigenous education is constantly in flux. Schielmann and King (2006:217) outline some general objectives of indigenous education:

- a. To ensure that indigenous peoples have equal access to, and the opportunity to reach, the same level of education as other citizens of the national community;
- b. To strengthen identities as a basis for promoting tolerance and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity;
- c. To recognize and integrate the cultural values, languages, knowledge, histories of indigenous peoples in the design of educational programs, policies and curricula;
- d. To enable indigenous people to take their rightful place in, and participate fully as members of the local, national and global community;
- e. To strengthen partnerships with indigenous peoples and their communities as a fundamental factor in the sustainability of programs; and
- f. To recognize and strengthen the ownership of indigenous peoples over their own knowledge and education systems and to recognize the potential contribution of these systems to the promotion and advancement of culturally and linguistically appropriate quality education for all.

In different cultural and societal contexts, and keeping in mind the legacy of history in that particular country, indigenous people struggle with different obstacles in order to gain control of their education. The challenges shared by the different indigenous peoples may be similar, but

solutions to tackle them change from country to country. Each indigenous group is faced with the dual tasks of participating in the general civic life of the larger society while at the same time protecting its heritage and worldview. The need to incorporate a traditional perspective into the contemporary context has been easier to assert in principle than in practice.

To conclude this section, we should keep in mind that attaining acceptance and recognition of indigenous alternatives to state-run formal schooling is a slow path and procedures for it to be achieved are far from easily available. May and Aikman (2003:140) reminds us that

...such initiatives have to overcome national policies aimed at assimilation and homogenisation, as well as trends towards standardisation which smother diversity for the sake of accountability and equality. Educational approaches must recognize the role of hegemonic discourses and their debilitating effects on indigenous students.

2.2 Current educational situation

Dropout rates and failures must be viewed as what they really are - rejection rates (Coolangatta Statement, 1999)

Here, I discuss the worldwide phenomenon of academic under-achievement of indigenous students and present some theories. The culturally-relevant pilot curriculum will be framed within these theories.

Political authorities in many nations claim that their public educational systems aim to provide indigenous students with educational opportunities equal to those of the majority. Yet this remains a challenge to be successfully undertaken as many indicators show that mainstream schools have not served indigenous people well. In Rwanda, literacy rates among Batwa children are markedly lower (around 15%) than the national average of 89% (Larsen, 2003:28). In China, ethnic minority students have far lower enrollment rates and far higher drop-out rates than Han majority students (Lee, 2001). The New Zealand Ministry of Education reported on their 2002-2005 fact sheet for Maori student achievement on the national qualifications the following:

- It is a concern that the proportion of Year 11 Māori candidates who did not attain any qualifications has remained about 60% in the last three years (2003 – 2005). In contrast, the figure has been 35% or lower for their non-Māori counterparts.

- Overall, Māori candidates were less likely to gain typical level NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) qualifications than their non-Māori peers.

(http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/maori_education/2223)

Why is this the case? Some theories have been put forward in an attempt to find an explanation.

2.2.1 Theories

The Cultural Deficit Theory locates the problems of indigenous educational under-achievement with the learners themselves and their families. The advocates (Nash 2003) argue that children are 'handicapped' because the home does not provide the necessary stimulation for 'normal' development. This view presupposes that the indigenous child does not achieve in school and in life because of

...deficiencies in their home environment, disorganization in their family structure, inadequate child rearing patterns, undeveloped language use assumed to lead to deficient cognitive development, maladaptive values, personal maladjustment and low self-esteem (Persell, 1981:26).

The solutions proposed by cultural deficit theorists broadly suggest that the victims need to change. By locating the source of failure in individuals rather than in racial inequalities, proponents of this theory demonstrate the degree to which racist ideologies saturate society. Bishop (2003:224) says of these deficit theories:

...they blame the victims and see the locus of the problem as either lack of inherent ability, lack of cultural appropriateness or limited resources; in short, some deficiency at best, a pathology at worst.

The cultural discontinuity theory suggests that when indigenous children have been raised in a distinctive culture of their own and are then thrust into a school system that promotes the values of the majority culture, the severing of the familiar results in a conflict. Huffman (2001:5) puts it as: "congruency between the school environment and the language and culture of the community is critical to the success of formal learning". The link between identity/self-esteem and the ability/willingness to learn is not considered in the way schools and programmes for indigenous students are structured. Indigenous students are at a disadvantage in 'cultural capital', which May

(2001) holds to include language, knowledge and styles of behaviour that are valued by society. Cultural capital produces an unequal social order because it is usually the cultural capital of the dominant social group which is valued. The place of school historically has been one in which centralist principles of the national state/dominant group are reproduced. Schools therefore help to maintain this unequal social system because they perpetuate these inherited cultural differences in the language and format of instruction, the curriculum, and in the expected comportment of all those who enter its sphere. For the sake of brevity in a word limited thesis, I will only discuss curriculum.

2.3 Contemporary approaches

When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing (Thompson, 2002:20).

It is legitimate to ask why the curriculum surfaces as a specific component worthy of special attention when we look at redesigning schooling for indigenous people. Gellner (1983:37) argues that school-transmitted culture is the institutional centrepiece of nation-states:

Men acquire the skills and sensibilities which make them acceptable to their fellows...by being handed over to an educational machine which alone is capable of providing the wide range of training required for the generic cultural base.

Under the aegis of the objective One Nation One Policy, a common curriculum was part of the strategy of pacification. Niezen (2003:87) is of the opinion that

...the goal was to uniformly distribute the skills and knowledge needed to make 'useful' citizens of those whose differences would otherwise represent multiplicity, and the ever-present possibility of dissent.

For the indigenous populations, the homogenising educational ambitions of nation-states has meant that state education, particularly its curriculum, has been constructed to reflect dominant ideologies. Mathew (1999:2) asserts that "one knowledge system should not be favoured over another", yet for indigenous populations, their knowledge and skills have rarely been recognised

in the school sphere. If this is the case, a revamped education typology blending elements of the native culture with those of the receiving culture into a unique synthesis might work for indigenous students. This would function under the premise that there is linguistic and cultural congruence. Corson (1998:240) cites benefits of IBE and place-based pedagogy as examples of this type of education:

- a. to help students develop a more positive self-image;
- b. to assist non-native student who may have access to the curriculum to develop more positive attitude toward indigenous people;
- c. to provide indigenous student with the opportunity to become aware of the transition between tradition and contemporary forms of indigenous culture.

2.3.1 Intercultural bilingual education (IBE)

IBE has been proposed as being able to fulfill many societal aims of countries with significant indigenous populations (Fettes, 1998). Indigenous educational authorities stand behind IBE as they believe that it best reflects their educational goals because “it allows them to bring their cultural values and languages into the curriculum and promotes tolerance of other cultures and viewpoints” (Fettes, 1998:260). Ayounman (1995) says that though it was popularly believed that IBE would lead the target population ‘backwards’ to where they originated from, it was subsequently confirmed that it offered them the possibility to succeed with these indigenous resources (Johnson and Chhetri, 2002). A curriculum encompassing indigenous language and culture together makes sense as there is tacit agreement that these two components cannot be dealt with separately as they are ‘two sides of the same coin’. This is due to the belief that language and culture are inextricably linked in that culture is in and expressed through the language (Gibbs, 2000).

2.3.2 Place-based Pedagogy and culturally-responsive curriculum

Another suggestion for improving educational indices for indigenous students is known as place-based pedagogy. Sarangapani (2003:202) speaks of the growing interest in India in incorporating

indigenous knowledge into curriculum at the school level as a sign of the burgeoning status of the indigenous people involved: “the indigenous knowledge of tribal groups without political clout is unlikely to be included in the formal education system”. As indigenous people assumed control of education for their own students, culturally-responsive pedagogy was the means through which this power was exercised. The primary objective for a culturally-responsive curriculum is to allow indigenous students to learn about their background (spirituality, history, cultural life) within the school context.

Renewal of curriculum is a powerful way to ensure that meaningful experiences are provided to school children to reinforce integration of specific ways of knowing and behaving. Schooling experiences which begin with an ethno-centric approach mean that children are well immersed in their own culture before they learn of other cultural manifestations. If children do not know their own culture, they never develop fully their identity. They are therefore easier to control in their ignorance and more resigned to oppression (King, 2004). As Phuntsog (1999:2) insists, in the context of ethnic minorities in China, all of us should:

...recognize the centrality of social and cultural factors in school learning, and the urgent need for schools to develop culturally responsive content and process to ensure equity and excellence for all students.

2.3.2.1 Indigenous Knowledge System

Indigenous peoples’ culture and language have historically been subjugated. Their knowledge was never deemed legitimate by the dominant group in power to be taught in educational institutions. Though Burns (1998) critiques the dichotomisation of knowledge (school versus indigenous knowledge) saying that it cements unequal relations of power in education, the view does persist that schooled science is universal and objective while indigenous knowledge is its opposite. However, the misconception that indigenous knowledge is static, that it is an artefact of a former way of life is contradicted by Kawagley (1998:2) who believes that,

Indigenous knowledge has been adapting to the contemporary world since contact with ‘the other’ began, and it will continue to change. Western science is also beginning to change in response to contact with indigenous knowledge.

The fact that indigenous knowledge is denied validity because it is considered unscientific is how the education system effectively establishes greater cultural authority for those on the outside.

Not only has this been traumatic for the indigenous people as it denies the existence of their culture, but it has also imposed, through its assumption of the superiority of European culture, drastic transformations of collective knowledge, social arrangement and identities for indigenous populations. Fanon (1963) establishes that decolonisation can only be understood as a historical process that ultimately culminates in changing the social order, which would then bring into question the continuation of placing Eurocentric knowledge in a hegemonic position over indigenous knowledge.

Disregarding indigenous knowledge also represents a loss of paramount importance to our understanding of the environment. The United Nations contends that there is a strong relationship between the conservation of biological diversity and the maintenance of cultural diversity, and this in turn is related to long-term food and medicinal security. Human survival is threatened as much by unsustainable ecological practices as by the swallowing of diverse cultures. UN Leaflet #10 puts it succinctly as:

Indigenous peoples inhabit many of the areas of highest biological diversity on the planet. When looking at the global distribution of indigenous peoples, there is a marked correlation between areas of high biological diversity and areas of high cultural diversity (OHCHR, 2001).

If there are two distinct bodies of knowledge (indigenous and western), irreconcilable and occupying mutually exclusive spheres, then one would automatically be favoured over the other depending on the situation. As Semali (1999:98) says: “there are dilemmas created by the concept of indigenous knowledge and the way it competes with other knowledge systems”. A way to bridge this would be to have a curriculum which emphasises using a self-as-explainer approach. By connecting academic content to the day-to-day real-world experiences of students, schools increase the chances that all children will derive meaning from their studies. If subjects taught in classrooms are committed to local contexts, the ‘school’ knowledge so produced will avoid becoming marginal and will not crush “the minds that were intended to be freed by the new knowledge” (Semali, 1999:111). By fostering an inquiry-based approach using a culturally-relevant curriculum, some of the needs for increased pluralism in programs for indigenous students can be addressed. As Kawagley (1998:2) says:

...if the subject matter is based on something useful and suitable to the livelihood of the community and presented in a way to allow connections to be made, then the student will be more able and motivated to learn.

This is empowering for indigenous students because it respects the fact that culturally different students have a different knowledge base compared to mainstream students (schooled and indigenous knowledge are informed by radically different epistemologies), yet one is not favoured over the other. Schooled science, or education in the broadest sense, would become “a human construction and a cultural institution with a human purpose, not as an indisputable and unchallengeable domain of knowledge and skills” (Roberts, 1982:245). Knowledge would then be contextualised. By linking content with context, Ignas (2003:52) says that “it increases the likelihood that indigenous students will more fully identify and articulate their own culturally unique set of behaviours vis-a-vis knowledge construction”.

2.3.3 The Dilemma

Formal education has been a double-edged sword for indigenous peoples. On the one hand, it is a fundamental tool used to empower themselves and to raise awareness of their rights. On the other hand, education has been used to further marginalise communities through policies designed to promulgate foreign values and ‘modern’ knowledge. Removed from parents, placed in boarding schools, prevented from speaking their own languages, and imposed with a certain dress code – the education project has had little to do with current notions of access and respect for diversity (International Labour Organisation, 1999).

There is controversy around local pedagogy and the move to ground school curriculum and instruction in local geography, ecology, culture, economy and history. Though this may prepare students to live productively in their communities, and it has been demonstrated to improve the academic experiences of indigenous students (King, 2004), the cultivation of a national/regional/provincial/local character may not make sense in a global world, where the barriers of political and cultural borders are falling away. Having said this, indigenous curriculum designers are aware of the need to be pragmatic and aim to design material which prepares indigenous pupils for incorporation and participation into today’s societies. Place-based pedagogy establishes practical alliance with mandated standards but the risk remains that these standards will erode local control over education, thereby limiting the important connection between communities and their schools.

	Aims of education	Educational governance	Curriculum
Place-based education	Preparing citizens, promoting community interests	Local control	Integrated, practical, broad in scope but restricted in coverage
Standards-based education	Preparing workers, promoting national interests	State control	Discipline based, abstract, narrow in scope but comprehensive in coverage

Table 1

(Gibbs, 2000)

Gibbs's chart above shows that in an environment in which school aims are strictly tied to instrumental purposes, such as improving worker productivity or increasing global competitiveness, place-based pedagogy may not fare well. If education is construed broadly however, as a means to connect students to larger purposes – personal development, ethical decision making, committed participation in civic life – place-based pedagogy may be able to flourish.

This raises the question whether place-based pedagogy and world-class standards are mutually exclusive. In the face of our increasingly transnational societies, it is truly a conundrum. If the educational system continues to reproduce the hierarchies of inequality, but now in the name of globalisation, it would simply mean that everything continues as has been for the indigenous students in terms of their low academic achievement. This is unfortunate as Ogbu (1990:54) says with respect to African Americans, “these students are already more susceptible to give up on educational avenues as a route to social mobility than those of immigrant origin who enter a new society voluntarily”. If on the other hand, the direction is shifted entirely to the nurturing of an individual, solidly indigenous in culture and traditions, then that individual might not be equipped for participation in the greater global spheres. Globalisation connects us to the world but it also implies the risk of extinction of the cultural identity of indigenous peoples, who do not enjoy strong political and economic power. This scepticism is voiced by Friesen (2005:200) “there is an underlying contradiction in trying to bring back traditional ways while at the same time preparing students for a successful lifestyle in the mainstream society”.

The challenges that face many indigenous communities today are to be able to develop from the particular to the universal and vice-versa, to be able to cross between the global-local worlds and to be empowered with skills and knowledge to walk in their ancestral one, perilous and perishing, and the modern one, inviting and encroaching. Burns (1998) says that indigenous people want their children to learn through the formal learning system and still retain their cultural and linguistic identity. The foremost challenge in indigenous education today is to create learning environments that maintain the cultural integrity of every child while enhancing their educational success. As Banks (1988:168) puts it so succinctly:

It is essential that we help students develop clarified, reflective and positive cultural and national identifications. However, because we live in a global world society in which the solutions to humankind's problems require the cooperation of all nations of the world, it is also important for students to develop global identifications and the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to become effective and influential citizens in the world community.

This conundrum of what indigenous parents want for their children is exemplified by Aikman's (1997:470) ethnographic account of the Haramkbut in the Peruvian Amazon:

They want formal education because they believe it offers a means of acquiring knowledge and skills from the wider society, which can be used to provide alternatives to halt the pauperization of their lives. They want schooling to value and positively reinforce learning and knowledge about the way of life, and its beliefs and practices, because these underpin a Haramkbut concept of self development. They also want their children to access what they see as the benefits accruing to the migrants and colonists living around them; access to clean drinking water, participation in the market economy, and other trappings of modern society, such as television.

2.3.3.1 *Education and development*

Many indigenous communities the world over continue to live within social conditions that perpetuate extreme levels of poverty, ill health and poor educational opportunities. As Smith (1999:4) noted of indigenous communities in high income countries:

Their children may be removed forcibly from their care, 'adopted' or institutionalised. The adults may be as addicted to alcohol as their children are to glue, they may live in destructive relationships which are formed and shaped by their impoverished material conditions and structured by politically oppressive regimes. While they live like this, they are constantly fed messages about their worthlessness, laziness, dependence and lack of 'higher' order human qualities.

According to the International Labour Organization (2002), primary education is the single largest contributor to growth and development in developing countries. At the same time, the ILO (2001a) reports that for indigenous students, traditional education (typically including learning traditional occupations) has been more educative and formal education more disruptive (in social, emotional and economic terms). A farmer with four years' schooling is much more productive than one who has had no education. But it is exactly this necessary education which is problematic for indigenous students. For this reason and given the boundaries of this thesis (for it is a huge issue), I will briefly discuss the theoretical link between development and education.

Indigenous people are often educated in the dominant culture's necessary skill sets, yet they face educational difficulties that are not common to the general population. There are complexities involving issues of health, gender, social and political empowerment, access to state goods/social services, and environmental issues. Because the problem with education is multi-faceted, the solution must also be a multi-pronged one. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2002) claims that:

Economic growth and social development of countries are invariably associated with large and sustained investments in education and training. Learning, education, and training offer benefit to individuals and society alike, but individuals benefit only when they are supported by economic and social policies. Individuals who are well supported in such a manner have the opportunity to become socially mobile and are provided with choice in selecting career paths. These paths are escapes from poverty, marginalization, and encourage a productive life.

Brehany (1997:165) suggests that development projects should also adopt a more culturally-relevant approach for operating:

...using the traditions and customs of the people may offer a more appropriate starting point in planning and implementing development projects. It is one important entry point into the community. It helps the organization to quickly find out where people are at.

If development projects are to be successful, there needs to be a parallel self development in the people. If people are able to advocate for themselves, equipped with means and confidence, then they can express opinions as to what and how their communities are to be developed rather than simply be passive recipients. This thinking is reiterated by Aikman (2002:46) when she speaks of the kind of education required for the Haramkbut,

A qualitative and relevant bilingual education, which values the Haramkbut language while providing good skills in Spanish, the national language, and the 'language' of government, media and bureaucracy. The Haramkbut need the ability to utilize effectively a range of genres to serve self-development ends; for example, in the defence of their lands. They need to lobby government, to give radio interviews, to negotiate with colonists, to write project proposals, and much more.

The quality of all students' lives and their communities is enhanced when the students' skills are developed. A culturally-relevant curriculum would support the development of a solid indigenous identity from which strength can be derived to interact with indigenous and non-indigenous people alike. It is in being 'educated' that informed decisions about themselves and their community can be arrived at. Indigenous students who recognise how the majority culture impacts their nation's culture are in a much better position to deal with social issues that may affect their communities (Jordan, 1995).

2.4 Concluding remark:

In the process of European colonialism, indigenous people have historically faced an assimilationist educational approach which was used as a means of cultural invasion. This was more indoctrination than teaching as it insisted on implanting a particular body of knowledge and a specific view of the world which often did not correspond to the life experiences that indigenous people had. This has had dire consequences on the indigenous pupils' academic lives. Evidence from many studies (Hornberger 1999, Clothey 2005) showed that indigenous students from homes that follow traditional customs seem to have the least trouble in school. This led researchers to make the inference that school and all that happens there is a greater threat to those whose own cultural identity is insecure, as compared to children from tradition-based homes. In the search for a solution to tackle cultural discontinuity, IBE and culturally-relevant curriculum have surfaced. This opened up the debate of the balance that needs to be found between localising the curriculum and the responsibility of education to provide the skills to function in the bigger world, not one at the expense of the other.

Chapter 3 – BOLIVIA NATIONAL CONTEXT

3.1 Bolivia Population demographics

Bolivia's population was estimated at 8.5 million in 2001 (last census). Approximately 55% of the total population is believed to be of "pure" indigenous descent making up 36 tribes, 25-30% mestizo (a mix of indigenous and Spanish), and 15% European. Luykx et al (2007) calls it the most "indigenous" country in South America. The distinction as pure or mixed indigenous person is questionable however, as it relies on a system of self-identification. President Morales of indigenous Quechua blood has attempted to rally country unity with the utterance: "Who among us doesn't have Quechua or Aymara blood?" (Associated Press, 03-05-2008)

Notwithstanding the indigenous majority, the masses have never reached parity in all comparable factors to the minority dominant class. There are differences between the 'have' and 'have-not' in all indices of standard of living. These inequalities have racial and historical roots, but have pervasively extended into the social and economic spheres as well. With the election of President Morales in 2005 however, this established balance of power seems to be shifting, albeit turbulently, at least at the very top.

3.2 The town: Santa Ana de Yacuma

Santa Ana de Yacuma is the capital of the main cattle raising department of Beni in the eastern part of the country. In the 1980s, Santa Ana played a central role in the Bolivian drug trade and coca paste was processed in laboratories. The most famous drug barons lived in Santa Ana and that brought prosperity to the town as roads were developed and churches erected. In 1991, residents watched as dozens of Bolivian police and Drug Enforcement agents arrived in helicopters and seized 15 cocaine labs and 110 kilos of cocaine base (New York Times 20-09-1992). What remains from those times are the drug barons' sumptuous colonial-style houses side-by-side with banana-leaf thatched huts.

Santa Ana de Yacuma is also the centre of the Movima-speaking region. Movima refers to the indigenous group that speaks this language but European inhabitants (upper class white landowners, middle class mestizo professionals) in Santa Ana are also in the custom of calling

themselves Movima⁴. There are more than 270 indigenous Movima communities settled mostly along two tributary rivers of the Amazon, the Yacuma and the Apere. Mapajo and El Peru, where I conducted the first stage of the field work in investigating traditional knowledge, are two such



communities.

Figure 1

(http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/bolivia_rel93.jpg)

⁴ For the European and mestizos, calling themselves Movima does not imply at all an identification with the indigenous people of the same name. Apart from wealth and physical appearance, surnames are one of the clearest dividing lines between the white and indigenous population. Both the white and the indigenous people are highly aware of whether they have indigenous or non-indigenous, upper class surnames.

3.2.1 The indigenous Movima people

The first mention of the Movimas was made by Father de Bolivar in 1621. Crevels (2002) tells of white farmers in the 19th century coming into the Beni department to raise cattle, using the Indians as slave workers during the so called 'rubber boom'. The acculturation and assimilation of the Movimas must have proceeded rapidly then. Not much is known of the pre-colonial Movima culture. Bolivar in 1621 described the Movimas, who lived as hunters, fishermen and farmers as "vile, totally naked and dedicated to witchcraft". Nowadays, the only material attributes that can be seen as typically Movima are the adorned mats of reed and *chive*⁵. It is probably due to the lack of exotic features that the Movima culture has been very much neglected by anthropologists.

Historically, the rivers have provided channels of movement for the Movima and commerce with European people has always occurred. This has meant not only learning to speak Spanish but also, the discarding of traditional clothing. There is not a necessary correlation between learning a new language and losing one's maternal one, but what happened to the Movima was that the maternal tongue began to lose influence as the society changed to promote the speaking of Spanish. It was believed that speaking the indigenous language would be a hindrance to learning Spanish. Similarly for the traditional apparel, it may have been a consequence of increased engagement with Europeans but later, the clothing was part and parcel of the discourse of hegemony and modernisation. Certainly now, the pressure is generated by the Movima themselves, to be with the times. At the sites of my investigations, the language is endangered and survived only by a few elders. The traditional garbs are ceremonial, for festivals only. As uttered in a focal group discussion, *"we wouldn't be taken seriously dressed that way by anyone. They would think we were still savages"*.

The present situation of the language and culture of the Movima is bleak. The elders, who are the 'fountains of knowledge', are one by one reaching the end of their natural lives. Normally, there is nothing extraordinary about this, but the difference here is that most indigenous people, and of course the Movima too, have a form of cultural storage which is oral. The traditions, if not transcribed and codified, will disappear altogether with the passing of these individuals and this signifies another step towards the culture's demise. By helping to preserve the multiple varieties of human understanding of the natural world, we go to the heart of preserving cultural diversity. As Chambers and Gillespie (2001:234) say:

⁵Chive: a powder of roasted fermented manioc usually mixed with water for drinking.

Some knowledge systems have already disappeared, some are known only in fragments, some involve sacred knowledge that cannot be made public, and most can be uncovered only by learning relevant languages and by working in collaboration with native scholars, elders and practitioners.

Today, indigenous Movima are engaged in subsistence horticulture, as well as limited hunting and fishing. Often the men in the communities are contracted out to work on ranches as farmhands. Meanwhile, the *chaco*⁶ at home is not tended to as the women are preoccupied with chores and children. With little food from the *chaco*, women supplement their family's income by working as domestic employees. This provides an additional disruption to the family structure as no one is left at home to provide supervision to the children.

3.3 Bolivian education

Chronic political instability hindered the development of general education throughout Bolivia's history. In the colonial era, education was limited to a few clergy acting as tutors for the sons of elite families. Independence (1825) brought a series of ambitious decrees calling for universal, compulsory primary education and a public school system. Nonetheless, little was accomplished. By 1900, schools existed primarily to serve urban elites. No vocational or agricultural institutes existed in the country. Only 17 % of the adult population was literate (<http://countrystudies.us/bolivia/42.htm>).

Mass education is a relatively recent phenomenon in Bolivia. A 1947 law calling for an end to illiteracy required that every literate Bolivian teach at least one other to read and write. Laws in 1970s revised the curriculum and instituted a compulsory five-year primary cycle, followed by three years of intermediate school and four years of secondary education. There was a national educational reform in 1994 legislated in the Education Reform Law 1565.

In 2004, the state began talking about 'intercultural' as opposed to 'bilingual' education. Cultural diversity was to be encouraged in the curriculum, including but not exclusively containing, indigenous content and representation. An Indigenous Education Congress also took place that year, during which representatives demanded that the criteria of intercultural-ism and bilingual-

⁶ Chaco: small farming plots

ism be universally applied to all educational institutions. At the beginning of 2006, Morales started a discussion aimed to pursue a new Education Reform Bill, the Ante Proyecto Nueva Ley de Educación. According to the Ante Proyecto:

[Education] is decolonizing, liberating, anti-imperialist, revolutionary and transformative of economic, social, cultural, political and ideological structures, oriented towards self determination and the reaffirmation of the indigenous and Afro-Bolivian nations and of Bolivian nationality. (Ministry of Education, 2006:5 as quoted by Howard, 2008)

The curriculum desired by the Ante Proyecto would be based on indigenous knowledge and technology which would meet the needs of the local community. At the same time, though secondary in importance, universal curricular content would be included. The education would be 'intracultural' (Howard, 2009).

3.3.1 Indigenous education

The marginalisation of indigenous people and the challenges they have raised against white/mestizo elites have long been at the centre of Bolivia's education debates. For most of Bolivia's history, the education system's position vis-à-vis indigenous groups was assimilationist or exclusionary. During the colonial years, minimal effort was made to teach the indigenous people beyond the bare necessity to convert them to Christians. Independence from Spain did little to improve the lot of the majority as education was denied to virtually all indigenous people living on *haciendas*. In the early 1900s, there were a few scattered initiatives at establishing rural schools.

Bolivia's most renowned educational experiment of this time was the Ayllu de Warisata School in 1931 near Lake Titicaca. This combined socialist philosophy with Aymara cultural principles. Warisata instituted bilingual education, community control over school decisions and strategies akin to what is nowadays called intercultural education. Smaller satellite schools in nearby settlements supplemented the nuclear school's offerings. This arrangement became the prototype for rural education in the Andes. Rojas (2004) cites the Warisata School as a historical milestone in alternative education. It offered liberating education to indigenous people. Despite support from important governmental figures, Warisata's role in indigenous struggles brought violent retaliation from the mestizos. This experiment met its end under political pressure of the Mestizo oligarchy.

By the 1940s, a system of government-sponsored rural schools was in place with a curriculum emphasising agriculture and hygiene. Instruction was in Spanish though most students had little knowledge of it. Only 11% of rural children attended. During the Bolivian National Revolution of 1952, government schools entered every nook and cranny of the rural space. The beginning of formal education for every indigenous child also signaled the beginning of the end for native tongues, from now on forbidden to be spoken in public spheres. Most people from that generation, now nearing 60, did not pass the language onto their children.

The 1960s saw attempts at bilingual education beginning with the evangelical Summer Institute of Linguistics. These pilot programs were somewhat successful but Spanish was still the only language of instruction. Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) then consisted of translation of national curriculum into the minority languages, chiefly into Quechua, Aymara or Guarani. It did not attempt to 'personalise' the material for the indigenous students. By the 1970s, though most rural schools remained decidedly substandard, the national literacy rate did rise from 31% to 67% between 1950 and 1976. In spite of this, the multiethnic societies which made up Bolivia still found their interests overlooked.

In 1982, a national plan (National Popular Education and Literacy Agency SENALED) was launched to promote literacy in rural communities. They financed literacy campaigns targeting children and adults. SENALED's activities significantly expanded the use of Aymara and Quechua as languages of instruction. This initiative later led to another intercultural bilingual project (PEIB) that promoted a new curriculum, teachers trained in active methodologies and production of indigenous language materials. (<http://www.britannica.com/facts/5/737002>)

Ismailova (2004:247) speaks of the demand by indigenous groups to use their language and culture in formal education as a:

...political, social and cultural process which emerged as a response to a long-term domination, neglect and denigration by the colonial regimes and powerful groups of the culture, languages and traditions of the indigenous people.

Within this context, Lopez and Kuper (2000:23) speaks of indigenous organisations' demand for bilingual education as:

...demands which would obtain a better quality education and facilitate the adoption of the communicative tools (the literary, oral and scriptural uses of the dominant language) required in order to take part in the life of the country.

In 1992 as public perceptions of a “crisis” in education intensified, a nation-wide education congress was held. From this arose the National Educational Reform of 1994. IBE was placed at the heart of reforms to bring about socioeconomic development and democratic participation for all citizens. Aikman (1998:199) speaks of the various ways and standpoints IBE was conceptualised:

...allowing citizens of the state to develop strong cultural identities based on their own paradigms and socio-cultural matrices, strengthening indigenous ways of life and forms of knowledge as well as providing indigenous students with an education which equips them with knowledge and skills of the national society, and training new generations of peoples with the conscious ability to manage the technological, social, linguistic and autochthonous spiritual inheritance of their native Amazon societies and of the knowledge and values propagated by the surrounding society.

A salient point mandated in this reform is that every student should have to learn an indigenous language. Luykx (2007:44) reports that many teachers (especially urban monolingual Spanish speakers) expressed misgivings about the wisdom of giving such a prominent place to indigenous languages and cultures. In spite of its idealistic ambitions, McCarty (2006:178) says of the proposed interculturality measures: “it is a general discourse that is highly political but at the same time, conceptually poor”. Luykx et al (2007:945) believes that the emphasis on IBE was encumbered by “debates over standardisation of native languages, resistance to their use in academic settings, and a deep legacy of racism, paternalism and the hegemony of urban values”. Up until then however, the 1994 Educational Reform was the most comprehensive effort through formal schooling to highlight and construct indigenous identity.

Indigenous students continue to show lower academic indices than their non-indigenous counterparts. In 2002, Ochoa et al found that children from low-income families, indigenous groups and rural areas are less likely to finish primary school (though these are cited as distinct categories, they are often one and the same, meaning that indigenous = low income = rural). Nearly 320,000 children between the ages of 5 and 15 do not attend school. This represents 14% of children between those ages. McEwan (2004:161) confirms this finding in his investigations: “indigenous students enter school later, repeat grades more often and drop out earlier. Only about 40% of rural youngsters continued their education beyond the third grade”. Partridge et al (1996) found that indigenous children receive about three years less schooling than non-

indigenous children. Huffman (2001:4) suggests that “underachievement in education of indigenous students can be attributed to the system of education, to the people themselves and to their unique situation”. With the election of Morales in 2005, the priority became the advancement of the majority indigenous population through education. He has called vociferously for change in every aspect and education as a starting point for the institutionalised racism. It is hoped that through a national change in the type of education offered to all students, making it mandatorily intercultural and bilingual, indigenous students will stand to gain the most by finally experiencing a more encouraging and positive educational environment.

In 2007, work began on a revised National Educational Reform. The emphasis is still to bring IBE to all Bolivians. In concrete action, it sought to institute a participatory intercultural education for thirty ethno-linguistic groups. International specialists were enlisted to evaluate the proposed curriculum based on a structure consisting of competencies at both the national and the local levels. In addition to Spanish, it also included the uses of Quechua, Aymara and Guaraní as medium of instruction (MOI). Its statements of purpose outlined actions to tackle the concerns raised by the debate of local versus global pedagogies. The goals of the reform included improving the relevance of education to community needs, promoting the permanence of educators in the system and guaranteeing equality between the rights of men and women. In terms of educational material, this meant mass literacy with decolonisation of curricular contents and the production of an intracultural, intercultural and multilingual curriculum structure.

3.3.1.1 *IBE and curriculum development*

IBE in Latin America has a long history dating back to the 1930s with the United States based Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) projects in Mexico focusing on indigenous language development and evangelization. From those beginnings, IBE has come a long way. Lopez and Sichra (in press) of PROEIB Andes inform us that “although much work remains, IBE has been gradually paying more attention to indigenous knowledge and practices” and considers these essential in its curriculum outline and definition. The fact remains though that teachers, most of whom have been professionally trained under “the ideals of monolingualism and monoculturalism and the illusion of an unquestionably homogeneous Nation-state” (Regalsky, no date given http://bvirtual.proeibandes.org/bvirtual/docs/country_report_bolivia.pdf) threaten the acceptance, construction and implementation of IBE.

IBE curriculum development and how it should be done is a point of discussion, if not contention. Trapnell, speaking of the 1999 curriculum reform in the Peruvian context for which a competence-based curriculum was designed, compares it with the AIDSEP/ISPL's⁷ Alternative program. The latter has significant innovations allowing for interculturalism as shown below:

- A critical awareness of the civilisatory and hegemonic approach which still pervades in school-based education and of the role which education can assume in the development of indigenous peoples' rights.
- An overall concept of education which recognises the importance of family and community-based education in the transmission of cultural heritage
- A critical awareness of the gap that the assimilationist model has opened between primary socialisation processes and school education
- A comprehensive and critical approach to knowledge and learning, which assumes their social and cultural nature and the need to develop a pedagogical outlook and practice that incorporates their own indigenous conceptions regarding these matters.
- Linguistic competences that will allow teachers to promote the use of their students' mother tongue and second language in school. (Trapnell, 2003:179)

The way interculturalism and bilingualism are conceptualised by different parties show that there are ethical, political and pedagogical challenges when looking at curriculum decision-making and practice.

3.3.1.2 *EIBAMAZ*

EIBAMAZ is an initiative currently taking place in Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador under the aegis of UNICEF. EIBAMAZ is an acronym for **E**ducacion **I**ntercultural **B**ilingue de la Zona **AMAZ**onica, which translates into Intercultural Bilingual Education for the Amazon Region. It had its beginnings in the national educational reform of 1994 and continues through this latest reform of 2007. EIBAMAZ never took root back in 1994 for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was political manipulation behind the scene (interview with Melvin Rossel, District Education Officer). Other challenges include the region's topographic (mountains, forests, rivers) and climactic (rainy

⁷ AIDSEP/ISPL is the Spanish acronym for Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest/Loreto Teacher Training Institute (translated into English)

season) features which present logistical difficulties such as access. EIBAMAZ has as general objectives some of the following:

- betterment of the level of education in order to facilitate inclusion of indigenous communities in the economic processes of the country; betterment of the quality of primary education promoting teaching in the maternal language in order to facilitate students' learning;
- developing and expanding on appropriate methodology, curriculum and material for intercultural bilingual education;
- increasing participation in and consciousness of the importance of intercultural bilingual education;
- promoting participation of indigenous communities in the planning and implementation of the project; and
- promoting valorisation of indigenous cultures and languages (UNICEF document, 2005:47).

EIBAMAZ is the project that I incorporated myself into for my thesis field work. The opportunity to do so was offered by a fellow doctoral colleague who works for UNESCO and knew of my professional experience and academic interest.

3.4 Concluding remark:

In summary, despite moves since 1994 to make the curriculum more inclusive for indigenous students, this has remained an aspiration rather than a reality. As the country redefines itself within a more pluralistic framework, schools have surfaced as an arena for the resurgence of indigenous values, languages and identities. The research I conducted sought to open up a discussion concerning the role and effect that dominant forms of schooling have had on the Movima communities and continue to have on their children.

Chapter 4 – DESIGN and METHODOLOGY

The chance to participate in EIBAMAZ in Bolivia, a country in the throes of a historic moment of transformation because of its new political leadership, called upon my interest and experience combined. I was excited to go to Bolivia because I hold an inexplicable romanticism for all things indigenous. I thought I might just be in the right place at the right time. In addition, I would be contributing to an innovative project in which I would be able to apply skills I have developed through years of teaching and further skills I wish to have and need as a researcher.

I could also bring to this my experience of neighbouring Argentina, the place that swallowed my childhood in the early 70s and exposed me to some of the cruelest racial moments I have had to endure. Being of a different colour, I was unlike most of the people I encountered during that time in Buenos Aires, who were mostly of Italian and Spanish descent. From many events suffered those days, I developed a sensitivity for the 'underdog' and the issues of race and unfairness. With so many painful memories, I had never gone back to that part of the world since leaving it in my early teens.

From what I had read, I felt that Bolivia would be innately different because it is a country with lots of people 'like me' (coloured that is, by whose palette?). I was curious as to the race situation in Bolivia. How could there be a majority indigenous population when Argentina had conducted such a thorough extermination of its native peoples? My investment in the research was therefore affected by something visceral which led me back to the cradle of what I am now. I began this methodology chapter with a personal introduction not just out of passing interest but to highlight how the person of the investigator is very centrally implicated in the research. In this chapter, I will explore how my researcher identity in interaction with other participants, together with the methods and procedures of the project, have produced the data and findings.

4.1 Methods and Methodology

In this section I discuss methods and methodologies which I adopted, some of which are necessarily entailed in the Participatory Action Research approach and some of which represent choices that I made.

4.1.1 Why Qualitative Research?

Issues such as quality of education are better described and explained, in order to be clarified, rather than shown in the form of numbers and quantitative figures (Cohen and Manion, 2001:34).

Because of the research questions I had set out, I thought that a qualitative investigation would best yield the kind of answers I was seeking. This is because the researcher is involved as the primary instrument of data collection and the data is analysed through the researcher rather than through some 'inanimate inventory' or computer. Merriam (1998) refers to qualitative research as fieldwork that involves going to the people, building concepts, hypothesis, and which focuses on the process, meaning and understanding. A qualitative study is a richly descriptive study.

4.1.2 Why case study?

My intention was to conduct a case study as part of qualitative research in order to evaluate the impact of a culturally-relevant curriculum intervention in two schools (urban and rural) in the Amazonian Beni department of Bolivia. Smith (1978) identifies case studies as a model of inquiry that intensively analyses a single unit system such as a programme or a practice; therefore I saw this approach as being best suited for conducting research into a place-based pedagogy situation. Merriam (1998:29) characterises qualitative case study as being "particularistic, descriptive and heuristic":

Particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular situation, program or phenomenon, so a case study:

- can suggest to the reader what to do or not to do in a similar situation;
- examine a specific instance but illuminate a general problem; and
- may or may not be influenced by the author's bias.

Descriptive means that the end product of a case study is a rich description of the phenomenon under study. The descriptive nature of case studies addresses the following aspects:

- illustrate the complexities of a situation;
- show the influence of personalities on the issue;
- include vivid material – quotations, interviews, etc; and

- present information in a wide variety of ways and offers various viewpoints. (Merriam, 1998:30)

Heuristic means that a case study illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study so it can:

- explain the reasons for a problem, the background of situation;
- explain why an innovation worked or failed to work; and
- discuss, evaluate and conclude, thereby increasing its potential applicability. (Merriam, 1998:31)

By confining my research to a case study of a small locale, it provides rich data grounded in experience rather than theory. It also allows for triangulation among the participants to discover their beliefs/attitudes towards this project.

4.1.3 Why ethnography?

It is more than intensive description and analysis of a social unit... It is socio-cultural analysis of the unit of study. Concern with the cultural context is what sets this type of study apart from other qualitative research (Merriam, 1998:23).

Ethnography allowed me to observe subjects in their own setting. I thought this important as I needed to find out what the culture was about, where it was at, to '*feel*' it, to '*live*' it, so that I could form a whole picture of the context surrounding the pilot project and reconstruct it for others who were not present at the experience. By participating in the event that I was studying, I expanded my knowledge base about issues which needed further clarification. As Goetz and Lecompte(1984:9) wrote:

Ethnography admits the subjective experiences of both investigator and participants into the research frame, thus providing a depth of understanding often lacking in other approaches to research.

However, in order to label my study classically ethnographic, more time would have had to be spent with my subjects at the research site. It might be best to call it a '*micro-ethnography*', a term Bogdan and Biklen (1992:66) used to describe "case studies done on very small units of an organization". The limitation of time (three months) of the condensed field research must be

acknowledged; in the way that anyone involved in long-term ethnographic research confronts the irony that work conducted during one period, within one set of guidelines, will inevitably be evaluated differently later. It is true that in three months I only caught a glimpse of the culture. However, as the aim of the research was not anthropological, though humbling the time frame, the stories told by the gamut of participants, as diverse and complex as they were, did allow for a picture to be composed of the situation of the Movima indigenous people. It is hoped that the results of this research will contribute to the substantial body of documentary evidence on locally-based curriculum which I had already accessed.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework I composed to direct my research objectives has two dimensions: participatory action research as a suitable *modus operandi* for working with marginalised populations, and anti-racist/colonial education to combat the legacy of years of domination as part of indigenous activism and revitalisation. I will elaborate on each below.

4.2.1 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

A primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives. A wider purpose of action research is to contribute through this practical knowledge to the increased well-being – economic, political, psychological, spiritual – of human persons and communities... (Reason & Bradbury, 2001:3).

Though the methodology of PAR was considered the best approach possible for this pilot because of the relationship between knowledge and power, it was not a typical PAR project. Usually in PAR, there are cycles of repeated action to allow for improvements, revisions and further improvements. This was a one-off pilot without any reiteration of the process.

Using PAR here for this project is consistent with the democratic impulse that was originally associated with action research, the motivation to contribute to greater equity and social justice in schooling and society. Okri (1997) suggests that by using collaborative methods, it alleviates issues when working in communities that do not reflect mainstream culture. In disenfranchised and disempowered communities, PAR increases problem-solving competence of its members. Kelly

and Simpson (2001:348) suggest several ethical dilemmas that might present themselves in the practice of action research:

- Participation of community members may be symbolic rather than authentic;
- Persons involved in the collaboration may find that they are experiencing conflicting loyalties; and
- Employing community members may compromise the collaboration by introducing additional and complex power dynamics.

I took note of all these points when I decided to use PAR and was mindful to look out for them.

4.2.2 Anti-racist (anti-colonial) education

“Until lions become their own historians, tales of the hunt will always glorify the hunter”

(Don Juan, October 2007)

Fundamentally, this thesis stands on the cornerstone of anti-colonialism, with inherent proclamations for equity and justice. I investigated the research questions from the position of marginalised peoples who have been treated with inequities for centuries by mainstream society. Dei (2000a:34) describes anti-racism as “the need to have multiple perspectives involved in the production of mainstream social knowledge”. As discussed previously in the literature review, indigenous people and their knowledge system have been profoundly affected by the power of the white elite. This is manifested through formal education and all that it entails (repression of indigenous language, lack of indigenous representation in texts, insufficient culturally-relevant material, absence of indigenous teacher). Therefore, this thesis takes as its standpoint anti-racism/colonialism in addressing the issues of representation and diversity through the effort of putting a face to the Movima indigenous population in educational material. As well as documenting traditional customs, this research also engages with ideologies that continue to depict indigenous knowledge as unqualified for formal discourses by bringing it to the classroom validated in the form of culturally-relevant curriculum. Dei (1999a:) insists that in order to make a realistic transformation, students and their identities have to be valued. This is the foundation of this research. Though I assumed only temporarily the stance of an ‘anti-colonial’ educator, even this short period enabled a rethinking of all that has been lost through erasing of the Movima’s cultural traditional histories, not to mention ignoring their deep connections with nature.

Until now I have used the terms anti-racist and anti-colonial interchangeably but there is a significant nuance. Indigenous people have been colonised and have suffered racism as a consequence. The reverse cannot necessarily be said to be true, not all who have suffered racism have been colonised (speaking here of physical occupation of the land). In terms of my project, the anti-racism/colonialism discourse is one and the same.

4.3 Design

The pilot project had four stages consisting of: collection of traditional information, creation of culturally-relevant curriculum elements, implementation of these curriculum elements and feedback/reflection. This structure was based on a design by Evans (2000:102) in which he outlined steps to collaborative curriculum development, with consideration to, first and foremost, the autonomy of indigenous authority:

- Step 1. Informal meetings with leaders of the community to set direction and structure for the research by identifying the community's needs and wishes (cultural or linguistic recovery, development of cultural pride, etc), agreeing on principles which will guide the process (experiential learning, indigenous pedagogy, etc), pinpointing informants and establishment of a central committee to provide support and guidance.
- Step 2. Curriculum construction
- Step 3. Implementation of elaborated curriculum
- Step 4. Evaluation and expansion

The stages devised for the pilot can be linked to those of a normal action research cycle which comprises of repeating reflection, planning, observation and action. The first stage of collecting traditional information can be the 'planning'. Creation of the culturally-relevant can be the 'acting'. Implementation of the lessons in the classroom allows for the 'observing' and feedback/reflection can be used to assess the various impacts of the project.

4.3.1 Why connection with UNICEF?

In defining the goals of the research, it was important to me that my findings be utilised. There is so much research done and the results of these are never put to any use. It simply becomes another report to be filed. In order to avoid this happening to my project, I thought a pilot similar

to the objectives of EIBAMAZ but on a very different timeline, a condensed three months of investigation, codification, implementation and feedback, would yield results that could be useful. This could be considered a test-run for UNICEF's EIBAMAZ, a locally-validated intervention to serve the purpose of informing a regional project. I wanted to do this because I had some familiarity with international development organisations and knew that large sums of money could sometimes be misspent on projects that, for one reason or another, do not give the desired effect. The research process and the data generated could be valuable information to UNICEF as pitfalls to be avoided or recommendations to be considered.

From experience as well, I knew that any project's survival depends on the community sustaining it, after the party responsible for initiating it has departed. I wanted to find out if intercultural education, materialising in the form of a culturally-relevant curriculum, is what is wanted by the communities. It would be a part of the investigation not done by UNICEF as usually internationally funded projects 'land' on a community. I wanted to give the people voice, as I suspected that EIBAMAZ will likely not involve them at the participatory level. The people would again be subjected to the project as opposed to being engaged. I wanted to do a bottom-up investigation: is this project really necessary, is it wanted, will it be supported? Ultimately I wanted to know if a culturally-relevant curriculum can result in improved academic performance of indigenous students. However, this would not be possible in the timeframe I had available. In order to present a credible opinion on that, the research would have to be longitudinal over many years. I modified my quest to emphasise on educational experience. How might a culturally-based curriculum be devised and how might it affect the educational experience of indigenous students? This I thought I could find out in the time permitted. Additionally, I was given permission to get in touch with UNICEF's contacts for field work. This would be helpful in two very important aspects of research: access and time.

4.3.2 Why the town of Santa Ana?

Though my UNICEF contact had assured me access into the communities, I was not able to tell him exactly where I wanted to be in the Amazon. I knew where I did not want to be. I did not want to be in a community that UNICEF had already been in for their investigative field work (duplication), but instead I wanted that the place I ended up choosing would also be a target place in the plans of EIBAMAZ so that my results would be utilised. My point of entry was at a UNICEF workshop

during which they informed the participants (District Education Officers of the Department of Beni and personnel associated with different indigenous organisations of the area) of the progress of EIBAMAZ and solicited their continued cooperation. I was introduced as a doctoral student who would be assisting in EIBAMAZ. At this meeting, I made the acquaintance of the President of the Subcentral of the Indigenous Movima people. Guillermo lived in Santa Ana and invited me to do research there. As he was my main link and occupied an important post, I was certain that I would be able to access whatever contacts necessary for my investigations. This is where I ended up being based in for the duration of the field work, except for the four weeks when I lived in the nearby communities of Mapajo and El Peru, to gather data on traditional knowledge.

4.3.3 Why the villages of Mapajo and El Peru?

Mapajo was suggested for its proximity to Santa Ana (30 minutes by motorised transport) and for Don Juan, a 'wise man' with a cache of experience in indigenous activism, storytelling (bilingual) and healing. El Peru was chosen for its high concentration of bilingual speakers and for being one of the oldest settlements of the Movima people. In these rural communities, fluency in the indigenous tongue demarcates the generations and the distinction is between those who are said to 'have' their language, the elderly, and those who do not, everybody else.

4.4. Data-collection

As each phase of the research had its individual purpose, I used the corresponding tool(s)/procedure which allowed me to collect data. Data came mainly from oral sources and were obtained through semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, audio-recording, video-taping, photographing, individual and group feedback, discussions, field note-taking and journal-writing. After the initial interviews, some questions were reworded to clarify their meanings. For all the interviews, time was increased to allow for participants to talk about related issues, to ask questions, to attend to young children. The aim was not to extract information from them to take away but rather, to engage them in dialogue. Part of the motivation is that I believed it would work better methodologically, as Freire (1970:223) said:

Dialogue, in particular, looms large as an important methodological link among the activities pursued because of its existential significance for human life. More than a technical means to an end, it is an expression of the human condition that impels people to come together as thinking and feeling beings to form a common entity that is larger than its constituent parts.

The other reason for dialogue was that I wanted to develop relationships with these people. I was certain that my experience in the field would then be more meaningful and pleasant for both parties.

4.4.1 Stage One (Gathering TEK)

In order to gather information on traditional knowledge and culture, a meeting was held upon our arrival between the research team and the community during which we outlined the purpose of our visit. Once it was ascertained that this was in lines with the vision of the community for itself, it was their prerogative to suggest what of their culture they wanted incorporated into the curriculum. I asked them to consider aspects of their culture they would like to preserve, the knowledge they would feel comfortable to allow to be converted from oral to written and therefore become 'open' and accessible to all.

During this phase, I took part in some 'traditional' activities, turtle egg collection for example, in order to personally experience it. Not only did I do it for the novelty (as I had never done it), I thought it would be helpful to gauge first-hand, by being an active participant, its appeal to the youths of today, who are on similarly unfamiliar cultural ground as myself. To a novice, is it interesting? Because the likelihood of partaking in the traditional activity is not a certainty for the students (for a variety of reasons), I had the responsibility of experiencing it *for* them. My experience would affect how I present the material and consequently, how it would be received by them. My impressions were written up post hoc, usually at the end of each day. The activity itself was recorded in photographs and video clips. This served a dual purpose: for verification of the information and for the production of documents, which would later accompany the text.

Other information was obtained through loosely-structured interviews. Very soon after I began the interviews with the elders, I discovered that their extensive knowledge was not amenable to direct questions and answers could not be formulated into a few sentences. It was almost as if their knowledge was a relational concept, more like a verb than a noun, more process than product. In all the interviews I conducted with the elders, I was struck by the similarity in the way that I would be conversed with, rather than answered. The 'answers' given would be in the form of an anecdote, narrative or life history: *"let me tell you the story of..."* and through recounting

episodes of their own lives or others, the answers to my questions would be indirectly given. It was almost as if they tapped into a full range of narratives as points of reference for answering the questions. I soon caught on that story-telling was their technique to illuminate some event which had occurred and knowledge acquired. Through the two weeks, I noticed that frequently there would be an interruption in the dialogue, with their eyes glazing over almost as if the subject was lost in some old memory, and then continuing with: *"you remember that story about..? No, I haven't told you that one yet. Well, that's the one I am going to tell you now"*. As Coles (1989:128) puts it so eloquently:

How to encompass in our mind the complexity of some lived moment in life? How to embody in language the mix of heightened awareness and felt experience? You don't do that with a system of ideas. You do it with a story.

I had not originally set out to employ narrative inquiry but as the research process unfolded, it became obvious that it would be a good method for

...in-depth investigation (of a classroom, a system, a person, a culture, an event, a relationship), sensitive topics, cross-cultural research (as it does not privilege one perspective on knowledge) and people who are on the margin of society who find it difficult to get their voices heard. (Akyeamong lecture notes, 2007).

The ways in which people make and use stories to interpret the world and represent themselves is shaped by narrator/listener rather than interviewer/interviewee. By inviting stories that are meaningful for the narrator, rather than assume he/she has answers to questions the researcher might pose, serves the purpose of allowing the possibility of information not normally heard contributing unexpectedly to the existing knowledge base. I used a recorder during these conversations, and often began with *"I am curious to hear about..."* or *"tell me about..."* and had my notebook at hand for jotting down notable things.

I modified the intended interview protocol when I arrived at the communities as I noted that local modes of interaction were more informal. When I set out initially to do the field research, I was determined to follow the conventions of the university knowing that I would have to justify my methods later. For this reason, I took great care to have the participants understand and sign consent forms. They found this procedure superfluous and soon I abandoned it. As for the guarantee of anonymity, the participants wanted to be recognised instead. The interviews were done either at the home of the informant or on-site (of the activity). At either locale, there were

passers-by curious as to what was taking place. For the most part, they observed and did not intrude. The informants were not put off by the presence of other people and appeared proud to be in the spotlight.

4.4.2 Stage Two (Creating lessons)

Before I could make lessons from the information gathered in the field, I first became familiar with the current textbooks. I felt this to be important as textbooks and their discourses are potentially powerful tools in constructions of identities. Textbooks can subordinate the individual to the national group or they can become part of a transformative movement supporting intercultural education. In other words, textbooks can reinforce existing power structures or offer alternatives promoting social diversity, respect, inclusion and non-discrimination.

I began by conducting a fairly superficial look at the textbooks using criteria that I had developed in my years as a teacher: usability (how the book is designed and organised that would affect how efficiently students could use it to acquire skills and concepts) and interest (what would they enjoy reading? What would put them off?). Because I do not work as a teacher in the Bolivian educational system, I could not assess the material's readability for its intended audience. I also looked at the member structure (number of people, racial make-up) of people who worked on the textbooks. The textbook analysis was focused on assessing the quantity and quality of indigenous content based on a framework of intercultural education. Were domestic and international indigenous peoples described, and if so, how? Were indigenous issues featured in the books? Were there descriptions of other minorities? Some specific things with respect to indigenous people I looked for were:

- Styles of habitation, adaptation to geographical areas
- Stories, songs, symbols, rituals
- Foodstuffs, agricultural techniques
- Professions, social roles
- Historical events, heroes

The purpose of this analysis was to see what textbook content has done to, or for, the cultural essence and values of indigenous peoples. Does it encourage learners to relate to indigenous people in a spirit of equality and tolerance? Does it promote the formulation of a national identity as diverse and inclusive of indigenous people?

I regard textual review as appropriate for deconstructing textbooks and for learning to create new texts that do value the culture and traditions of indigenous people. From the point of view of strength, this technique allows a serious questioning of textbooks. With regard to weakness, this method excludes the student from being consulted.

After the interviews, the elders felt sufficiently comfortable leaving the 'academic' work of transforming their stories into curricular material to the research team. The team consisted of two indigenous Movima people from the District Education Office and me. Both collaborators had worked as uncertified primary teachers in previous careers. Though my collaborators were unfamiliar with the terminology of place-based pedagogy, they had both practised it during their teaching years. This had come about in a rather natural way as they had to adapt the foreign material in the textbooks to the local environment so that the students could understand. Their incorporation in the pilot project was recommended by a professor from Universidad de San Simon in Cochabamba who vouched for them as two capable bilingual individuals with invaluable knowledge of the traditional way of life due to the fact that they had grown up in rural communities. They were also familiar with IBE because they had participated in governmental workshops on said topic. Through these exposures, they had acquired experience in research and curriculum writing. I agreed to his suggestion as I considered them to be the "cultural bridge" which Aikman (1998:204) refers to, a crucial role occupied by a local indigenous person who has knowledge and understanding of both local indigenous and non-indigenous societies, and who:

...recognises the wisdom of the elders and respects them as repositories of knowledge and historical memory. He/she has grown up and learned according to the oral traditions and informal learning and teaching practices: learning from the elders and from the spirits, and learning through experience, which is active, self directed, life-centred, problem-solving, relevant and flexible.

Incorporating local personnel in the development of curriculum was a good idea as they shared the cultural experiences of the students. Students were more likely to have affinity with the product than if it had been developed externally. Both individuals jumped at the proposition to

participate in the pilot project though they both held full-time work at the District Education Office. I suspected that this was due to the financial remuneration which would supplement their humble incomes. As far as I could tell from what they said, they were not motivated politically to have directed our research to the communities where we did the field work.

The big hurdle facing us now was negotiating between the oral and the written, something which needed to be meticulously managed and handled gingerly. I wanted to make certain that the original meaning was conveyed without too much transformation happening. Campbell (1985:144), writing of another indigenous context, mentioned the difficulty when fusing together the oral and the written:

Now came the big job, to take those oral stories and put them on paper. It was hard; we had to change from telling a story to a group of people to being alone and telling the story to paper.

Events, after all, are stories known directly only to those who experience them and interpret them to others, who in turn make their own interpretations of what they hear. Personal narratives based on shared metaphors and responses to common problems in one generation may be reworked quite differently by the next. But if we write down the oral traditions, then they become a formally-encoded product. They begin to accumulate different meanings. Culture becomes static, the 'official version'. Because a written account often gives the impression that it is the 'truth', we must be aware that codification does create literature which in its published form may be quite far from the original telling. If the stories we are writing about a people are not recognisable even to the depicted people themselves, then the written material is problematic. In that case, the truth is not *their* truth and the owner's voice is a point of concern. As Smith (1999:33) says:

We have often allowed our histories to be told and have then become outsiders as we hear them being retold. Schooling is directly implicated in this process through the curriculum and its underlying theory of knowledge.

Our research team wanted to make sure that the 'indigenouness' in the material came through in a way that was acceptable for the people we were representing. We tried to ensure this by checking back, after creating the curriculum, with those to whom the knowledge belonged.

4.4.3 Stage Three (Implementation)

For the implementation, the created lesson plans were piloted in two schools. This was to see how the material would be received and assess the possibility of place-based pedagogy succeeding, not solely on its instructional merit for indigenous students, but also as an instrument for cultural revitalisation for said people. We decided to pilot the lessons in a semi-urban area and a rural community. The same program was followed in both settings. The first phase was researcher-led implementation with the classroom teachers present as observers. The second phase was carried out by the teachers themselves.

During this implementation stage, I thought of testing out an idea - what would students gravitate towards if they could choose between material that was culturally-relevant and material that was not? This could be an additional activity to the culturally-relevant lessons. The activity would consist of some photographs taken from the community with characters involved in daily traditional work and others taken from my family photo album. The results of this activity would allow conclusions to be drawn supporting or refuting my hypothesis that students subconsciously tap into the constructivist theory of learning and write about what they know.

4.4.3.1 *Researcher-led*

In introducing a topic (turtle's egg collection) relevant to their culture for the first time in the classroom context, I felt it would be necessary to awake the interest of the students. I wanted to jolt their imagination from the very beginning, and through this galvanising, sustain their curiosity to further pursue their culture. There would be special events which do not ordinarily happen in these students' schools. I invited Don Juan, a story-teller, as a special guest to come into the classroom and tell a story about turtles. Other activities required them to work creatively and were designed to employ alternate pedagogical methods than the standard one they had been used to. Also, I prepared a slide show of the turtle egg gathering process with the intention of seeing how students would respond to a different technological mode as a teaching instrument. Given the length of the class periods, our implementation was carried out over a period of two days.

4.4.3.2 *Teacher-led*

Incorporating the teachers in this exercise was for sustainability reasons. They would be the ones doing this in the classroom on a daily basis. Success of the project sits crucially on their shoulders, on his/her ability to be a cultural-transmitter reliably and confidently. We looked for information of two kinds:

1. Feedback and evaluation - What were their opinions of the lessons that were created, specifically the topics chosen, level of language used, the structure, the activities? How could they be improved? What else should be included?
2. Self assessment - What did they discover about themselves/their needs when they implemented these culturally-relevant lessons? How did they want to be supported? What did they require in terms of professional development?

4.4.4 Stage Four (Feedback/Reflection)

For the feedback and reflection stage, the participants were invited to a slide show of our work. They participated in an open forum discussion of the project. For the student participants, we had them 'do', rather than tell. Children of that culture are not used to being questioned individually and I thought that due to power dynamics, they would just tell me what I wanted to hear or not express their opinions at all. In order to avoid this, I designed materials which the students arranged, ranked, classified and labeled. Through these activities, their invaluable feedback was given in a valid manner.

4.5 Interpersonal relationship

4.5.1 Researcher-Subject

My presence in the communities was initially startling as none of the places I did research in (Santa Ana, Mapajo, El Peru) are usual stops on the 'gringo' trail. But as days extended into weeks and I got involved in community celebrations, ate at the local market and walked about town, the novelty wore off. The number of people I spoke to on a daily basis increased and the whisperings and pointing at me decreased. I felt that if they could get to know me on their terms and begin to see me as not so 'strange', it would open up avenues of communication beneficial to everyone.

This was part of my strategy to develop visibility within the communities of my research and through this, establish interpersonal researcher-subject relationships. I believed that interviewees inevitably select the kind of information to share with a researcher; they will rarely 'tell it all'. Establishing rapport gives the researcher a chance to gain the trust of the participants and opens more possibility to find the data they seek. In ethnographic fieldwork, Spindler (1987) is of the opinion that the content of oral sources depends largely on what goes into the questions, the dialogue, the personal relationship through which it is communicated. As my experience with interviewing grew, I began allowing 'extra' time for participants to ask personal questions or discuss matters that were not directly related to the data sought. I felt that through this, unexpected information could possibly be revealed. I also tried to let them know me as a person and answered unhesitatingly their questions, though not given to their narrative style.

4.5.1.1 The subjects

In the two sites of the field work, the villages of Mapajo and El Peru, my sample consisted altogether of eleven elders (7 men and 4 women) who recreated history and traditions. Their names were offered up as obvious choices by the crowd assembled at the introductory meeting. The concern with oral sources is the accuracy of the data obtained. In our case, this is understandable given two facts: the age of the holders of the knowledge and the nature of memory being selective and elusive. How much can people recall, especially the elderly, and are the recalled facts correct? In spite of this, there is the consolation that in oral societies, people are practised in remembering stories and have a great desire to communicate, because what is not communicated is sure to be lost. Also, details of everyday life tend to stay in the mind because of constant repetition. The informants in the communities were open to sharing the information which they had held privy up until then. They were aware that their traditional information would metamorphose into lessons enshrined in books. A consequence of this was their seriousness in the task of teaching me. They wanted to make sure that I had received the information correctly, that I had understood the subtleties between this and that, that I knew the important highlights in a given topic. Every volunteered 'expert' participated but there were two who did not. My assistants suggested lack of financial remuneration as the reason.

With the teachers initially, they were constrained and mistrustful. Though this was never verbally articulated, I understood their reticence to stem from the uncomfortable feeling of being watched.

As a practising teacher myself, I can attest to the awkwardness of having someone else in the classroom who is not ordinarily part of the classroom dynamics. As my intentions became evident through my actions however, the teachers became more communicative. I conducted several interviews as teachers are key figures in this intervention. They need to be taken seriously as they are the agents 'on the ground' transmitting the information to the students. Any prejudice they have would result in more damage than good being done.

The parents were cooperative and seemed comfortable in speaking to me. On a couple of instances, people of more humble background were suspicious of me wanting their opinion, questioning themselves as much as me, "*What have I got to tell the doctor?*"

4.5.1.2 *The Researcher*

If we want to access the meanings of others' experiences, we must be able to imagine a world other than the one we know and be willing to see the difference. In the journey to understand the other, we need to accept that what we uncover will always be mediated through our own interpretive lens. This lens is

...acquired as a particular member of society, and as such underpins my impression of my experiences by views about human nature, human morality and virtue, by conceptions of gender and race. (Smith, 1999:44)

The above helps to determine what counts as real for me, but may be different for an indigenous person or another researcher. Because no one comes to a research task or a situation without preconceptions, it is important to admit that my accounts inevitably reflect the socio-cultural, historical, political positions from which I come, and my understandings will reflect my prejudices in observation, data-collecting and meaning-making. This is a concern in research, the imposition of "an 'alien' framework of thought based upon an 'alien' set of universal principles about the world" (Overing, 1987:76). Freire (1970:103) believes that all is not lost however, by saying:

While it is normal for investigators to come to the area with values which influence their perceptions, this does not mean that they must transform the thematic investigation into means of imposing these values.

This is exactly the point that I kept in mind while carrying out my research. By applying a methodology which aimed to privilege the subject's voice, I tried to listen with an open mind and view their actions without judgment. Smith (1999) writes of the word 'research' as being one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world, linked to European imperialism. Some participants expressed their resentment as product of the frustration from all the seemingly inconsequential research that had taken place in their communities.

I was constantly reminded of the position that I occupied in the informants' eyes. They held me in high esteem and granted me affectionately the appellation of '*Doctora*', though I made sure to clarify that this was not yet the case. Being a diasporic and mixed-background researcher, visibly non-white, "*you are Japanese?*", and coming from Canada, presented a short-lived conundrum upon initial meeting of the participants. These two countries were similarly viewed for their shared commonality of being wealthy nations. This notion meant that anyone coming from such a place automatically got respect.

On the one hand, I am writing as a critical voice within the academy, and therefore taking the necessary steps that would establish credibility for my research findings. Also, I am a product of fifteen years spent as an educator and it is through this experience that I have developed the confidence to pilot this project, to inform on, as well as to critique it. I played the role of an investigator, a curriculum writer (a field in which I would like to develop further professionally), an implementer (not unlike my teaching job) and an evaluator. I approached the research process from the point of view that it could establish new knowledge pertinent to my questions about the relevance of what I do in the school system, in particular when I am dealing with indigenous students, as well as to generate some substantive theory about the relationship between what I teach, and what I consider sound educational practices to the future academic development of that population. Using the entirety of myself as a tool, including physical matters such as dress, talk and behaviour, my identity took form in the shape of an experienced teacher cum non-indigenous researcher cum person affiliated with UNICEF.

Being young and educated, a married woman and a mother, all these were aspects of my mediated researcher personality which guided, consciously or not, the participants in accepting or rejecting me. Using different 'currencies' (Srivastava, 2006) at various points in the research process by playing up different aspects of my persona meant that my researcher role was constantly in flux. To sum it up, my awareness of my multiple positionalities heightened the need

to be reflexive, an ingredient crucial in research. My stories are intrinsic to the research and unfold simultaneously with it. I reject the idea that findings are unaffected by social processes and personal characteristics, particularly those as influential as the researcher's own. Hammersley (1995:19) put it thus: "the fact that behaviour and attitudes are often not stable across contexts, and that the researcher may influence the context, becomes central to the analysis".

4.6 Ethics

I raise three concerns in this section:

1. Whose interests and needs are being served by this intervention?

There is the fact that the project is being conducted so I may realise an academic ambition. It must be noted however that most indigenous people in the villages and town I spoke to appreciated the objective of the project.

2. Who owns the data, the researcher or the participants?

Participants own the data as do I. Ownership implies that anyone deemed to be the owner can put the data to a use other than the one initially intended. It is hard to predict whether such use would be to the advantage or disadvantage of the participants. In order to protect participants of the study from any unforeseen negative eventualities, I used pseudonyms instead of the participants' real names as a preventative measure. In any case, the nature of this study did not place demands on personal views or information. I did not seek information that, in my view, could disadvantage them. But as Stenhouse (1988) notes, a researcher may never fully be able to anticipate all risks.

3. Whose voice is heard?

This question posed so simply disguises layers: whose voice do we hear? Whose voice is in the report? By making the research process participatory, a methodology advocated by many researchers working with indigenous communities, there was a greater possibility of hearing the voices of all those who typically do not have it and to diffuse the power relations inherent in the production and dissemination of knowledge. Yet in order to hear their voices, I had to listen attentively as Pantin (1983:10) says:

You should listen carefully to what people tell you and be convinced that their voice is the most important element in their own development, and you should continue to adopt this listening stance throughout your dialogue with them.

For the second dimension of this question, the voice of the report, this is an issue that should be recognised as one has to think about how the story might change depending on who is telling it. Investigators often enter research relationships with particular kinds of cultural capital. It is often their voice that takes centre stage in the report, speaking and interpreting for the community while not necessarily being that of the community. Some opinions of the community can be presented to the public through direct quotations from the interview transcripts. However, it is very much the prerogative of the researcher to include or exclude a particular voice heard, depending on what he/she is after, and to allot it the interpretation that he/she wants. Although my voice inevitably dominates, I aimed for polyphony from the participants.

4.7 Concluding remark:

In weaving the story of my research, I have attempted to guide the reader to where I am at and where I have been. Subsequently, I have shown my position and biases through detailing my theoretical framework and methodology. Haraway (1991:142) voices the opinion that “embodiment is configured by acknowledging where we are and are not”. We may think that acknowledging our biases or our epistemological embodiments is a bad thing, yet I believe that a clear presentation of my assumptions contributes to a better reading of my findings. I have taken actions to build rapport, repeat interviews, establish non-hierarchical relationships and countercheck interpretations with participants in order to achieve successful data collection. However, there is still the question of, who is interpreting the data? What is the status of the researcher’s interpretation of events, vis-à-vis the interpretation made by others? As researchers, one must accept that findings will be represented as text. Like any other text then, it is subject to as many interpretations as there are readers. Thus I will expect my audience to draw a plurality of meaning from my text. As Foucault (1970) argues, the only determination in such texts is what they represent, given that their truth is not in the presentation but “in some future discourse”, in which case, readers of the text determine what experiences to draw from it. In fact, Eisner (1991) is of the opinion that in qualitative research, the facts never speak for themselves and the meanings are subjective. He suggests however that the criteria of coherence, insight, and instrumental utility as validity checks will determine if a study is trustworthy to all the stakeholders in the research project. A trustworthy presentation requires a high level of persuasion that can be

established by way of spelling out how the study was designed, including the techniques used, the settings studied, and the data presented and interpreted. As Blumer (1969:139) says:

...to approach the activity through the eyes and experience of the people who have developed the activity requires an intimate familiarity with this experience and with the scenes of its operation.

In the following chapter, I will present the data obtained from the first two stages of the pilot project, exploration and codification of traditional knowledge. It is not possible, necessary or academically relevant to include all the data which was obtained in the fieldwork. My process of selection and analysis therefore privileges one way of seeing the world at the expense of others. Both what is selected and what is not are significant (Chase 1994). It was my prerogative then to present the information which would help in answering the first two research questions previously set out:

1. How can traditional knowledge be incorporated into a culturally-relevant curriculum for the primary schools in the Movima people's traditional homeland?
- and
2. To what extent is it possible through curriculum development to value and sustain traditional cultural knowledge of the Movima people?

Chapter 5 - EXPLORING AND CODIFYING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The culture of a group or class is a peculiar and distinctive ‘way of life’ of the group or class, the meanings, values, and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs, in mores and customs. Culture is the distinctive shapes in which this material and social organisation of life expresses itself (Clark et al, 1981:52).

In attempting to construct a culturally-relevant curriculum for the primary schools in the Movima people’s traditional homeland and through its development, to value and sustain their cultural knowledge, I conducted two main activities: explored traditional knowledge and designed curriculum. Each activity was subsequently divided into sub-questions:

Exploring traditional knowledge

- What is traditional cultural knowledge in the context of the Movima people?
- How does it relate to the current state of society in the Movima people’s traditional homeland?

Curriculum planning

- How might traditional knowledge be incorporated into curricular material planning?

This chapter will first present data obtained to the exploration phase. Data here refers to the process and principles of traditional knowledge. Next, I look at key ideas in codifying traditional knowledge and present my reflection on the process of creating curricular materials.

5.1 What is traditional cultural knowledge to the Movima people?

5.1.1 The Knowledge Quest

There is no easy description of what an indigenous culture looks like for a particular community. Deer (2002) says that in order to understand the struggles of a culture and the people who represent that culture, one must become well acquainted with the particular indigenous community and the indigenous knowledge that is associated with that community. This is precisely what we set out to do. At the introductory meeting with the community, it was unanimously agreed that the people to guide us should be the elders. They are the sole remaining speakers of the Movima indigenous language. This was the key indicator to the community of the amount of traditional knowledge (TK) someone had. Doxtater (2004:625) refers to the particular beliefs, rituals and environmental relationships that exist in an indigenous community as TK. Briggs (2005:109) says that “a key element of indigenous knowledge is that it tends to be deeply embedded within the society in which it has been developed, and it must be seen in its economic, political and cultural contexts”.

Over the period of two weeks each spent in Mapajo and El Peru, the elders showed us aspects of their culture that they wanted preserved, represented and conveyed into text. This was through artefacts, activities and stories. The material objects and oral traditions seemed central to their understanding of culture. They pointed to the continuing importance of things for them, though steadily vanishing over time for the rest of the community. They showed us tools and talked of strategies they use to provide a life based on hunting, fishing and trapping. They spoke about the ceremonial clothing which would be donned for the “fiesta”, the decorated instruments, and the small works of handicraft that were part of everyday life.

The elders also emphasised the importance of spoken words. They insisted that oral tradition does not simply tell us about the past, but rather continues to provide guidelines for the present and lays the foundation for the future. Story-telling was not only a source of real data which communicated aspects of their culture, but also a method of exchanging information crucial to their lived reality. Jones and Konner (1976:326) say, with respect to the role of expressive forms in the transmission of information among Ju’Hoan hunters of Botswana, “folklore, far from being a kind of cultural froth, represents an important phase in the systematic of the knowledge of hunter-gatherers”. These authors make the evolutionary point that successful habits of mind

connected with learning, storing, and communicating survival information will have been strongly selected for. This selection pressure has left a creative legacy in the expressive forms, strongly imprinted with the attitudes towards work, social life, and the supernatural.

The stories I was told contained, for the most part, a high degree of religiosity and interconnectedness with the land, the stars and other places in the universe. They depicted humans, super-humans, non-humans, animals, plants and insects engaged in an astonishing variety of activities. They also inter-mingled non-Christian beliefs and practices with aspects of Spanish Catholicism. After many stories, I was able to categorise them into betrayal/punishment, repentance/salvation and loathing of God/ comeuppance.

Through these (seemingly) fantastic stories, I became aware of an additional dimension to their culture, one alluding to a pervasive, omniscient yet intangible cosmology. In fact, in the context of Bolivia, this 'cosmovision' is a key word in the education that is being sought for its majority indigenous population. The Andean cosmovision, as explained by Gonzales (1999), is that the local mother earth (Pacha) is a micro-cosmos, a representation of the cosmos at large. She is animated, sacred, consubstantial, immanent, diverse, variable, and harmonious. Within the local Pacha, there is the Ayllu (word for community in Quechua and Aymara). The Ayllu is comprised of three communities: people, nature, and spirits.



Figure 2 (<http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/the-andean-cosmovision>)

‘Cosmovision’ refers to something that relates/explains all aspects of the world, an energy that contains and confers. Special attention is given to animals, plants or phenomena that occupy a strategic place in the culture’s cosmological system, although they may or not have direct relevance to the tribe’s livelihood. The French anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (1963:89) suggests this as an explanation for the incredibly detailed knowledge of many indigenous peoples about their environment. He argues that “natural species are chosen not because they are good to eat but because they are good to think”. Mathew (1999:3) refers to the ‘cosmovision’ as being of the collective subjectivity, a way of life or outlook adopted by a community; “humans are not separate

from anything, not from the land, not from the animals, not from the seas and the skies, and certainly not from each other. We are all one family”.

To the Movima elders, culture was the everyday practices of hunting and fishing, objects such as ‘tinajas’ and ‘totoras’ (woven straw mats tended on wooden beams to serve as beds), but also stories, suffused with this indisputable, lucid, conspicuous cosmology. Most of what they know comes from personal lived experiences or from hearing others’ dramatised stories. It rarely happened in a direct didactic learning context (with a teacher) under pressure. But even before the experience could be acquired, for one had to wait for the appropriate time (age), *“there were always the stories that taught”*, locally-grounded, highly particular and culturally-specific. These would be told in moments of rest by older people to younger people, in the intimate surroundings of the house. They were most often told on quiet evenings, after people had eaten and before they felt overwhelmed by sleep.

For the Movima people now, a specific setting no longer exists for the telling of the elders’ stories in spite of the fact that there had always been a pragmatic usefulness for it. Tucked within the artistry of stories was a general fund of knowledge which permitted continued survival in the forests and jungles of the Amazon. It is as Smith (1999:145) says:

The point about the stories is not that they simply tell a story, or tell a story simply. They are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and the story-teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story.

The narratives the elders recounted have been passed on for generations and provided for them the basis for evaluating contemporary choices made as a young person, as mature adults, and during later life. Abercrombie (1998:10) puts it thus: “they strive to place themselves in a historical context, tapping into diverse kinds of memory sources in a self-defining act”.

5.2 How does traditional cultural knowledge relate to the current state of society in the Movima people’s homeland?

In addition to partaking actively in the learning of cultural traditions, I had another objective for my immersion in the village which I have not yet articulated openly. I wanted to conduct a

reconnaissance to find out the context that the culturally-relevant curriculum would be entering: Where and how does traditional knowledge fit into the quotidian lives of children in the village? Wanting to provide a contextually grounded account led me to adopt a largely qualitative and ethnographic methodology. Given the inaccessibility of children's views, only through such a methodology could the tensions identified be explored, in order both to ground a critique and provide the textured evidence necessary to understand the reality of children's lives.

5.2.1 The elder's perspective

The elders recorded the stories in Spanish for they saw themselves as recording narratives directly for the young, who now speak only Spanish and for whom Spanish has become the mother tongue. Boas (1940) relates to the inevitable loss in style and form that occurs when narratives learned in an indigenous language are recorded and transcribed in another language, referring to the disembodiment, de-contextualisation and crystallisation which may occur. The elders however were less concerned with this. They focused more on the fact that the printed page would allow readers to 'hear' the words of those who are no longer living. In other words, print would enhance possibilities for communication and allow for preservation of their culture. They were not sure how this information would help the children in their schooling, or even whether it fitted into the school, but they were certain that it needed to be passed on. When I was listening to the stories, I got the impression that I was in the presence of a dying tradition, which was surviving in that most precarious of media, the memories of a few old people. Their talk and the recitation of their stories struck me as melancholic, as if they were fragmented echoes of a world that had been shattered by history.

The elders told me that it was their responsibility to share their knowledge. The difficulty they were experiencing was trying to convince the young that this knowledge was worth learning at all. As one elder expressed, "*it is not that there is nothing more to know, it is that no one wants to know it.*" All eleven elders we spoke to were resigned to the fact that their culture and language was dying. The traditions were so infrequently practised now that they had given them up for lost, to never be recuperated. This pilot offered the opportunity to halt this decline. This possibility captured their interest and galvanised their participation, "*we should do this in case the children want it one day*". However, there was also much resignation. On an occasion when I suggested to an elder who is the last surviving artisan of traditional pottery that what she knows should be

taught in school, she replied with, “the young don’t want to get their nails dirty”. This woman made household items such as ‘tinajas’, a container to hold water made from materials (clay and coral) harvested from rivers. The ‘tinaja’ was valued for its ability to keep water cool in the Amazonian heat. Now, plastic recipients have replaced it. She said:

It isn’t bad that we want things which make life easier. It isn’t bad that we want to be modern. What bothers me is the shame that accompanies the rejection of the traditional items. What’s wrong with us? It is our own culture. We are rejecting ourselves.

Another elder added, “it is embarrassing for people to see ‘tinajas’ in your house now. They would laugh at you.”

5.2.2 Parents’ perspective

I spoke to parents to find out how traditional knowledge fitted into their contemporary lives. Here is a transcript section of a conversation with a village parent whose personal anecdote added to the picture the elders had started painting for me of the Movima:

In an isolated place like where I grew up, there was no school. All that we were taught was work, sail on the river, collect eggs during the dry season of august, when the beaches are out, seagull eggs, turtle eggs. I learned everything I needed from being out with my father, on the river. The kids don’t have this knowledge because it is another way of life now. They need to know other things now...I got married and my husband doesn’t lead the same life that my father did. We have different work than we had when we lived in the village. This is so that the boys can get a proper education. When I grew up, the parents didn’t worry about the kids getting an education, they just took us out because they needed us to work. The new generation, my sons, never heard me talk of piranhas or eggs. That was the life of the peasant people, along the river’s edge. Our children are not peasants anymore. The traditions are dead, of the past. It would be good if they knew something of our traditions though. But I don’t know how important it is.

Another parent gave me this insight:

I teach my daughters some traditions but not like the way I was taught and brought up. My father was a salaried cattle rancher, working for a Spaniard. He taught us about work, the field, he took us out to show us how to do things, milking the cows, tending the yucca and rice, fishing. The way things used to be are not at all like what they are now. Everything comes peeled and packaged. Before, all was done by hand.

We didn't run to the store to get our food, ready to cook. We exchanged things, paid with what we produced and got other things. I didn't go to school because I grew up with my dad. My mother died. My stepmother didn't want me to study so they didn't take me to school. For this reason, I want my daughters to go to school, study and live better. My life was too hard, too much work. I don't know if what I used to do in the past would be useful to my daughters now.

In analysing the information gathered from the elders and the parents, it would appear that the Movima view their culture not as something dynamic and evolving, but rather as something static and stable. More confounding and powerful perhaps was their notion that their culture had already departed, that it was a thing of the past, dead. Speiser (2000) speaks of the common system of symbolic significances being submitted to a continuous revision – culture understood as a process that does not come to a definite end, and cultural reality as being constituted in the action-process between humans and their social environment. This was certainly not the understanding the Movima held of their culture. What exists now was not affirmed unanimously as culture, though it is what they have become and identify with. Exigencies of life had forced its citizens to adopt a contemporary vision which for the most part, excludes their traditional culture. What I witnessed was a hybrid culture, not unlike that experienced by indigenous people the world over. This hybridity is a result of contradictory ways of being, doing things and clashing notions of time. All these factors composed a picture of a people which I found unsettling. I jotted down in my diary:

They are neither marching forwards nor backwards, a people that are neither here nor there, caught in a time and place which is neither in the traditional yesterday nor in the modernity of today.

5.2.3 The teachers' perspective

In isolated communities, teachers usually take up residence amongst the villagers. Señor Ruiz, the teacher in Mapajo, had been at his post for about six months when we met. He gave me the following insight:

The kids work, helping out in the family 'chaco' or if there is no work that day, they just play. The school is secondary to the work of the home, it is not the priority. If it were, the kids would not be absent. They would come everyday, but that is not the case. They are very independent. They want to learn. I only have to orientate them. They want to do the work, they are eager to volunteer. The way they are learning to work at home has instilled in them the independence of their own learning. They have a low level of education because they repeat what the parents say, the way they talk,

and they don't have an elevated vocabulary. The most important thing for the parents is that the kids can read, write and do mathematics. I think the young don't care very much for the old traditions anymore. I myself don't even see so much traditional stuff or activities around anymore.

Another teacher told me that school was interrupted for three months this past academic year due to flooding. The whole community had to be relocated to Santa Ana till the waters receded. When they returned to the village, efforts had to be concentrated on salvaging and reconstruction. There was no time for school. As she puts it:

The villagers here spend so much time just surviving, getting food out of the ground. There is so much that is against them, against education working out. If they are hungry, how can they study? I don't think their cultural knowledge would help them much against what they have to live with. The way life used to be is not the way life is now.

This made me realise that there are deep underlying problems which need to be remedied before these communities, still reliant on subsistence living, can hope to think of education, regardless of what type, as the path to getting out of poverty. Again, what the teachers said seem to reinforce an emerging picture of a people with few remaining elements of traditional knowledge and culture.

5.2.4 The children

With increased participation in schooling, children spent less time with their elders, participated less in agricultural activities and had less time to learn about intimate spiritual links between crops and animals. The children were in school half day, from 0800 to 1200. After school, they went home to have their lunch and then they either played or were asked to help out on the family's farming plot. I noticed children being autonomous, meaning that they seemed to be minimally restricted or directed by adults. They wandered about the community at all hours of the day with evidently little limitations on their freedom. I asked a group of children at play what time they were expected home. They looked at me in incomprehension and said: "*we go home when we are done playing*", as nonchalant and simple as that. It appeared to me that they were not habituated to being controlled and supervised. I wondered if this independence on the part of the children, unaccustomed to adult surveillance and input, presented problems in the school environment

where they have to bow to a teacher's demands. When I asked if any of them had ever gone turtle egg collecting, turned the crank on the 'trapiche' (traditional cane juice extractor) or knew the original tale of the Movima as 'tigre-gente' (tiger people), a boy smiled and replied:

We have gone a few times to gather turtle eggs, but you can only get the eggs very late at night. We don't go anymore now because if we were to go, we would be very tired for school the next day. Because of this, we don't do it anymore. Our parents say that it is not as important as going to school to study.

During the weeks that I spent in the communities, I noticed that there wasn't much interaction between parents and their children, almost as if the spheres of childhood and adulthood were separated. The two groups came together at meal times but on the whole, the meal transpired in silence. After the meal, the television became the centre of attention as the generator began to hum. There was no story-telling, intrinsic in which is "a focus on dialogue and conversations amongst ourselves as indigenous peoples, to ourselves and for ourselves" (Smith, 1999:145). It seemed that modern technology has not only replaced oral storytelling but has consequently severed social life and communication as well. Pryor and Ampiah (2003:63) in their study of rural Ghana speaking to both young and older people advanced two theories for the demise of traditional story-telling:

The first was that on occasions when it might have happened people now listened to the radio or watched television. The second was that the young people in the village no longer revered the old people and looked more towards younger role models.

Additionally, these children in the communities grew up relatively isolated from mainstream society. The road to their villages can be used for only half of the year during the dry season. In the rainy season, the access is by boat (and this usually implies spending money for petrol). This meant that the community children in general had limited experience with mainstream environments, norms, and values when compared to children brought up within or in close proximity to a mainstream context such as a town (Santa Ana) or urban area. A boy told me:

I went to Santa Ana only once but I didn't like it. I had to walk there. It was a long walk and I got very tired. When I got there, we didn't have the money to buy anything. I felt that they were looking at me funny because we were poor. My mom and dad sometimes go there to work but they don't take me. I prefer to just stay here.

5.3 Production of curricular material

The second phase of the research had as objective the elaboration of curricular material using traditional cultural knowledge. There were many factors that needed to be considered, the concretisation of oral knowledge into written material and the identity of the persons writing the text for example. In this section of data presentation and analysis, some of these concerns are addressed.

5.3.1 Current curricular materials

The process began with a qualitative content analysis of the current curriculum resources. I was looking to answer specific questions regarding the authors and the representation of indigenous peoples, issues and traditions in these materials. During the last educational reform (1994), it was decided that one of the responsibilities of the national government (through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports) would be to provide language and mathematics textbooks to every primary student in the country. This was executed through a UNICEF initiative called locally *Educación Para Todos* and part of the global *Education For All* movement initiated at Jomtien in 1990 (see Global Monitoring Reports at www.unesco.org). What this meant in actuality was the standardisation of educational guidelines, textbooks and accompanying workbooks in all the schools of the country, from the Andean highlands to the Amazonian swamps. Every student in the country for that grade level would study the same content and use the same books to do so. For the purposes of my research, I looked at the materials supplied to the Grade 2, 3 and 4 students.

The modules were conceptualised by two professors in education from a well-respected national university in Bolivia whose papers I had come across in my literature review. Under them, there was a team of four to five authors, two of whom were in charge of graphic design and illustrations. Because I did not have the opportunity to meet these people, I was only able to look at their names and analyse them in terms of racial and gender make-up. Other than the two professors who were male, everyone else in the team was female. Looking at their surnames⁸ and consulting my assistants, we deduced that none of the authors was of Movima indigenous background,

⁸ My collaborator told me not to call people indigenous, as that would be seen in a bad way. He asked me specifically not to ask that question of people, whether they were indigenous or not, as by merely asking the question, the respondents will be insulted by the negative connotations associated with the term. When I insisted that I do need to have this information as it may bear importance in analysing their responses, he replied “*show me their family names and I will tell you if they are indigenous or not.*”

though it was possible that some of the authors were of Quechua or Aymara (the predominant indigenous groups in Bolivia) extraction.

In the six books (three language and three mathematics) that I analysed, I found only three references specific to indigenous groups in Bolivia, and these had as topics housing styles (circular houses of the Uru-Chipaya), clothing (the dress made out of bark of the Tsimane Indians) and jobs (a Quechua stone sculptor). The remainder of the books had topics which can be said to provide general comprehensive information aligned with the philosophy of global education, with no attention paid to, nor mention of, the diversity of peoples and the wealth of traditional knowledge held within Bolivia's majority indigenous population.

The books were structured in a format which allowed for development of literacy skills, with a paragraph for reading or pictures for interpretation. This was followed by exercises, usually in the form of questions to be answered. Reviewing the topics such as nutrition, personal hygiene, the environment, toys, I marveled at the lost opportunities for making this more culturally pertinent and distinguishable for the indigenous people. The illustrations conformed to the generic, universal depictions of 'western' people with no conspicuous features highlighting any indigenous particularity. In summary then, it can be surmised that the guiding principle was to make the school material cosmopolitan, unbigoted and universal. However, one can also see this as being exclusionary of indigenous people, granting privilege to people ordinarily in positions of power, and inferring through that, the illegitimacy and invisibility of indigenous people in mainstream society.

In analysing the material, the obvious cannot be overlooked. It is not so much what is being said about indigenous people and other ethnicities, it is what is NOT being said. What I saw in the textbooks reinforced something which I had noted on television, jotted down as being remarkable in my research journal: *"all the news presenters are 'white', all the commercials feature only 'white' people. One could almost think one was in Spain."* This domination in the public arena of 'white' people emphasises and buttresses the strength of the established elite. In fact, this observation was shared by the few people that I mentioned this to; *"yes, they are on television because they are more beautiful than us"*.

I present here an example taken from one of the textbooks I reviewed which is typical of the material found in the rest of the books. It is also representative of the symptoms of irrelevance, inapplicability and disconnection. This is a poem on spring (my translation from the Spanish):

Spring comes once a year
it is after the darkness has gone,
the leaves begin to grow
the birds come back
wonderful spring returns again.

Spring comes once a year
It is after the snow has melted,
the flowers begin to bloom
the animals come out of their burrows
wonderful spring returns again.
(Lenguaje Modulo 4 Primer ciclo, 1998)

This poem, though imbued with facts familiar to us in the North American geographical and corresponding climatic/environmental contexts, is not what is known to the students as their spring, their season, their reality. For the Movima, inhabiting the coastlines along the tributaries of the Amazon, there are only two seasons, the dry one and the wet one. There is no snow, hibernating animals, migratory birds. In summary, there is not that cyclical sense of renewal which we experience. It is rather, when the rains come, an invigoration, a re-enforcement, of all that is already present. Viewed in this light then, it has little pertinence to the students' lives and the information would not be grasped with any real comprehension. The poem, as I saw it, could not really involve or engage the students as the content did not support and validate their knowledge with regards to their environs or culture.

In spite of the limitation that a relatively small number of texts were analysed, the observations of the analysis point to the need to include more indigenous content into the textbooks. This would allow indigenous students to identify with some of the characters represented, as well as promote awareness of indigenous people and issues for all learners. Some recommendations for overcoming existing marginalisation of indigenous people in the texts would be to revise or enrich existing learning materials, as well as adopting usage of alternative teaching/learning techniques.

5.3.2 The curricular material

The lessons to be created for this pilot project were intended to be similar in ideology to the outline of EIBAMAZ. Traditional cultural knowledge would be the medium through which learning of important academic skills of reading, writing and computing would take place. Linking content to the cultural backgrounds of students would serve to reduce cultural discontinuity between students' ethnic heritage and school culture. This could in turn result in a more positive academic experience. Having evidenced little traditional artefacts and customs in the lives of Movima people now, I feared the irony that the culturally-relevant lessons we were creating would be more foreign to the students and present more of a discontinuity to their day-to-day lives than the material currently being used in school.

Though indigenous traditional learning takes a more holistic approach to curriculum and instruction, my assistants and I nevertheless felt that creating distinctly identifiable themes would be a better way to proceed. In selectively choosing, some stories and information were enshrined in text while others lamentably remained marginalised and eventually discarded. When deliberating on topics, we considered the importance of context, wanting to assent to and allow for concrete situations that take place in the communities. As well, the student's interest for the topic was the focal question. Knowing the age group of our target audience, Grade three students, we chose something in natural science, turtle eggs, and something involving mechanics, the sugar cane juice extraction process. For each, we created text with reading comprehension and mathematical questions. This is a format similar to that of the books being used. We did not create a unique style or anything dramatically different. The purpose was to find out how this material, with the text as the only variable, would be received in the classroom. The objective was to envelop language and mathematics in culture. It is not a substitution for math or Spanish, it is math and Spanish using Movima culture. Additionally for these lessons to be sustainable, they had to fit into the classroom as they existed. They could not be designed with requirements of resources and materials, from electricity to scissors/glue, which the schools may not have.

The elders had also wanted ethnic heroes and festivals to be included as part of the culture to be transmitted. Though I reject this type of representation to be superficial on the assumption that it trivialises the culture, I abided by their wishes as this was the premise of the project. I thought that perhaps they wished these topics to be included because now the interpretations on these ethnic events would be from a different perspective, theirs, and thus, would give them ownership, voice

and ultimately pride and power. We created lessons on these though we did not have the opportunity to pilot them.

The Movima people were represented in the lessons in a relatively neutral and objective way. The reason I feel I can say this is that I did not know very much about the Movima at all, and did not feel compelled to represent them one way or another. The elders from whom the information was extracted were consulted after this curricular material was produced, and asked to give their input. I asked whether anything needed to be changed, was lacking or made them uncomfortable. There was open pleasure shown on their faces as they realised that what I was reading them came from the information that they had given me. I interpreted this reaction to the fact that I was acting as an extension of them, the dummy to a ventriloquist, communicating their knowledge to a wider audience. They also remarked on how “important and official” their information looked on paper. The entirety of what I ‘said’ in terms of generating new text was a fractional portion of what they said, my role being mainly to condense and transform.

5.3.3 Process of creating literature

The process of elaborating the curriculum involved changing medium for the promulgation of information, from oral to written. Circa 700-650 B.C., what is often described as ‘a thunder-clap in human history’ occurred: Homeric epics were committed to paper. It formed a kind of watershed dividing forever the face-to-face, socially interdependent, participatory world of oral communication from the increasingly isolated, abstract experience of alphabetic cultures. Bieseke’s (1993:121) list (Table 2 below) outlines the ways folklore and literature can be compared and contrasted. It becomes clear that folklore thrives on the collective, active participation of the people who control their own expressions. Oral wisdom is free to express pragmatic attitudes which vary according to the necessities of various situations as they arise. Literature, as the printed form of individual and collective products of the fantasy, brings an entirely new dimension to the way people relate to their own cultural expressions.

Folklore	Literature
Oral	Written

Performance	Text
Face to face communication	Indirect communication
Ephemeral	Permanent
Communal event	Individual event
Recreation	Creation
Variation	Revision
Tradition	Innovation
Unconscious structure	Conscious design
Collective representations	Selective representations
Public ownership	Private ownership
Diffusion	Distribution
Memory recollection	Re-reading

Table 2 A comparison between Folklore and Literature (Biesele, 1993)

Havelock (1978b:36-7) puts it thus; “Knowledge and custom as performed and created together orally gave way to individual and often silence contemplation of texts and rules”. The reason being that writing, or literacy, has historically been used to determine the breaks between the past and the present, the beginning of history and the development of theory. Smith (1999:190) elaborates on this by saying:

...writing has been viewed as the mark of a superior civilization and other societies have been judged, by this view, to be incapable of thinking critically and objectively, or having distance from ideas and emotions.

For most indigenous populations, who on the whole still very much value oral ways of knowing, this presumption on the part of those who do partake of literacy has meant that indigenous people have been considered to be dissociated from culture and enlightenment, at the same time as being mired in barbarism and savagery. Though those scholars sympathetic to the oral tradition may describe the accounts as “stored within genealogies, within the landscape, within weavings and carvings, even within the personal names that many people carried” (Smith, 1999:190), many

underestimate the significance of the power of words and the cultural knowledge integrated within.

5.4 Reflections on Curricular Construction

5.4.1 What is lost? What is gained?

There are challenges and limitations to integrating oral traditions and knowledge into formal education. One of them is that a written account can never provide more than a partial understanding of ways of knowing that reside in practice as much as a verbal narrative. The oral form produces a different function for the listener than the written form. When oral traditions are told, it happens as a performance, the information materialising in an atmosphere of spontaneity and dynamism with the audience participating in the way it is born. This is evident in the following extract from my research journal:

When I witnessed Don Juan telling a story, I became aware of all that was lamentably being lost. As he began to tell the story, it bore great similarities to another tale he had told me but not the one that I had requested he tell the students. I thought that he had mistaken which story he was supposed to tell. As I began to panic that he was going to mislead the students because he was confused, I noticed that the narrative began to come around, but in what clever ways! He had woven two stories into ONE. His imagination was galloping ahead, responding to the attentiveness of the students, who were silent throughout this dramatic performance.

I mention this incident because I realised then what is forfeited when oral knowledge gets codified. In making it two-dimensional, something flat on a page, it becomes less creative, lacklustre compared to what it used to be. But it gains in points in that it becomes more accessible to everyone, and at their own time, disposition and privacy. What is lost in creativity from the ephemeral oral telling is gained as longevity through the permanence of the concretised script. As Abercrombie (1998:127) puts it so well; "...written and published, my account freezes out of time the enacted social memory of specific peoples..." Written textual transcriptions of spoken language have the potential to freeze speech, no matter how well carried out. As Cruikshank (1984:95) puts it; "it is like a molecule by molecule replacement of an organic plant by stone. A petrified log may look like wood, but it is actually stone".

5.4.2 Whom is it written down for?

This task of encrypting oral traditions has several implications. Bieseke (1993) is of the opinion that the very longevity of hunting/gathering societies attests to the usefulness of oral traditions. Since such societies have been successful for so long a time in human history, it seems reasonable that their apparently recondite systems of thought, with facts embedded in oral public forums, may embody an essential practicality and obvious suitability. If this is the case, why write it down? Who are we writing it down for? Ultimately the question being asked is: Is writing important to indigenous people? Bishop (2003) says that for indigenous communities in which the oral languages were frequently still heard at home, the use of literature in association with schooling has resulted in the alienation of the child from the child's history, geography, and other aspects of culture. However, this is not the case for the Movima indigenous people whose language survives only in a few elders. The elders themselves felt the need to document their culture in a last attempt to salvage for posterity what still remained of a culture on the brink of extinction. They were proud to have participated in concretising their culture to the written medium. Transmission of this information through the curriculum, they felt, would increase the legitimacy of the knowledge which they hoped would boost the young towards a revitalisation of their culture. In spite of this, Abercrombie (1998:17) notes that: "the arrival of writing did not automatically displace all other forms of collective memory". Even as we focus our efforts on written language, we are reminded of the critical role of orality as the fabric of indigenous communities.

5.4.3 How is it represented? Whose voice is it in?

In the transformation from oral to written, knowledge is exposed to the possibility of becoming something other. All those who are engaged in the task must be aware of the implications of the differences between these modes of communication. Smith (1999:35) claims that "books are dangerous" to indigenous readers because historically, written material have not served the purposes of the indigenous communities by "not reinforcing our values, actions, customs, culture and identity...telling us only about others" and through this "they are saying that we do not exist...writing things about us which are untrue" and "writing negative and insensitive things which tell us that we are not good". All these concerns are related to issues of writing and representation, of which we had to be careful.

5.5 Concluding remark:

While immersed in the communities for the field work, the consensus emerged that traditional cultural knowledge was something of the past and beyond the requirements of contemporary life. The elders' eagerness and willingness to share this information, historically selectively transmitted, shows that there is an urgency to preserve this cultural wealth of knowledge. Schools, as they serve the majority of the young members of a community, are in a position to help create the 'territorial niches' that indigenous language and culture need to survive and flourish. In Paraguay for example, Hornberger (2006:282) speaks of the language education policy which seeks to "implant instruction through the medium of Guaraní alongside Spanish in all grades and in all schools of the nation." Whether or not the culturally-relevant material can supplement a revival in indigenous language (as mandatory national legislation) and culture remains to be investigated. More immediately though, the question remains about the pertinence of this curriculum in the Movima communities. Would this curriculum material be more culturally foreign to the students than the material currently used? In the next chapter, we investigate students' reactions as the lessons are implemented in semi-urban and rural classrooms.

Chapter 6 – PILOTING LESSONS

This chapter contains the data obtained from two activities conducted at selected schools: reconnaissance, during which the current culture of teaching and learning was investigated and implementation, during which the culturally-relevant curricular material was enacted as lessons. This would constitute a pilot run of the material with the aim of informing the much larger EIBAMAZ project. The reason behind choosing the two locales, the rural community school in Mapajo and the Lourdes school in the semi-urban town of Santa Ana, was to see how this material would be received differently by these two populations. With cultural discontinuity as one of the factors contributing to indigenous students' academic underachievement, coupled with the unfamiliar environment, processes and expectations of schooling, I predicted that the rural students would fare better with the material as they would be more familiar with its content. Should there be a significant difference in the two populations, what would this mean in terms of the way the material has to be adjusted and/or the teachers prepared so that the project attains equally successful results?

6.1 Reconnaissance

I separate reconnaissance out in my writing as a distinct action yet I must clarify that actually there was an overlap or a continuum. From the first stage of the research, when I was immersed in the villages, speaking to the elders and just 'hanging out', I was carrying out reconnaissance. The aim was to be able to compose a comprehensive picture of the Movima people and the state of their culture as to be able to guide the project along its objectives. This reconnaissance that I write of now is derived from observation every day for one week and is specific to the school environment: the classroom, the teachers, the students, the instructional materials and methods. There were two reasons for my reconnaissance:

1. I wanted to know the classroom terrain before proceeding; and
2. I wanted my presence to be minimally disruptive when the lessons were implemented.

My collaborators who helped create the materials did not feel this reconnaissance was necessary for they were from this cultural milieu and knew what to expect. Given their time constraints with their full-time work and family obligations, I did not insist.

6.1.1 The schools

6.1.1.1 *Lourdes:*

Lourdes is considered a very good school in Santa Ana, attached to the prominent Catholic church. It goes from Kindergarten to Grade eight, the last year of elementary school. The student population is approximately four hundred. Due to its affiliation with a religious institution in Germany, it enjoys good facilities, is well-supplied and amply-staffed. The school has electricity 24 hours a day, flushing toilets and computers. The Grade 3 classroom had individual desks for the students with the teacher's desk at the front. The walls were barren and had two grated windows to the street and one large window open to the playground.

6.1.1.2 *Mapajo:*

It is a multi-grade (Grades one to six) community school hosting twenty indigenous children from the thirteen related families in the village. The classroom is the school, an open structure exposed to all the elements of nature. It is situated on slightly elevated ground just beside the river. The school has planks of wood for walls, a thatched straw roof and compacted dirt/sand for floor. It has communal tables shared by two to three students. It has a small blackboard in front of the classroom, and a desk for the teacher.

6.1.2 The teachers, pedagogical style, instructional material

6.1.2.1 *Lourdes:*

Señorita Aida is a thirty-two year old Mestizo woman who has been teaching for eight years after graduating from a teacher training institute (one year of post-secondary training). Cleanly attired in uniform and meticulously coiffed with hairpins, she presented herself well. In spite of this, I was quickly disappointed by her lack of fervour in teaching, and had jotted down conclusively in my field notebook by the end of the week, "*she does NOT teach*". Though the judgment may seem harsh, the description of what I witnessed might explain what prompted it. At the beginning of each class, two students would be sent to pick up textbooks from the communal storage place where they were kept. This took approximately fifteen minutes out of the total class time of sixty minutes. During this time, the class was in absolute chaos. The teacher seemed oblivious to, and unbothered by, the students chasing each other, eating candies and throwing things around. She

sat at her desk looking bored, shuffling papers. There was never an attempt to bring the class to order in preparation for the learning about to begin, or any preliminary questioning to find out what they knew of the topic that they were to cover in class that day. When the books arrived, they were distributed. She directed the students to open to a certain page, read it individually and answer the corresponding questions. Sometimes she would circulate through the class, but most of the time she just sat. The first time I saw her 'teach', I thought I had caught her on a 'bad' day, which as a teacher myself, I could understand. But throughout the week's observations, I was able to confirm my initial suspicion - this was 'teaching', as she knew it.

I had no opportunity to invite Señorita Aida to a formal interview for she always left immediately after school and came only minutes before the start of class. The only chances for conversation were informal ones, in front of the students when they were working from the text/workbooks. Our conversations were of limited content and engagement because they were always in a public forum. I also found that, though not antagonistic, she was not forthcoming. The reason I suspected for her unfriendliness was that she had been told by the director of the school to admit me into the classroom. As she had no choice in the matter, perhaps she resented it and manifested this through lack of cooperation.

6.1.2.2 Mapajo:

Señor Ruiz is a twenty-eight year old indigenous man of the Tsimane group. He was posted to the community only six months prior to my fieldwork. Being the only outsider in a village so small, he found it difficult living there. In fact, his predecessor had deserted the posting. This happens often with graduates from teacher training colleges who are dissatisfied about being assigned to a hardship posting (isolated, rural). He confessed to experiencing frustration with handling a multi-grade class:

I can't be with any group of students long enough to teach them anything. If I sit down with one group, the other one begins to talk loudly. I don't really know how to do this. I don't have enough resources so I can't find activity for all of them to do.

In order to control the noise and disruptiveness of unattended students, he has simply been giving them material from the textbook to memorise, whatever the content. During the week that I

attended, this was indeed the practice that I saw. He designated something to learn by rote to students of each 'grade', whether it was the multiplication table, a lesson or a poem. While they did that, he called students up one by one to work with them on something other than the assigned task. I observed him teaching mathematics to the students. It consisted of numbers, 1 to 20 for the Grade one, and progressively higher (20 to 100, etc) as we travelled up the grades. The most advanced work that I saw him do was count from 100 to 500 in intervals of 10 for the grade six students. He wrote down the numbers at the top of the page, asked the students to copy them down the column and repeat the number by saying it as they wrote. The students would then return to their desk to do that and abandon the previous task of memorisation. When I asked him about this technique, he answered:

It is very difficult to teach so many kids of different levels. You don't have any help, equipment, nothing. I feel like I have to make things up. So I try to teach them what I think they absolutely need, such as basic maths and reading. This is more than a lot of their parents have, who can't read or write. Most of these children when they graduate from grade six will not go further in school. They can't afford to go to the secondary school in Santa Ana. As long as they can read and do some basic maths, they will not be tricked by other people when doing business with them. That is what's important.

I also asked him about his usage of the books from the Educational Reform of 1994, for I only saw these emerge once during the entire week that I was there. He replied that these books did not serve their purpose very well in Mapajo:

I don't use the books because they are too advanced for these students: There are so many things in these books that these children will never be able to understand. I don't know how to begin to explain those things to them if they are totally unrelated to their lives. For a lot of the pictures, the students wouldn't even know what they are looking at.

When I asked him what he felt about the education he was offering, he said:

It is good enough. So many things need to be improved in their lives before they can think of education. I mean, I can't even give them any homework because parents don't want too many pages from their notebooks to be used up. A notebook is considered expensive for them to afford. I just do my best under the circumstances.

Señor Ruiz, in contrast to Señorita Aida, was much more given to conversation. The reason I suspected for this is that he felt lonely as the sole outsider of the village and welcomed me as someone in a similar situation. In addition to lending him a sympathetic ear, I could also share in his impressions of the village. Summarising Señor Ruiz's experiences in Mapajo, it could be said that his intentions to provide the students with good formal education were challenged by the conditions of the situation.

6.1.3 The students

6.1.3.1 *Lourdes:*

The Grade Three class I visited consisted of twenty-five students, the majority of whom self-identified as Movima (three students did not know what I meant by Movima). All of the students were born in Santa Ana. They told me too that their families had always lived in Santa Ana. These children had their hair brushed and parted, were cleanly clad in white uniforms, had knapsacks loaded up with notebooks, writing utensils and lots of snacks. During the week that I was there, attendance was relatively consistent at twenty two students.

6.1.3.2 *Mapajo:*

The poverty of the village children was evident; they were disheveled, dirty, had no uniform and many were barefoot. Some had notebooks and others did not. I observed very irregular attendance and Señor Ruiz attributed this to students being pulled out of school for a variety of reasons: manual labour, accompanying the parents on errands

(trading of foodstuffs), or working on their family's farming plot. For these reasons, though a full class should number twenty students, invariably there were never more than fifteen.

6.1.4 Reflection on the reconnaissance

Aikman (1998:413), speaking in the context of schooling for the indigenous Haramkbut of Peru; "school educators teach and preach in a way which strengthens existing unequal economic, political and social relations". I thought this quote to be applicable to my observations of Señorita Aida. Whatever the reason for her lack of enthusiasm in teaching may be, her comportment in the classroom does not do very much for changing the existing inequalities inherent in Bolivian

society. If an intercultural program such as EIBAMAZ were to succeed, teachers (if Señorita Aida was indicative of a general pedagogical style) would definitely have to undergo a period of professional development for sensitisation to the topic of indigenous culture. In many schools in Bolivia, the teachers are not indigenous. Because of this, when asked to teach a culturally-relevant curriculum, they may be uninterested or feel a degree of discomfort for their lack of knowledge. This might be reflected in the way they impart the material which consequently fails to engage the students. Fortunately for EIBAMAZ, a phase designed strictly for teacher training is planned for.

I also noted that the two groups of students communicated in different ways. This I thought could affect how the lessons should be implemented. The Mapajo children were minimally verbal and shy. They had an air of humility which was shown in the respectful way they responded when addressed by their teacher. This, according to Señor Ruiz, was *“the way the poor behave”*. However, there was a change when the focus was off them, whenever Señor Ruiz and I were engaged in conversation. Thinking they were unobserved, they became boisterous, laughing and chatting. The Lourdes students on the other hand, did not exhibit this change of behaviour in the classroom. They communicated with the teacher in the same way that they did with each other, lacking any barriers that might have been mandated by her being a figure of authority.

Recording through notes, photos and short videos, the week-long observations constructed in my mind the places where this culturally relevant material would be entering. I suspected that the children of Mapajo would have more connection with the culturally-relevant material than the Santa Ana students. This would be for obvious reasons. The children in the village, even if no longer actively participating in the traditional chores, at least continue to witness the traditional activities in their community. Students in Santa Ana had never known the natural environment or the traditions of the Movima people. This experience might provide just the educational opportunity for rapprochement with their culture.

6.2 Implementation

6.2.1 Phase I – researcher led lessons

At both schools, the teachers allowed us to conduct the experiment while they observed. The implementation of the lessons went smoothly at both schools and the students responded enthusiastically to the change from their daily work. Their behaviour in the classroom was no

better or worse than what I had seen during the past week, which told me that it had been a good idea to come and observe beforehand.

The following was the schedule followed:

Day 1

- introduction of the team and our purpose
- students reading out loud the lesson on turtles
- open discussion
- storytelling by Don Juan
- slide show of the turtle egg gathering process
- individual activity (connecting the numbers, short writing piece)

Day 2

- maths worksheet involving turtle facts
- contest
- place-based photograph activity
- making figurines of turtles using play clay

Though the lessons were enthusiastically received at both schools, it was remarkable how differently the two groups of students worked. In Mapajo, the students talked constantly while they worked. When I circulated about the room, I found them talking about the activity. They were supporting each other to do the work. Older students even left their seats to help other students who were experiencing difficulties getting started. In contrast, at Lourdes, the students individually got down to the task at hand. I even witnessed a couple of students looking over their neighbours' desks only to find these classmates covering up their work with their forearms. This I found interesting but seemed to confirm what I had read in terms of the learning differences between urban and rural students. Studies by Wauters et al (1989) and Ryan (1992) corroborate the fact that rural indigenous students are positively oriented to collaborative learning and small group activities. They also suggest that these students overwhelmingly rate kinaesthetic learning highest as a learning modality preference, followed by strong preferences for visual and tactile learning. Once a teacher knows the profile of learning style characteristics of students in his/her classroom, teaching strategies can be utilised to take advantage of learners' preferences.

By the second day, the rural Mapajo students appeared more at ease around us and a few students actually answered some questions. At Lourdes, the students shouted the answers out

loud or waved their hands frantically. The different ways in which they participated in the activities reminded me that it is very important to give participation structures which are congruent with the children's cultural patterns. Cox (1988:29) is of the opinion that "students who are taught in the modes in which they are most comfortable are likely to feel more confident and competent". Tapping into these cultural modes of learning is the key to the children's participation. It would be easy to deduce wrongly about a student simply because we are not open to the possibility of other forms of communication.

When the students were engaged in the tasks in Mapajo, Señor Ruiz remarked how the students really seemed to like the material:

Look at these kids! They love this! For them to read about something so normal to them from their everyday lives in school books is incredible. I don't think they ever thought these things are important enough to be in school. Now, they might think differently.

While the activities were going on, Don Juan emphatically noted that:

This will make them proud of who they are and will raise their curiosity for their own people and culture. It will give them confidence to go on in this world. It is about time.

At both locations, they particularly liked the dramatisation of the turtle story by Don Juan. At Lourdes, Don Juan received vociferous encouragement of "otro otro" (encore encore) when he finished. In Mapajo when he arrived, the students looked surprised. I interpreted this as one of those awkward moments when a person one knows from one context is seen in a totally different one (as in seeing one's teacher in a supermarket). I had two objectives when I requested Don Juan's participation: one, as Abercrombie (1998:45) said of storytelling among the Andean people,

...stories are told by old people to their grandchildren because they are interesting. What motivates such story-telling is simply that they are interesting: the teller wants to tell them, and the listeners want to listen.

The second reason was that I wanted to see whether something like this could bridge the intergenerational gap viewed by the elders as problematic. This distance between the generations is seen in the state of segregation that currently exists amongst members of the family and family

with community. The distance also contributes to a breach of continuity required for preserving and perpetuating cultural traditions.

The hypothesis that students in rural Mapajo would be able to relate better to the topic was reflected in the short composition activity. Their work showed depth. The following are some examples:

Last night I dreamt of a turtle swimming in the river beside our house. She knew that it was time for the babies in her stomach to come out. She swam out of the river, walked on the beach, found a good place, dug a deep hole and laid thirty five eggs. She then left the little turtles, went back into the river and suddenly she suffered but kept on swimming and also crying. She prayed that her baby turtles would grow up fine. It will be hard for the baby turtles to survive because people dig the eggs up for food. If they are not eaten then and they make it to the river, they might be eaten by the caimans.

And

Last night I dreamt of a turtle that was poking her head out of the river to look all around her. She wanted to make sure there were no boats, large birds or people around. She looked for where there was lots of sand because that is the beach. When it was dark and quiet, she came out of the water, dug deep in the sand, laid her eggs, covered up the hole and again went into the river. Though she wanted to stay to take care of her babies, she couldn't. She swam away and did not look back.

Regardless of the fact that the simple compositions were full of blatant orthographical and grammatical mistakes, the content was insightful. This could not be found in the work of the students from the town school, which in the examples below, show a lack of emotional connection and shallowness:

Last night I dreamt of a turtle who had babies and then she went back into the water because it was night time and she was tired. She swam far away from the beach where she had left her eggs. She didn't care for her babies and sometimes that happens with people too. But the turtles will live because God will take care of them.

or

Last night I dreamt of a turtle with a big belly, so big that she wanted to go lie down on the beach. She laid down and gave birth to many eggs. She then went back to the river and swam away. No one saw where the eggs were but the next day some people found the eggs and ate them all.

Though most of the students at the town school Lourdes self-identified as Movima, their culture and customs were as unknown to them as to a non-Movima person, such as myself. As they had not been brought up in the traditional milieu, the material was totally foreign for them.

The place-based investigative activity was based on the idea that students would best be able to participate in activities if the context was familiar. For this, I chose sixteen photographs, half of which were of local content and the other half not. The Mapajo students laughed when they recognised some of the pictures as being their village and chatted animatedly. It occurred to me that perhaps they had never seen their surroundings photographed, or maybe it was the novelty of seeing the photographs themselves. The students were asked to choose any one of the pictures and write about it. The following is a summary:

Picture number	Picture of:	Lourdes (town)	Mapajo (village)
1.	Ferris wheel	0	0
2	Girl jumping on a trampoline	0	0
3.	Local - man sorting beans	0	2
4.	Couple getting married	0	0
5.	Local – school with desks	0	1
6.	Large water fountain	0	0
7.	Local – canoes and fishermen	0	2
8.	Buckingham Palace	0	0
9.	Local – alligator in river	6	3
10.	Local – sugar cane machine	0	2
11.	Children in Halloween costumes	1	0
12.	Local – river and beach	0	2
13.	Little boy pushing toy walker	0	0
14.	Local – monkeys on a tree	9	2

15.	Canada geese	0	0
16.	Local – capybara	6	1

Table 3 Summary of photographic activity

From both sites, all of the students except one wrote about local scenes. The rural students wrote about different local photographs while the urban students focused on the monkeys, capybara and alligator. My interpretation of this is that though there were other pictures of the local area, the town students were not familiar with these (the machine used to extract sugar cane juice, the rural school) and therefore could not write about them. I discussed this with Señor Ruiz and Señorita Aida. Señor Ruiz offered this:

It makes sense that the kids in Mapajo would not write only of monkeys and animals. They are familiar with all of the local pictures and therefore can say much more. It engages them, they have experience with it and can contribute what they know. It would be easy to add new knowledge to this foundation that they have. If all their books were like this, I am quite sure that they would be more interested in learning and learn better.

Señorita Aida said the following:

I am not surprised that my students wrote only of monkeys, alligators and capybaras. Most children are interested in animals. Of all the pictures, it was what they felt they could actually write something about. Why? Perhaps because it is already in their sphere of knowledge. The other pictures don't mean much to them. They have no connection with it.

The one student who chose to write about the children in the Halloween costumes related it to his town's fiesta, historically associated with the patron saint of the locale. At this celebration, the boys disguise themselves as 'macheteros', wielding machetes and simulating motions of cutting through the bush as labourers do. This is what he wrote:

There are many children in the picture. They are all dressed up. One boy is dressed up as Spiderman. I wish I had that outfit. I only have the one of machetero which I put on for the party. I wish I had something else to wear but it is fun being a machetero too. The party is fun. There are lots of people and no school.

In Mapajo, for three young students who could not write yet, I varied the activity to the oral format. I pointed to the picture of Buckingham Palace and asked them to tell me something about

it. I asked them, *“Do you know what it is?”* They just sat there silently and looked at the picture. Finally, a boy ventured to say, much to the other two’s laughter, *“A big house?”* Wanting to encourage his bravery, I said: *“Yes! It is a big house where the King and Queen live. Can you tell me something about it? You can make it up if you want”*. I said this, thinking that now with the clarification of the picture, they might feel free to invent. Oddly enough though, they recoiled further. The mentioning of the King and Queen seemed to intimidate them and make them uncomfortable. I looked to the boy who had previously participated and he just looked down, averting eye contact with me. Since I had not been very successful with that picture, though unable to pinpoint the exact reason, I thought that I would choose another one. I chose then the photograph of the girl jumping on the trampoline. Again, the students did not volunteer any answer and just stared blankly at the picture. Faced with an extremely awkward moment, I wondered if it was the verbal exchange and direct interaction they were shying away from, so I picked a picture of a local scene. Immediately, they began muttering under their breaths but audibly enough for me to hear *“Don Genares is shelling beans”*. Encouraged by this, I pointed at the picture of the cane juice extractor ‘trapiche’. Instantly, it was as if I had pricked a bubble and the air was escaping all at once. Answers were shouted out: *“it’s fun to crank the trapiche”*, *“We have contests to see who can squeeze the most juice out quickest”*, *“if you boil the juice, then it becomes honey”*.

Overall, this activity generated a lot of excitement and commotion. The photographs really stirred the students into participation. I also thought that as teachers we should capitalise on this as a method to promote imagination and oral expression. As well, the results of this exercise reinforce the belief that knowledge building is done through scaffolding of pre-existing information, in other words, social constructivism. From this standpoint, an activity based on the locale is a good place to begin.

6.2.2 Phase II – teacher led lessons

Both teachers managed to implement the material, cane juice extraction and uses, adequately enough. The classes went as clockwork, proceeding in the way that I had observed during the weeks passed. Neither of them did the lesson in any fanciful way. The students read the material and were then asked to work on the comprehension and mathematical questions. Don Juan confirmed my observation that the students were not as enthusiastic as they had been for the

lesson of the previous day. Having said this, they were willing to participate in discussions when these were initiated by the teachers.

As discussed in the methodology section, the reason to have the teachers implement the material was to get their feedback. Señor Ruiz was of the following opinion:

I think the lesson worked well enough though I don't think the kids found it as interesting as the turtle. I think it is so important when we think of the skills that need to be learned, we think too of the way the skills are 'wrapped in', meaning the content.

When I asked Señorita Aida how she felt the lesson went, she said:

I think it went well but I am not comfortable teaching this material. I can teach it like I teach so much stuff but I am not interested in it. When the students ask me something, I can't really tell them anything. I have no experience in it at all. I never even heard of a trapiche. I did not find the material too interesting because I don't know anything about it.

She also made this comment about the format of the lesson:

It is good that the lesson is structured in the same way as the books we are using now. It is easy for the students and comfortable for the teacher. I think this is a big factor, how comfortable the teacher is with the material. It helps to take away from the foreign-ness of the material.

A specific suggestion that Señor Ruiz made was to have lessons of a common theme under one chapter. For the trapiche, he suggested 'traditional production of foodstuffs';

Other Movima practices and machines should also be included together with the trapiche. Each of these could be a lesson in the chapter. There could be many chapters, one for natural resources, for example. Doing it this way would paint a more complete picture of the way things used to be. It would bring all aspects together.

They also mentioned that the lessons could be bilingual but given the limited ability of both teachers and students at reading text, writing and communicating orally in the Movima language, it would be pointless to do so. A compromise would be to have key words in parentheses to increase the visibility of the language and begin promoting its entrance into the spheres of school learning material. Other than these helpful suggestions, there was no negative criticism. I wondered if this was in deference to me being a 'doctora', someone whom they felt was more

educated than they. This fact alone meant that I was deserving of their respect and though ideas were proposed, as part of the participatory process, they held back from making unfavourable comments and ceded to their presumption of me being the ultimate authority on curriculum development.

After the implementation, the teachers targeted some needs which they saw as important to fulfil if a culturally-based curriculum were to succeed. As a first, they advocated cultural congruence between teacher and student. This sentiment emerged from both teachers, though phrased differently. They viewed it a true handicap not being able to contribute additionally to the material because they were unfamiliar with it⁹. Señorita Aida said:

I think if we are going to be teaching cultural material like this, it would be very helpful if we got some training in the culture of the students before we have to present it in class. This could be accomplished by a weekend workshop or something like that. It makes me very uncomfortable to go in front of a group of students of another culture altogether and give them lessons on their culture. Yes, I think some attention to professional development is needed.

Señor Ruiz of Mapajo village added:

If I was talking about my own people, then I can add more because I could share stories of my own family and other history about our culture. It would be more intimate. I could impart some real enthusiasm because I have experienced those activities myself. Teachers should be able to spark students' imagination and if we

⁹ I had heard this concern before, from elders and others involved with educational work at the grassroots level. However, this meets with dissent from the government as there exists a clause, ideally espoused in the National Constitution, that "all Bolivians are equal and regardless of their indigenous affiliations, should work in all parts of Bolivia". However, this seems to apply only to those who do not have the power to choose. In my visits to two good schools in the big urban centres of La Paz and Santa Cruz, I did not see teachers who were visibly indigenous. On the other hand, all the teachers I met in the small towns and communities were often strictly indigenous or mestizos. This observation belies the fact that assignment to one's work location is random and underscores the possibility of selection, possibly as much from the authorities who run that particular school or from teachers who come from families who have 'connections'. In all case, I was told by elders that often teachers who have been assigned to their communities leave their postings, considering it too much of a hardship appointment. In such circumstances then, the communities are left to fend for themselves in finding an 'educated' person from the village who could serve as teacher to the children. These replacements are known as 'interinos' or internals. In fact, this is the recommendation made by experts in the field, that people within the community be trained to become teachers in their own schools (Dr. Prada, University of San Simon, October 2007). They argue that it is not the same at all to select individuals, teach them the cultural information as structured by an external task force, and place these trained individuals back in schools, which are external in operational style, to function as teachers for that community. In spite of this proposition and advocacy for 'interinos', the situation remains unchanged. Because 'interinos' are not officially recognised by the government as teachers, they are unpaid. Given the demands on time of a person whose life depends on subsistence, it is not unusual that this elected person ends up abandoning the job. This means that often in rural places, the school is un-pupiled because there is no teacher.

ourselves don't have any knowledge of it, then how can we make them interested in it?

Both felt they could use more professional training. Specifically, Señor Ruiz emphasised better understanding of the learning processes of children and classroom management skills as a start. Both concerns I viewed as being a grievance against an overall area desperately needing improvement and professional development. After having observed their teaching, I thought I would make the recommendation that teachers receive training along the lines of skilful preparation and presentation of curricular content, to supplement their current classroom techniques.

6.3 Concluding remark:

The implementation of the culturally-relevant lessons provided insights at various levels which, if heeded, could drastically change educational experience and outcomes for indigenous students. The data indicated that possessing familiarity (previous knowledge) of something allows one to contribute in comment and opinion as well as providing the skeleton on which to scaffold new information. This is applicable not only to students as seen through their participation but to teachers as well when they discovered areas requiring support in their teaching. For these piloted lessons, it was seen that rural students were more acquainted with Movima cultural elements than urban students. As well, different participation and learning styles were noted. Once a teacher knows the profile of learning characteristics of students in his/her classroom, teaching strategies can be utilised to take advantage of learners' preferences. Students who are taught in the modes in which they are most comfortable are likely to feel more confident and competent. Simply knowing students' learning style preferences will not identify a single teaching strategy best for all students, but it does suggest a range of alternatives which could lead to more success. In the next chapter, we get feedback from the participants and stakeholders on the pilot project. Reflection by the researcher on the methodology employed will also be offered.

Chapter 7 – FEEDBACK

The last phase of the research consisted of getting feedback from all the participants of the pilot. The feedback process is important for both the participants and the researcher. Particularly for a participatory action research project, the feedback gives the participants a final opportunity to input. For the researcher, the information obtained permits a review of the research process and may produce useful findings which could have implications for future investigations. Some information may also provide new directions for research. Specific questions were not formulated as I felt that a goal-free assessment would reduce bias and give participants the opportunity to contribute in any way they like. As different stakeholders would have different concerns, a myriad of opinions would be heard. Guiding the dialogue along emergent strands of thought and comments through loosely structured questions would yield unanticipated outcomes. These could be important in terms of understanding project impacts. What additional insights might surface, solicited or independently, through the feedback?

The feedback also reflects my position that the degree of success any project enjoys in the long run depends on its significance to the participants. The extent to which this pilot had an impact on the participants will determine their degree of commitment to see it through in the future. This is supported by a statement from UNESCO (2003) that collaboration within the entire community is more likely to reverse the trend of language and culture death. The commitment from stakeholders will determine the degree (if any) of cultural revival, particularly as Krauss (1992) found public schools to be unable to revive dying languages and Fishman (1991) argues that the primary responsibility for indigenous-language sustenance should lie in the hands of parents and grandparents at home. As Ngai (2007:723) says:

Although the responsibilities for the survival of indigenous languages cannot be shouldered by the schools alone, schools can build on the knowledge of the home and bring informal, family and community-based language experiences to the process of formal learning.

Though this was the last stage of the pilot, periodic informal assessments had been done throughout the research process. These were done in order to review ideas and update impressions to plan for the action(s) that would take place. All this was recorded in my field

journal, which together with the recordings, constitute the body of data I had recourse to in order to generate these final reflections.

7.1 Stakeholders' feedback

7.1.1 The community and the elders

The elders and the community as a whole supported the project. Initially, there was a lack of enthusiasm to having “more research” done, as so many initiatives had gone by and the community had rarely benefited directly from them. An elder said to me:

They often come to our village to do research but it hasn't done us any good. It doesn't matter who it is, UNICEF, USAID, you name it, they have been here. Some of us participate, they give us a little bit of money, but a lot of people don't even care anymore. We would like to see something come out of all this investigating. I mean, we don't know what they write about us, where they write it. They take pictures too. Where are all these things?

The elder's opinion is reinforced by Castellano (2004:98) finding that:

...research acquired a bad name among Aboriginal Peoples because the purposes and meanings associated with its practice by academics were usually alien to the people themselves and the outcomes were, as often as not, misguided and harmful.

Given the cynicism, I offered an extensive explanation of the reason for the research. As a compromise, I said that a copy of the thesis would be sent to the District Education Office once it was published. Another elder laughed and said:

You will write it in English but no one here can speak English. Not even people at the District Office. It's better than nothing though. At least it's something we can have about us. Or maybe you could have it translated...

The elders told me that everyone who lives in the village is sharing nature's space and therefore needs to know how animals live, plants grow, and how best to preserve them for the future. Since this knowledge was no longer transmitted verbally through the generations, they thought it a good idea that one way or another, through a culturally-relevant curriculum for example, this information gets learned. Because passing on knowledge has always been the responsibility of

select elders, through this project they felt that they were still doing that, in the “modern way, the way it has to be now”. As one elder so eloquently put it:

The children need the orientation from older people. They will look but may not know what they are looking at. It is up to the adults to explain to them the meaning of what they are looking at. If the way to show them this is by having it in a book, then it is what we have to do.

Another elder said this:

The place to learn our traditional knowledge has changed, whether we like it or not. Before, young people spent time with the elders learning out on the water, in the forest. That knowledge was very important, it helped us to survive. There was a school in the village where I grew up, but I never went to it. My friends told me that in school you learned to read, write, memorise and obey the teacher. I don't know too much about that. I can see that in order to keep our culture going, we have to bring the information to where the young people are. If they are in school, then that is where this has got to be.

My assistants had told me that this pilot very likely would bring good feelings to the elders as it gave valorisation to their knowledge. Given the progressive decline of their traditional society, the legacy they will leave behind will forever be engraved in the lessons and textbooks produced. My desire to hear and record it, this validated their knowledge and sense of self.

In their traditional way of life, the elders were the instructors. Now, the instructors have changed. For this reason, they voiced the opinion that “the success of the programme depends on the teachers, as they will be the ones to give answers and solutions to the students”. Another elder said deprecatingly:

Those who don't know anything are now the ones who know. Those who know something, well, we are nothing. It is funny to think that we are teaching both the students and the teachers. The teachers have never recognised what we know. They are the educated ones and we are just peasants. Now, the tables are turned.

There was unanimous consensus that the school is an institution which functions independently of Mapajo space and time as they know it. Within the ‘walls’ of the school building, the school timetable and calendar force Mapajo time into the rigid strictures of institutionalised learning. One elder said:

I went to school, but it didn't make much sense. Many of us never went. The teacher was always telling us to do this and that. It didn't feel like we were doing anything that was actually helping us. I suppose I was learning something though. I dropped out of school very early on because there were lots of other more important things to do. I had to go work because we didn't have enough money.

Another elder added this:

When we live with nature, we don't wear a watch. School is different. You always have to watch the time. Now, it's time to do this. Now, it's time to do that. We are not used to living that way. We learn from the forest. Pachamama (mother nature)'s clock is the only one we watch. It seems strange to me that what we know can be learned in school. The way school works is so different than how nature works. School doesn't seem the right place for this kind of information.

I made a suggestion that with these culturally-relevant lessons, there could be a new role for them to assume in school as resource personnel. Since both Mapajo and El Peru are small villages, coordinating inclusion of elders into the programmes of the school should be possible. Laponce (1987:3) stresses the importance of transforming schools into 'territorial niches' for the survival and flourishing of indigenous languages. Spolsky (2002) also speaks of school as possessing the local infrastructure needed to mobilise community-wide indigenous language-maintenance initiatives. Through my comment, I meant to suggest that they could influence changes and convert the space of the school, not simply wait or accept external impositions. Acknowledging this, one elder said:

She is right. We do need our culture and language to come back. If the way to do it is by putting it down in words and pictures, at least they will know where they come from, or who the Movima used to be. If we need to go into the school and show the teachers, the students, we will do it. It would be a big change for us to go into the school. It doesn't feel like the right place for us. We have never been invited, but maybe we don't need to be invited. It is our children they are teaching. It would be nice if they welcomed us though.

For the most part, the elders were supportive of the project, though initially they had qualms about how the information gathered would be utilised. They also questioned how their knowledge could fit into the restricted structure of schools as they remembered. The sense of responsibility they felt as promulgators of information and the recognition that this was no longer happening through the traditional modes of transmission worried them. It is this preoccupation that

propelled them to participate in the pilot. They also openly expressed a desire to be incorporated into the formal learning environment as resource for either teachers or students.

7.1.2 Indigenous parents

For the parents in the communities and the town, there was no contradiction between wanting both a Movima cultural identity and an enriching school experience for their children. They saw the culturally-based curriculum as a good way of achieving this. They were impressed that this could be done, that their culture could be taught in school. For many of them, this simply had not been their experience of formal schooling. Their culture had never been talked about, or at least in any way positive. Most of the parents interviewed, adults in their thirties and forties, digressed to anecdotes of language when we were discussing the place-based curriculum. They grew up in a time when their language was forbidden to be spoken at school. As the punishment, if caught, was rather draconian, it became habitual to speak Spanish whenever they were out of the house even if they spoke the indigenous tongue at home. There was also the factor of ridicule by others, and speaking the native tongue was considered ‘backward’. Amongst the ten parents I interviewed, it was not uncommon to hear stories like the following:

My mom and dad are both Movima but they never spoke it themselves. My grandparents did speak it but it was already finishing with them. They never spoke it to my parents. I think they just thought that Movima was not as important as Spanish. Also, they thought that if you spoke Movima, you wouldn't be able to speak Spanish as well. I only know Spanish so I only speak Spanish to the kids.

or

I am Movima and my mother is Movima and a speaker, but bad luck has it that my parents were not used to speaking the language amongst themselves because my father, being partly Spanish, could not speak it. So my mother was ashamed to speak to us in her language because of him. She never taught it to us because she wouldn't speak it in front of him. She couldn't share that way with my father. So when the couple is of the same origin, it is when the kids will receive some language. When there are different surnames, then it will be lost.

Their association of culture with language was a very natural one. Language cannot be dissociated from culture as these components go hand in hand. The belief that language and culture are inextricably linked is almost an unarguable fact, culture is in the language and expressed through the language. Gibbs (2000:4) contends that:

Take language away from the culture, and you take away its greetings, its curses, its praises, its laws, its literature, its songs, its riddles, its proverbs, its cures, its wisdom, its prayers. The culture could not be expressed and handed on in any other way. What would be left? When you are talking about the language, most of what you are talking about is the culture. That is, you are losing all those things that essentially are the way of life, the way of thought, the way of valuing, and the human reality that you are talking about.

Because of the parents' comments on language, I thought that designing a culturally-relevant curriculum in the indigenous language would make sense. However, given the contemporary cultural state of the Movima, this would be futile as no student would be able to read it. Some parents made a similar suggestion to that proposed by the teachers of highlighting certain words in the lessons in Movima. As an example, the word for turtle could be translated into Movima and incorporated in parentheses.

Their support for the project arose out of a fierce sentiment that they did not want to see the Movima culture go the way the language has gone. A noticeable sentiment expressed by many parents participating in the feedback was the nostalgia that usually accompanied their answers. Many recalled stories they had been told and traditional practices they used to perform as young children. I remember in particular a parent who initially had been reluctant to concede an interview. Eventually when we did speak, it was as if something bottled up inside her for many years had been unleashed. In a stream of consciousness, with excitement and hands fluttering, she recalled fondly and proudly her childhood:

I grew up working in the field, in the chaco, it is all work for the poor people. When you wake up early in the morning, the footprints of the turtles are still on the beach. Then if you are lucky, you can find these mounds of sand. When you dig in these little mounds, you find the turtle eggs. It is like finding a treasure. How happy we were when we ate the eggs! Those days were such happy days. We were never hungry. If we weren't eating the eggs, we were eating fish. My dad would make a big fire on the beach and we would cook the fish right there...

Her sentence was left in mid-air, trailing unfinished. Catching herself lost in this bubble of reminiscence, she added

This is the first time that my sons have heard me speak of these things. It was so long ago. Our lives have changed so much since those days. They don't know all that I know but then again, I just couldn't teach it to them. There was no place, no time, no point. My life totally changed when I got married. I moved out of the village and got a job. It is too bad though. The worst thing is that there is no one I can talk to about those days. It is nothing more than a memory, till now.

From these stories, I formed a picture in my head of the physical geographical separation from the community that had happened in these people's lifetimes. Due to this, they had not been able to maintain what they knew or passed on what they had been told. It is as if, as described by one parent, *"with the move to the town, we left ourselves behind"*. But to justify it, they understand that *"it had to be done, out of necessity"*. I took this to mean that they could not lead the same lifestyle in the town as they had in the village. It was a matter of adaptation to embrace what the new environment had to offer, to assimilate. But because this had been their particular experience, and they saw themselves partially responsible for their cultural degeneration, it was with open hearts that they welcomed a project that might bring back for their children, the redeemers as they saw it, their culture. It was this need to vindicate what is theirs that I saw as the chief reason for their support of the project. As one parent expressed so aptly:

What is ours is ours. I used to dance and even barefoot! I am not ashamed, it is our pride to be Movima and we have to die with this pride, it is our 'raza'¹⁰". Let's put it in the books. Let's all learn about it again. Let's speak our language again!

The way this parent talked about the culture of the Movima coincides with what Speiser (2000:240) says:

Sometimes they pass through an appreciation process, even through an exaggerated pride process, before learning to recognise the limits of one's own cultural horizon.

Other parents expressed concern that this curriculum would be *"replacing important things"* that their children could otherwise be learning in school, such as reading, writing, and mathematics. I tried to offer reassurance that the intent of this curriculum is not to displace any important subjects, but rather to convey culture through reading, writing and mathematics. In fact, I said with all the eagerness of a salesman, it is reading, writing and mathematics, but now the topics are aspects of the traditional Movima culture, *"the wrapping is different but the inside is the same"*. Another parent phrased this pragmatic concern more succinctly:

Sure the culture is important but not as important as making a good living. All we want is that our kids get the right education that will allow them to get a good job,

¹⁰ La raza is a political term which has captured the imagination of indigenous people. It represents indigenous solidarity and promotes pride in indigenous identity. For the Movima, identity may be determined by blood quantum or as some townspeople informed me, identity is more closely associated with the relations one has in society and the fidelity to observance of Movima traditions.

make good money and live better than we have. Is what you are going to do give them the right education? That is the most important thing.

7.1.3 Non-indigenous parents

Of the eight non-indigenous parents that I spoke to, they were evenly split in their opinions of a culturally-based curriculum for all students. One parent opposed to the project believed that:

They should get on with it and stop blaming the past. There is material that needs to be learned and that's that, no matter how you put it, facts are facts and the kid just has to learn it. They just don't want to learn. You will see, nothing will change even if we spend lots of money making this new curriculum. They are just not interested in education.

Another parent was of the opinion that:

This is not material for everyone to learn. The place for it is at home. If the parents and grandparents didn't find it important enough to teach it to the kids, why should we bring it to the school? School is for learning reading, writing, and math. School is for learning things that are going to be useful in getting a job. School is not the place for this cultural stuff. That is private. It has nothing to do with my life or my children's. If the indigenous people are losing their culture, then they should make more of an effort at home to speak their language and practice their culture. It's going backwards to have this in the schools. It is not a move in the right direction.

Regardless of the fact that I was appalled by these comments, usually uttered in angry or disdainful tone, I hid my reaction and probed further. I thought it would be important to find the root causes of their frustration. These parents had expressed such vehement objections to the culturally-relevant curriculum that I felt the emergence of a veritable opposition if they were to unite. A comment struck me with its particular frustration:

If they don't learn our stuff, how do they expect to get ahead? I am tired of being blamed for all this colonialism stuff. It has nothing to do with me. These are things that happened so long ago. They haven't wanted to break out of it. What do they want me to do?

The other half of the non-indigenous parents were of a drastically different mind, though equally emphatic. They believed that such a curriculum would be beneficial for everyone:

Imagine that my kids grow up and go to work with those cultures, those indigenous

people, they won't know those things. If my child is a professional and goes to work with those people, he has to know about them, so it is good that he learns something related to them in school. Otherwise, when he is working with them, he will be the ignorant one, the un-educated one.

Another parent stressed the political situation in Bolivia and the need for everyone to have awareness of these topics:

Especialy because things in our country are changing so quickly and unexpectedly, we have to change with the times. Indigenous people are a large part of Bolivia. Who would have thought that one day an indigenous person would be President?! It is a shame that we don't know much about them. It shouldn't be like this, us against them. But because we don't know anything about them, we can only form our opinions from what we see on the street and the people that work for us.

Another parent offered this supportive comment:

You know, what we receive from the television is temporary, it goes into the brain directly and then it goes out. On the other hand, if we give them this, the kids read about it, they get curious about indigenous people, and they will remember it. I never learned anything about them in school. When I was a little girl, my parents would tell me stuff about them. I never thought it was racist but I guess it is, kind of. A lot of it is old thinking though. In this modern day, there is no place for all that. If Bolivia is to become modern and move ahead, then we have to open our minds. If our minds are closed to the majority of the people in our own country, then how are we going to get ahead?!

It would appear that non-indigenous parents were divided in their support of a culturally-relevant curriculum to be universally taught in schools. Though some parents could see the benefits of it, others were latched onto a mentality of finding culpability with indigenous people. This made me think that in the context of rural districts of mixed populations, the future of indigenous culture and language learning very much depends on collaboration among indigenous and non-indigenous entities in the community.

7.1.4 Primary School Students

My professional experience as an educator has shown me that it could be difficult getting significant, pivotal opinions from eight-year-olds. However, to rely solely on my researcher/adult perspective and interpreting the observations independently of the opinions of the subjects would exclude the children in the participatory process. My assistants had insisted that these students

were not in the custom of having their opinions consulted. They informed me that if I were to simply ask questions of them, I would probably not get much information that would be “*useful*”. In their culture, being one that is inherently hierarchical in nature, for the children to voluntarily express their opinions would be viewed as a challenge to the structure of their society. In spite of the fact that the way of life for the Movima people has changed and the transformation carries on with unstoppable momentum, the authority of the elders/parents to make decisions for the children seems to be a fundamental fact that is immutable. The young follow unquestioningly what they are asked to do. In a classroom setting then, this ‘cultural’ behaviour exhibits itself as acceptance of all that they are taught, without their critical faculties ever challenging what is presented within a context conventionally interpreted as being the domain of the teacher.

In order to get the opinions of the students then, I had to find different methods and strategies to allow for these to be expressed. I wrote out on large pieces of paper each activity that we conducted in our implementation. I then asked the students to work in groups of four to come up with their order of preference; which activity did they like the most, the least? Which one did they want more of, and why? The reason I did this was to find out what worked or did not work and to make suggestions to teachers with respect to teaching activities that could be applicable in their own classrooms. I also thought this information could be important for UNICEF’s professional development workshops for teachers. Students gave overwhelmingly positive response to the activity with the photographs and the contest. One group of students from Lourdes even suggested that next time they have a contest, maybe they could make up the questions. I thought this was an innovative suggestion for these students who so seldom are given opportunities to input into the teaching/learning that happens in the classroom. The construction of turtle figurines was also ranked high. On the low end was the reading and comprehension activity which the students found mundane. This was reinforced by some students from Lourdes school coming up to me during recess time and saying that they had enjoyed my lessons much better than the one given by their teacher. When I asked them why, they replied with: *“hers was boring, it was just reading like we always do and she didn’t do anything fun and new, like making turtle figurines or show us pictures”*. It would appear that hands-on manipulatives and visuals really engaged the students, while the routine reading/writing activity had the opposite effect.

In order to find out if students had retained any information on the material, I showed pictures related to turtles and egg collection and asked the students what they were looking at and to tell

me a bit about each picture. For the most part, they were able to comply and the information given was accurate. This told me that I had been successful in capturing their attention and imparting the content of the material.

In various informal conversations with the children from Lourdes, they gave me information which I thought most appropriate to summarise here. When asked if they knew what the culture of the Movima was, many said “*what is culture?*” The word culture appeared to be beyond their level of comprehension. When I attempted a description of culture by listing artefacts, customs, clothing, as some of the ways that one culture could be differentiated from another, they showed me with their answer that they understood what I meant.

I don't wear any special clothing that makes me different from my friends. We all wear the same clothes. Sometimes, like during the fiestas, my mother makes this special dress and she tells me that it is traditional. But if it's not fiesta time, I never wear that funny dress.

Another student added:

My grandmother used to keep the drinking water in the 'tinaja' till my mother threw it out. This upset my grandmother but my mother said that it was old and not clean. My grandmother then said that it was one of the old things that she has left. Is 'tinaja' part of this culture that you are talking about?

The Lourdes children did not really know whether they wanted to learn about their traditional culture or not. One girl said:

I don't know. My parents say I have to study whatever is in the books the teachers give me. If it is fun like the lessons we had with you about the turtle, then yes I want to learn more about culture. If it is not fun, then no, I don't want to learn about culture.

What this student said highlighted the important question of whether this intervention has successfully managed to produce the effect of arousing interest in the Movima culture. This might take several years to become evident and only through longitudinal follow-ups of the children can this question be answered. It would appear that though young children are willing learners, it is important to capture their imagination. If these children are to be seen as the ‘seeds’ of the Movima cultural revitalisation movement, then more emphasis must be placed on presenting the material in a way that is palatable, entertaining and absorbable.

What I was able to extract about culture and its place in the curriculum from speaking directly to the children from Mapajo was very limited. They were reticent outside the classroom, giggled when they saw me but on the whole, avoided any interaction with me. On one occasion however, I was able to gather some information on what they thought of learning about their culture in school.

I don't know if the things that my grandfather does can be taught in a classroom. It is things that you do with your hands, out in the forest, on the river. You can read about it in a book but you still wouldn't know how to do it.

An older student in Grade 6 offered this:

My parents tell me to go to school to study and that school is more important than what they do in the fields, in the rivers. If what they do in the fields is part of our culture and we bring this to the classroom, it doesn't make sense to go to school. I can just stay in the field. My parents have already said that school is more important. How can we study what they do in the fields in school? I don't think they would like that.

In conclusion then, it would appear that these young students either did not know what culture was (Lourdes) or were not certain of the place that culture should occupy in their schooling. The children in Mapajo expressed doubt as to the purpose of incorporating their traditional cultural activities into the school curriculum, given their understanding that school material was supposed to be very different than their traditional lives lived out in the forest, fields and river. It is not uncommon for children of that age to defer the decision making to their parents and indeed, this was seen in the answers obtained.

7.1.5 Secondary School Students

I spoke to secondary school students though they had not been active participants in the pilot project. I sought their opinions on the universal implementation of a culturally-relevant curriculum in the light of their experiences with the formal education system so far. Amongst my sample of ten students from three secondary schools, there were some who represented the first generation of indigenous Movima who had progressed as far as secondary school. The semi-structured interviews took place in a private room of the local internet cafe.

A 15-year-old indigenous Movima female told me that she was interested in culture and learning about it but thought that some of her friends might laugh at her. I gave an answer which emphasised that ultimately learning about her culture is a personal growth choice, to learn about herself, her people. “Yes” she agreed pensively, but

I don't have time to take it now anyway because I will be taking computers and English, and I think that either one of those is more important than culture. I think the time has passed for me to learn of these things. If they were in a book though, I could maybe pick it up and just read about it when I have the time.

Her friend, another indigenous Movima female said:

Sure I could go and learn those things... [But] we are the new generation and the things that the old people did in the past are not interesting to me. Besides, those things are of no use to us now. We have to move on with the time. Knowing those things won't help me get a good job.

When I talked about the culturally-relevant curriculum as a way of bridging the gap between home and school, a male indigenous Movima student offered this:

This culture thing has to be taught to the young, the second and third graders, catch their interest, and make them learn. It would probably make schooling much more fun and interesting to them. It might make them stay longer in school, and not drop out. It is too late for me now. I am past that point. I do remember school being difficult, not understanding things, but I never thought it had anything to do with the curriculum. I just thought it was school, and that school was hard. I don't know if it would have been better or easier using our culture to teach the skills.

Though a lot of the traditional Movima artefacts were still being employed in the villages surrounding the town of Santa Ana, most of the young people I spoke to were not familiar with them. They had never been exposed to them as they had never travelled to the communities. A 14-year-old indigenous girl told me that she knows something about sugar cane and the contraption of trapiche used to extract its juice because once her father took her to the village. When I asked her about her impression of the experience, she told me:

It was where my grandparents lived. We had to wake up at 0400 and that was hard. I wouldn't want to do that everyday. We did a bit of work but I didn't really like life in the countryside. It was so quiet and boring. I am not too sad that I don't know a lot about my culture. I don't really think about it and my parents don't talk about it. I mean, they don't speak the language themselves. If I want to learn more, I can always go back there. Since I have already been there, and I saw what was there, I don't

know what I could learn that would be useful to me. It's not going to be as useful as learning to speak English.

Another indigenous young man replied to my question of whether a cultural component should be in school with: “yes, it is a good idea. All I know about my culture is ‘chive’”. He smiled sheepishly when he said this, and added,

I remember playing with a wheel when I was young. I don't know if that is of the Movimas or not, but I know that kids don't play that anymore. But really, the culture of our grandparents is mostly history now. We don't miss it because we never knew it. What we have now, how we live now, this is our culture. The things of the past don't interest me. To me, it is much more interesting to find out how you live in your country.

All evidence gathered from the discussions with the indigenous teenagers indicated a lack of curiosity to inform themselves about their cultural background. This is not surprising as they grew up in Santa Ana and not in villages. As well, all traditional cultural modalities are at least one generation away from them. They do not have any exposure as many of their parents did not practice cultural traditions themselves. It would appear that students considered some subjects, such as English and computers, to be more interesting and important than Movima culture. Knowledge of these subjects was inevitably linked to increased earning potential. Culture was unequivocally viewed as a thing of the past, and their ignorance of it not a point of contention. There was no shame involved, unlike the impression I got from the indigenous parents I spoke to. Several students also mentioned that it should be taught to younger children.

I also spoke to four non-indigenous teenagers in a focus group discussion. It impressed me how similar their answers were compared to those of indigenous teenagers. Again, it was reiterated how there was no need for them to learn of indigenous culture. As one student put it:

We don't look at each other like that anymore. That was back in the old days. We just hang out with whoever we get along, doesn't matter if the person is indigenous or not. Our culture is the same. We all grew up in Santa Ana. We all use computers. We all want a good job. If we are to make changes to education, I don't see that is where the focus should be. Let's not stress the differences.

7.1.6 Teachers

The role of teachers in the success of a large-scale curricular change such as this one cannot be underestimated. Intercultural education requires not only personal competence but also competences related to how to impart and treat certain topics. Speiser (2000:232) is of the opinion that in order to involve anyone in intercultural education, that individual would have to begin with a process that involves:

...discovering one's own position in this multiethnic, multicultural and socially diverse setting. In this process the teacher's personal relationship towards intercultural bilingual education has to take place. Teachers' self attribution (identity) is related narrowly to the appreciation of the different groups and their cultures.

When Señor Ruiz and Señorita Aida were given the opportunity to pilot the culturally-relevant lessons, some of their comments confirmed this concern. To gain additional insight, I interviewed another eight teachers (four town, four village) to get their input on culturally-relevant curriculum, importance of culture and cultural revitalisation.

The village teachers all described doing something of this sort to a certain degree, though they did not have a specific name for it. They had just been doing it out of common sense, adapting the material of the textbooks distributed by the government from the educational reform of 1994 to local or regional content. For this reason, they welcomed the imminent arrival of this initiative. This would save them a lot of work, as they saw it, for they *"wouldn't have to make it up anymore"*. They had been modifying the instructional material out of necessity as their students in the villages had little understanding of the subjects contained in these books. One of the teachers cited as an example a text on pine trees. There are no pine trees in the Amazon but there are other trees. This teacher described to me in detail what he ended up doing in terms of modifying this lesson:

I asked the students to go and walk about the village and gather as many different types of leaves as they could find. Since I am not from the area myself and am not a botanist, I don't know the names of the trees. I asked them to take the leaves home and find someone in the home, or a neighbour, who might know. They had the job of bringing them back to the class the next day and name three of the leaves that they found and tell us something they learned about it. This worked out very well and I learned something too.

I found what this teacher said to be a very significant point. It contrasts directly with what Señorita Aida says. She conceptualises her professional competence as inhering in her greater knowledge of facts whereas this teacher admits his lack of the facts but is able to depend on the more specific pedagogical knowledge that enables him to devise this leaf activity. The implications for the introduction of indigenous curriculum are that the teacher needs to see themselves as a coordinator and inquirer, not the sole source of information.

The teacher went on to say:

With this project that you are doing, it would help us a lot. It gives us an incentive to become interested in their culture since we have to teach it to them. If we don't know anything about it, how can we interest them? It doesn't make sense.

Another teacher was of the opinion that it should be relatively easy to re-engage village children with their culture, in spite of the distance that has taken place. His comment was:

If you ask them about the honey of the sugar cane, they know it because they see it. What is lacking is their acceptance that what they know is valuable information too. By seeing it in textbooks, they will be proud of it. It is good to produce your own food. It is good that you know how to live with nature and survive in it. These are all aspects of their culture which they never thought were important, but if it is in a book, then they will believe it.

This same teacher saw how easy it would be to teach new concepts by extrapolating on something familiar;

When we talk about the honey from sugar cane, we can easily teach nutrition. We can talk about the different kinds of sugars and their nutritive value. We can talk about food groups and what they need to eat in order to be healthy. This can also tie in with trading and bartering. Marketing and economic ideas can be introduced then. If we teach new ideas and skills from the surroundings, something they have always known, the students will be able to understand better. They will also feel less scared about new information they have to learn.

This teacher is suggesting that educators are on the frontlines of production and reproduction of knowledge in classrooms. If we were to vary the dynamics and incorporate students in the process of 'knowing', offering opportunities which would allow students to use the self as explainer, the classroom would become an interactive environment whereby both the teacher and the student are engaged in mutual and meaningful construction of knowledge and practice, and "indigenous and school practices become overlapping pedagogical sites" (Daun,1992:46). Teachers would

facilitate new knowledge acquisition by scaffolding upon previous knowledge. This pedagogical strategy of constructivism has been found to coincide best with the cognitive style of indigenous students. Shiva (1993:60) says that in this way, students are enabled with ownership of knowledge that

...renders impotent the dominant culture which, if unchallenged, might eliminate the use and value of local botanical alternatives, traditions, and other forms of knowledge intimately associated with the unique culture of the locality.

Another teacher saw the culturally-relevant curriculum as awakening a renaissance in the Movima language as well:

The old people are not talking to the children in their language but if they were to start doing so, the children would begin to speak it and then everyone would speak it because it will catch on. Once you can speak your language, then you want to know more of where you come from. If we start with teaching the material in school, it will lead to wanting to speak the language. It works both ways. This is normal and natural.

Another village teacher offered the following insight:

The children are more separated from the traditional activities compared to before. In the house, the parents don't teach the children anymore. All that responsibility has been given to the school. As long as the children go to school, they are happy, but they don't receive teaching at home anymore. And that is what is needed too if they want the culture to come back. The parents have to work together with the school and vice-versa.

He continued with:

If we use a culturally-relevant curriculum, the students will know the material. They wouldn't find it as difficult as they would find the material that comes from the textbooks because they have their own library here. They know that if they don't know the answer, or don't understand something, they can ask any elder in the village. This material is easier for them. The elders would be their library. It takes teaching back to the home. Teaching is not just the responsibility of the school.

In summary, the village teachers saw the culturally-relevant curriculum to benefit not only the students, their communities but also themselves. Seeing the material concretised in school books would validate the village's traditional customs as important and may awaken a latent interest in the culture, including possibly language revival. Intergeneration conversation would be promoted by the grandparent or another elder in the village acting as expert resource for the students. This

relationship can deepen and the home could again assume an important place in the education of the young. For the teachers, these culturally-relevant lessons would make their jobs easier, as they no longer had to spend time modifying existing texts. The familiar content would also facilitate introduction of new concepts.

Most of the town teachers I spoke to were 'carallanas' or 'mestizos' (of Spanish or mixed descent). I was curious of their opinions on the culturally-relevant curriculum as I had encountered vociferous objections from some non-indigenous parents. The first teacher I interviewed replied: *"Yes, it's important because the traditions of the indigenous people are finishing, and if it is not written down, it could be lost forever"*. After my clarification of what it entailed, there was a moment of hesitation before she answered with:

I am not sure this material should be forced on every student. The target audience should be indigenous students. It would help them to learn because it is more familiar, because it will increase their self esteem, because they are losing their culture. But how will it benefit the other students, the non-indigenous ones? It is not important to them. The other students should not be wasting their time learning something that has nothing to do with them.

Another town teacher was of a different opinion. She said:

For the students in Santa Ana, it will be all new knowledge because they don't know this stuff. The students may know something of the Movima culture or of indigenous people in general but they don't have the entire information, it is incomplete and sometimes it is wrong or not favourable. On the other hand, the information in these lessons is more thorough, accurate, and gives them more information so that they can have a more complete picture to base their opinions on. We are too ignorant about the indigenous people. Learning about them will allow more understanding. Perhaps then we can begin to work together to move Bolivia ahead.

This was supported by another teacher of indigenous background who said:

We ourselves have to begin to value our culture, and not be ashamed of it. All this modernity has arrived and everyone is abandoning the culture because they believe that it doesn't serve us in any way but on the contrary, that is the foundation of everything. It is good to have it in a book because they are going to see it, they will read it and they will learn about how they used to get sugar, how they made honey, now they don't know even where sugar comes from. From the books they will get to know their own culture. I don't think it is too late because the language is just now being rescued.

The fourth town teacher is 'mestizo' but her student demographic is indigenous. She offered the following:

Because the culture is at a point of extinction, this curriculum would be interesting for every student, even if it is because it is curious and novel. I always tell the students that they have to know who they are so that they can teach other people who don't know about them. I am always telling the students that they have to know their own culture, not only of the other side, but to know deeper of oneself. They can't escape from themselves.

Though one teacher expressed an opinion similar to that uttered by non-indigenous parents, the general consensus is that a culturally-relevant curriculum would not only be good for all students but for every Bolivian. Accurate information about indigenous people constitutes national knowledge which could be accessible to all and can contribute to the understanding required for the establishment of good relationships. This point of view, working together for the betterment of the country as a whole, had been expressed several times.

The teachers agreed that all the education units from the different levels of government must work together in supporting each other to see through this intercultural bilingual education. Ngai (2007:724) supports this by saying:

Top-down and bottom-up cooperation and reinforcement are necessary for sustaining indigenous-language education. Public schools operate as dominating economic and, therefore, political institutions in many small towns and rural communities. If efforts to reverse language shift are to be successful, they must target and transform multiple forces and institutions in each dimension of the full social, cultural, religious, and political context.

The teachers felt most importantly that cooperation should be reflected in the message the government gives to the parents. Everyone in government, from television advertisement to signs around the village, has to do more to convince the parents to participate. The urban and rural teachers shared the same grievance that parents and the community are not sufficiently involved in the children's education. One teacher said:

If the parents agreed that their children's education should be intercultural and bilingual, then there is no problem. There wouldn't be a contradiction between what the parents believe the school should teach the kids and what the school is teaching. But that is exactly the point! They don't believe in it. Many are of the opinion that getting such an education would be to their children's disadvantage. They just want them to get a regular education so that they can get a job.

Her opinion seemed to be supported by the other teachers present. I brought it to their attention that every conversation I had with indigenous parents indicated they would support a culturally-relevant curriculum. Another teacher offered this then:

It is not true. They may say that they want it but they don't really. The elders might care because they can see that their culture is dying. For a lot of the parents, they already have left that culture behind. They realise that their children need an education to get ahead, to get a good job. As soon as one suggests the culturally-relevant curriculum takes time away from math or Spanish, they will object to it. I am not saying that they lied to you, I am just saying that I am surprised they would be as supportive as they said they were.

Overall though, the teachers arrived at the consensus that even if a culturally-relevant curriculum meets opposition from parents, this might be swayed if there is support from the government. One teacher ended our discussion on an optimistic tone:

Wherever children go, they will find doors opening to them if they are aware of culture. Culture is everywhere, whether we are speaking of indigenous people here in Bolivia or anywhere else in the world. Learning of other people is knowledge and that will reward in every situation. You can't lose by learning more. You can lose by learning less, and passing judgments on people based on some old notion. As teachers, we have to be careful not to pass our biases to them.

7.2 Concluding remark:

In order to find out the consequences of the intervention, we have to get information feedback on what these consequences were. The feedback provides experience, learning and the possibility to do better. The various stakeholders and their opinions obtained through loosely-guided interviews will be very useful in helping to decipher the future of a pedagogical innovation such as a culturally-relevant curriculum.

Chapter 8 – DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

This chapter is composed of five parts: a synthesis of the findings, a discussion of issues raised by the pilot, implications for future action and investigations, a methodological reflection, my claims to original knowledge and final thought.

The legacy of a colonialist assimilationist educational system is the under-representation of indigenouness in the large sphere encompassed by the schools - knowledge, teachers, and modes of instruction. For indigenous students experiencing limited academic success, the calculated intervention of transforming traditional knowledge to curriculum material in place-based pedagogy has been found to fortify their identities (Phuntsog 1999, Sarangapani 2003). My field work consisted of a pilot aligned with the mandates of a UNICEF project to bring intercultural bilingual education to schools in the Bolivian Amazon. Applying the principles of PAR, I investigated three main research questions through four stages of discovery: exploration of traditional knowledge, codification and creation of curriculum material, implementation and feedback. Part of the intent was to offer results, implications and reflections from the pilot to serve as useful recommendations to UNICEF's EIBAMAZ.

8.1 Summary of the findings

The investigative stage of the pilot revealed story-telling by community elders to be a natural method for them to exchange information and create knowledge. They saw themselves recording the narratives for their children from whom they felt a widening generational gap. They blamed this distance for the breach in transmission of traditional knowledge. The elders decided the aspects of their culture to be shared for the culturally-relevant curriculum: ecological knowledge, personal anecdotes, fables, hunting/fishing techniques and cultural artefacts.

When creating curriculum material in the second stage of the pilot, the needs of both student and teacher were kept as focal points. Accessing students' prior knowledge and catching their interest were of utmost importance, particularly given the hope the elders and parents had of a cultural

revitalisation through the young. For the teachers, the lessons and activities were in a format already familiar to them from Ministry texts. The similarity in design was meant to facilitate their use in everyday classrooms.

During the implementation stage, the culturally-relevant lessons were 'put to the test' in classrooms in semi-urban and rural schools. Differences between the two groups with respect to participation structure and interaction in the classrooms were noted. The rural Mapajo children were minimally verbal and painfully shy. At Lourdes, the students were much more vocal, shouted the answers out loud and were boisterous in their participation. Giving students a variety of ways for expressing their knowledge resulted in a less intimidating learning atmosphere. Teachers also discovered that they required more professional training when they implemented the lessons. They saw cultural congruence between teacher and student to be important in imparting a culturally-relevant curriculum.

The last stage of the pilot consisted of getting feedback from stakeholders. This process heard voices from different segments of the population on the topic of culture and culturally-relevant curriculum. The elders and the community as a whole supported the project. Indigenous parents saw the culturally-based curriculum as a good compromise in the education they desired for their children. Non-indigenous parents were evenly split in their opinions of a culturally-based curriculum for all students. Some thought that this knowledge would be beneficial for everyone while others thought that the school was not the locale for transmission of this cultural material, and certainly not for all students. The Grade 3 students either did not know what culture was (Lourdes) or were not certain of the place that culture should occupy in their schooling (Mapajo). Rural teachers saw the culturally-relevant curriculum to benefit not only the students and their communities but also themselves in relieving some of their workload. Some non-indigenous teachers advocated exposure of indigenous culture for all students while others thought it would detract from crucial curricular content. All teachers insisted that governmental support at all levels would be necessary if a culturally-relevant program were to achieve its goals.

8.2 Discussion of issues and implications of the research

8.2.1 Hybridisation of culture

Before going to the Amazon, perhaps out of wishful naiveté, I thought I would be amongst an indigenous people still in possession of an 'intact' culture, one distinct from the mainstream. It was not what I found. The Movima, like the Haramkbut described by Aikman (1998:198):

...have been in permanent interaction over the past 50 years with other indigenous Amazon peoples, indigenous Quechua migrants from the Andean region, coastal Mestizos and foreign missionaries.

This hybridised culture comprised aspects of both indigenous and Western perspectives present in varying degrees, though neither present in a fully cohesive fashion. Many elements of the dominant culture make up who they currently are, an identity so composite to the point of the elements being indistinguishable. Within the Movima themselves, these are quite diverse along variables such as degree of identification with their 'indigenouness', age, racial make-up of family background, socioeconomic level and religious affiliations.

The pilot adapted aspects of 'traditional' elements of this hybridised Movima culture for yet another culture, the modernist culture of school. As the customary methods of knowledge transmission were no longer happening, the intent of the project was to recognise these activities as being valid for inclusion in the school sphere. By doing so, the identity of the indigenous Movima person, which is so washed out, exhausted, is given an injection of life even as the outline of it is being sketched. It is important to point out that clearly there is a difference between learning in a classroom setting and learning by actually practising harvesting, hunting and fishing techniques. However, it was never the intention, as Aikman puts it, "...to turn back the clock to a time when they lived unmolested by migrants, but, on the contrary, developing proposals which recognise the intercultural nature of their lives today" (1998:198). An extension of the outlined purpose above was the opinion of Dr. Fernando Prada, a professor at San Simon University who was a consultant for EIBAMAZ:

It is not that we want to move hunting or fishing to school; rather, how can these systems of knowledge co-exist and work together to help these students access new information at school?

8.2.2 Schooling versus education

“I have never let my schooling interfere with my education” (Mark Twain)

Though many interviewees thought the terms schooling and education interchangeable, the distinction was especially obvious and important to me. Often out in the field, I found myself lacking knowledge and felt quite ‘uneducated’. The difference between what I had received in all of these years of schooling that could not be applied to the demands of the moment and which never could have prepared me for what I was experiencing, was really clear. Because of this, the terms schooling and education existed in a confrontational stance, as in schooling versus education. It can be said that while schooling involves socialisation to norms/values considered desirable by the local, national and global communities, education involves all those processes by which knowledge is obtained and internalised and can occur in the absence of formal schooling. Mathew (1999:1) calls schooling, “education in non-indigenous ways” and says that it:

...allows children to live well in a world different from the one we grew up in. At the same time, we also profoundly believe that the youth must sustain their indigenous knowledge and ways, as it is only by knowing from where they come that they will be able to determine where they wish to go.

Kawagley (1998:2) presents schooling, transposed and imposed from the dominant society, as not only alien to indigenous culture but as being directly conflicting with indigenous modes of transmitting knowledge across generations. Schooling is characterised by a high level of verbal teaching in a setting removed from daily life, and is carried out by a specialised individual who has otherwise no social role relationship to the child. The predominant goals are individual academic achievement and the acquisition of a skill base for a future occupation. Indigenous education involves observation and imitation embedded in daily family and community activities and is carried out by many individuals with particular kinship roles in relation to the child. Awareness and appropriate skills for integration into the immediate social structure are predominant goals.

It can be said then that while many of the Movima elders were minimally schooled, they were very educated. I, on the other hand, am very schooled but perhaps minimally educated, at least within their social context. The Movima elders I interviewed spoke of the times when they were young children looking forward to going to school. It was interesting because the teacher would be a novelty, a ‘traveler’ who was passing through the community and the ‘holder’ of curious information. Additionally though, they were encouraged to go to school by their parents because

schooling, through these 'outsiders', had always been considered necessary if they wanted to get 'better' work which would allow them to make more money leading to a better life. Schooling seemed to be instrumental in facilitating this advancement towards a place they all wished to be at. It did not exclude them from what they were doing at home, learning the traditional activities which were essential to their survival in the jungles of the Amazon. The only occasions when the two options entered a sphere of conflict was when their attendance was required at both. When this happened, the subsistence demands of their lives, reflected in participation in hunting, fishing and other traditional activities took precedence. Their absenteeism from school would then be for protracted periods of time. Schooling became subordinated to the necessity of being educated in skills more pressingly required.

For the Movima however, distinguishing education from schooling is inconsequential. Their utmost concern was not with keeping their traditional methods of teaching-learning, nor was it even (really) with the content of the material to be taught. It had to do with economic survival and freedom from the preoccupations of poverty which enslave them, whatever the type of schooling or education. Aikman (2002:41) says, in the context of the Haramkbut of the Peruvian Amazon:

Education is generally thought by parents and education providers to be important for children's acquisition of key skills and knowledge, which will help them later in their pursuit of livelihoods. Schooling is considered to be a key means of bringing about modernization and economic development.

The pilot project sat between schooling and education but this was secondary in importance to where it might lead. Whilst all the parties involved wanted cultural revitalization, their lives now are so intercultural that their livelihood is linked to becoming modernised and economically developed as much as (or more so) with harvesting resources from the Amazon. This has meant, for many of the interviewees and their families, being employed in hard labour or domestic work in nearby towns or big cities such as Santa Cruz. For many indigenous peoples, intercultural schooling is a compromise between schooling and education and provides a means of "regaining control over an important learning arena, which has formerly been monopolised by agents with assimilationist aims, such as government and mission organisations" (Aikman, 1998:199). A culturally-based curriculum would be able to infuse education with traditional customs and spiritual values which are considered to be fundamental cornerstones to individual and collective well-being.

There are some, such as Mathew (1999:2), who are of the opinion that every set of knowledge is taught in its unique way and place:

Formal education can happen in the classroom, but traditional knowledge must be passed onto our youth out on the land where our people have always hunted, fished and trapped. To ensure the continuing survival of our traditional knowledge, we must develop pathways which are parallel and complementary to formal education.

The unfortunate reality is that traditional methods and techniques of learning through practice or the use of proverbs/folklore have been ignored, and very few indigenous communities still live by such ways. Ignas (2003:57) suggests a curriculum design which would incorporate “traditional practices for bringing up the young, for learning through play, for the teaching of skills”. In reality though, the informants showed that the Movima have moved too far away from it to try to recapture that realm for learning, nor did I get the impression that they felt there was a need to do so. The practical aspect of the traditional activities was desirable but they were incompatible with the reality of their situation. As it were, the lessons piloted for this research were not conceptualised as practical activities and did not provide an experiential application in the village which would reinforce the knowledge. In the end, the task ended up being an introduction of customary Movima activities into the school sphere.

It can be said too that the existent epistemological tension between education/schooling and indigenous/western knowledge is educational in itself. For indigenous students, seeking to resolve it is probably not right or necessary. It is a matter of fact that they inhabit both worlds. This is what being an indigenous person in a non-indigenous world is like. Recognising and learning from this is the challenge that faces them.

8.2.3 Community participation and commitment

Changing anything as complex as education is very difficult and in order for any large education project to yield favourable outcomes, many things must be working for it. The collaboration of the different levels of government is one prerequisite. For EIBAMAZ, the fact that it enjoys the support from the national Ministry of Education, international funding and experts in bilingual education counts in its favour.

I cannot make the assumption that because of my pilot something will change. My engagement with this project was temporary. A place-based intervention has occurred but rather than achieving a sustainable intervention, I have developed some knowledge about how that might be attempted on a larger scale and what would be required in order for it to be successful. I discovered that it is impossible to work in such a context with “education only” as a focus. It is definitely a community development project requiring a pledge from all in the village to care and be involved. This means that the discontent with the status quo has to come from the populace, the anxiousness from the communities. It is only with everyone’s participation that a transformation in the schools will be propelled to take place. The community comes to the realisation that adapting the national curriculum to local cultural settings and producing localised learning materials has long-term benefits to the community as a whole, not only certain individuals. By integrating indigenous knowledge into school curriculum, schools could become de facto agencies for transmitting the culture of the society from one generation to the next. Students would have the opportunity to appreciate and respect the knowledge held by the elders in the community and this would in turn, promote intergenerational harmony. Young people, as they grew up, though they would not have the direct connection with the land that past generations had, might, because of the education that they received, become resources and advocates for their villages.

Noorlander (2003) reports on the findings from a project by CARE International for highland children in Cambodia that Community School Boards (CSB) are central in fostering ownership of a project. A CSB is usually made up of elderly members of the village who are already key persons influential in many aspects of the community. Here, the CSB functioned as

...management committees, they help identify education and learning needs, they select the community members to be trained as teachers and monitor their work, and they motivate parents to send their children to school. The board organises community members to build the school, as well as oversee maintenance and the development of the school grounds (Noorlander, 2003).

If CSBs were to be established in Mapajo and El Peru for example, then there would be a body responsible for taking initiatives, becoming directly accountable for what happens in their schools and working towards the year after year perpetuation of a program they saw worthwhile for their children.

8.2.4 Training teachers and teacher-trainers

For the indigenous Movima students in town, schooling has not been as culturally discontinuous an experience as I had forecasted. However, this same thing cannot be said for the children in the villages. They, for the most part, grew up in relative remoteness and have had limited experience with the norms of the mainstream environments. For them, schooling is definitely a 'strange' experience. On my return from El Peru community, my research assistant pointed out an isolated area where some banana leaf thatched huts could be seen and said:

Some of those people there, adults and children, have never been in a movie theatre, a big store or anywhere near a city. It costs too much for them to be able to afford it. They just stay in the villages. The river, the animals, their fields, this is all they have and know.

The sight of those huts in the middle of (seemingly) nowhere made me think about what these children must feel like when they go to school. They read culturally foreign books and must interact on a regular basis, possibly for the first time, with someone in a position of power (a teacher) who is not of their ethnic background. This introduction to schooling may be so intimidating as to make them reject any future association with it. Under these circumstances, the way the indigenous culture is presented in the textbooks and the manner with which the educators acknowledge and respond to it will impact the self-esteem and academic experience of students from these cultural backgrounds.

Not all teachers will automatically accept a newly proposed curriculum based on culture as what they should be using with their students. Some may be perfectly satisfied with the existing curriculum and resist change, becoming reluctant or 'dissonant' users rather than willing or 'consonant' users. Señor Ruiz and other rural indigenous teachers are good examples of consonant users. Take for instance the occasion when a teacher modified the tree lesson with local flora. This indicated to me that there was scope beyond the prescription of indigenous content and the creation of off-the-shelf lessons. There is something much more spontaneous which proceeds from the teachers' understanding of what is relevant and what is not. He saw the disconnection between the material and the students' background (perhaps due to his own educational history) and was able to devise alternate activities on the spot. Someone like him holds potential to become a local curriculum designer and developer.

Señorita Aida on the other hand, due to her own notion of being urban and metropolitan (in Bolivian terms, at least) and given her extreme passivity, would fall into the dissonant category as a user. It is still possible to engage with her though it might be more difficult. This is because it involves reconceptualising what being a teacher is. It is an issue not only of professional identity but also mixes in issues about ethnic identity, either as indigenous or non-indigenous. What might this entail? If Señorita Aida were inclined to, she could take interest in the local culture and get to know some of the elders. The beliefs and rules of cultural behaviour that she evidences would provide a baseline for her teaching to indigenous students of that community. Learning the local language to pick up even a few phrases would go a long way toward building credibility in the community. By interacting with the community and making use of local resources, the separation of school from the community might be reduced. The classroom might extend out into the community and vice-versa, bridging the gap as real-world significance was brought to coalesce with the information taught within the school. By embedding the curriculum in the world which the students are familiar with and working outwards from there, it helps them to connect it to the region, the nation, and the world. The adage “think globally, act locally”, should guide any planning the teacher does with the students. This could result in a school setting that was more natural culturally, rather than the highly structured and contrived situations that presently exist. As this exchange between two previously differentiated spheres continues to happen, the teacher might notice that more productive communication was happening with the students and that the community was more welcoming.

Kawagley (1998:5) advocates a pedagogical strategy of constructivism to coincide best with the cognitive style of indigenous students. A locally-based culturally-relevant curriculum stands a good possibility of surviving and thriving under these conditions. Additionally, someone like Señorita Aida may begin to recognise that there are multiple forms and ways of displaying intelligence, and therefore, she needs to provide multiple avenues through which her students can access what she is teaching as well as demonstrate their competence. This would mean not only adapting new approaches to assessment but also deciphering new boundaries to the content of assessment.

The examples of Señor Ruiz and Señorita Aida show that when we talk about training, this seems to hinge around the ability and disposition of teachers to identify what is inappropriate, and interact with local people in order to devise replacement activity and curriculum material which do not undermine indigenous educational patterns. Professional development could also include

cultural awareness delivered by elders in the community. The different socio-cultural processes operating in indigenous communities/classrooms and holding high expectations of **all** students are topics that should be tackled as part of professional training.

Often during the research process, I heard suggestions that recruiting and training local citizens to become community teachers would be a good idea. They, it was thought, would be a good replacement for impassive educators from 'outside'. They would also have a local knowledge base as well as, possibly, fluency in both Spanish and Movima. Having community teachers would solve the complaints I heard from community members that 'outsider' teachers are simply not interested in their culture and are rarely sensitised to the needs of indigenous children. Often too, the turnover rate of 'outsider' teachers is extremely high. The reality with individuals from the community as teachers though is that they usually have little formal qualifications. Sizeable funding would have to be available to train them, both pre-service and in-service, to impart to them the skills requisite to be a 'proper' teacher. As it stands though, they are an untapped resource.

In addition to training teachers well, it is of utmost importance to train individuals who will fill the roles of mediators of social processes, the trainers of teachers. These should be able to promote discussion as well as knowing the inside functioning of the society/community. This is perhaps a role that someone like my assistants could grow into.

8.2.5 Local curriculum developers

The epistemological tension between indigenous and school knowledges holds implications for EIBAMAZ and other indigenous knowledge curriculum development initiatives. In making sense of my work as a pilot, I discovered the important responsibility held by curriculum planners, who have to make sure that they do not contribute to further subjugation but rather, work as a catalyst for redressing the power imbalance that already exists between knowledges. Efforts must be concentrated into designing a curriculum geared towards a new way of knowledge production, not as abstract stocks of knowledge to be memorised and regurgitated at the time of exams, but as practical applications of what is learned. Ideally, this curriculum would provide learning experiences that affirm culture and identity while building skills to manage learning and working in mainstream environments.

Little consideration seems to be given to teachers, either as curriculum developers or as resources who could contribute a compilation of advice distilled from in-the-field curriculum development experiences. Señor Ruiz is an example of a teacher who has adapted his work to the physical and cultural environment in which the students are located. Interacting daily with the students and the community, he has developed not only relationships but also bona-fide indigenous cultural experiences. This awareness of indigenous knowledge allows him to support indigenous students effectively in their inquiry-based learning process by providing experiences which help to develop both problem-solving and thinking skills for real-life situations which “could be used to benefit self and society” (Ignas, 2003:52). Señor Ruiz, using his cache of insight developed from practical experience and knowledge of the target population, could well develop curriculum for said population of students. The wealth of information that he holds might not be available to an outsider, an ‘expert’ curriculum developer.

This raises critical questions about curriculum developers: Whose interests do they represent? What do they know about indigenous knowledge? How much do they value indigenous knowledge? Encouraging curriculum developers to rethink education and begin a path which departs from foreign interpretations of what is important at the local level is what a culturally-relevant curriculum is about. What someone like Señor Ruiz knows is not accessed. This is a slight of sort, almost as if his knowledge and experience were illegitimate, a hierarchical totem with him at the bottom, not unlike the place indigenous students find themselves. The reliance is placed on ‘professional’ curriculum developers instead. It is ironic and anathematic that the process being practised is reinforcing the same echelon of knowledge.

8.3 Methodological Reflection

8.3.1 The choice of Participatory Action Research (PAR)

It would be an approximation to say that the pilot project was PAR as it did not conform to all the descriptive elements of the methodology. Ideally, I would have had the resources – finance and time – to commit myself to such an investigation faithful to the repeated cycles, community identification of concerns, initiation of action, modification of action and starting another cycle of research; but I did not. However, PAR was chosen for its suitability to address the issue of knowledge and power. Acknowledging and consulting community elders as repositories of traditional wisdom challenged the notion that the teacher, the government, the consultant, is the

one 'who knows best'. The pilot was participatory in that different stakeholders within the communities were able to tell their stories and voice their opinions. In so doing, they painted for me a picture of the Movima people's culture and showed me the vision of education they desired for their children. I did not simply observe the subjects, compile the information in a report and prescribe recommendations. I would like to think that I was not conducting 'extractive' research, but rather engaged in the process of construction of knowledge together with all the actors who have a stake in this project. As Castellano (2004:98) suggests, "including members of the community allows the community to have ownership of the research process so that the community can research themselves back to life". I was interested in the local people's standpoint on education and what implications this held for EIBAMAZ. Are their concerns similar, their predicated solutions parallel? By addressing various players, in essence I coordinated 'action' on the part of the community, the action of participation. I sought to bring reflection, theory, practice, to see if a culturally-relevant curriculum could possibly be the salve for the concerns expressed - issues of educational experience, academic achievement and cultural renaissance.

Choosing a collaborative and participatory approach was not just an ideological commitment however, it was also a pragmatic one. In the investigative first stage, I required the active participation of the elders or there would have been no indigenous knowledge to base the curriculum on. For the sustainability of the project, using PAR did allow for a core group of people to be involved to the extent that they could carry the flame onward, perhaps in the formation of some local committee such as a Community School Board (Noorlander, 2003). One of the benefits of participatory research is that individuals and communities do become empowered and take the reins to assume leadership. When the community feels that their goals are at stake, that their interests are met, it is then that the continuity of the project can be assured. My pilot elucidated the desperation they feel with the moribund situation of their culture. They see an intercultural initiative as holding promise for salvaging their despondent situation. It would link the community to the school, a domain usually considered outside their control and belonging to a more centralised system of education delivery. The pilot also showed that by expanding the base of ownership, by tapping into the cultural base available in the community, by incorporating teacher's experiences in curriculum design, by encouraging parental input, by validating students' concerns, in synergistic collaboration, EIBAMAZ could succeed.

8.3.2 Listening to stories

Story-telling is an earnest, useful and culturally appropriate way of communication in that it reveals the diversities of truth within which the story-teller rather than the researcher retains control." (Bishop, 1997:262).

The elders told me that for them information is assimilated in an aggregative manner with repetition highlighting the points most important for retention. Learning and thinking in oral cultures depend on the circumstances presenting themselves rather than being merely hypothetical or analytical ones. Indigenous Mapajo folk stories had always occupied a crucial role in that they helped to perpetuate knowledge which allowed them to survive in the Amazon. According to Bieseke (1993:47):

Stories are makers of sense so oral traditions make sense by maintaining both continuity and creativity. This agreement has the most intimate connection with the details of procuring a livelihood and with the particular sort of cooperation made necessary by a specific form of livelihood in a given environment. The storyteller's art both 'makes sense' repeatedly and anew and provides a framework for remembering survival information.

Abercrombie is weary of the tendency to treat orally narrated accounts as collectible texts that can in turn be reduced to sources from which 'data' may be extracted. He means to make us aware that there is a false presumption of oral sources somehow being stable like written sources, and that once spoken and recorded, they are simply there, waiting for interpretation. Having been engaged in ethnographic fieldwork, I agree with him. He says:

Oral traditions are not natural products. They have social histories, and they acquire meaning in the situations in which they are used, in interactions between narrators and listeners. Meanings shift depending on how fully cultural understandings are shared by teller and listener. (Abercrombie 1998:24)

I found oral testimony to be never the same twice, with the content revealed depending on what went into the questions and the personal relationship that existed. It was a dialogue which was always in flux. In fact, I witnessed this when I developed a rapport with an elder, Don Juan, and was invited to 'shadow' him for a week. The experience afforded me close observation of a master story-teller with an inventory of tales of punishment and penitence, of regret, of superhuman accomplishments. I found the stories, upon repeated tellings, to intertwine about each other in fascinating creativity and interlocking complexity, emerging with new variations at each performance.

Because of all that stories represent, teach and encompass, I saw them as being the way through which I was going to learn about the Movima people as well. It would be through stories that they would be shown to me. As we sat patiently, unhurriedly, we travelled through the crevasses of the elders' memories and opened up tomes of biography, history and culture.

8.3.3 Constructing knowledge

As a student of the culture of the Movima people, I had to apply the self-as-explainer technique to absorb and construct new knowledge to help me deal with the unfamiliar situation. My first impressions of the new culture were formed in response to the more obvious surface aspects that I could see, hear, and feel. As I learned more of the particularities of the education system, through connecting with appropriate local expertise and community resources, I started to see why things were the way they were. By retrieving information from previous experiences in a similar context, another impoverished country or equally disorganised teaching institution, I was able to assimilate the new information about the Movima and transform it into new knowledge to be used to guide my research comportment, part of which was to have reasonable expectations. By offering up tentative generalisations in my own understanding, gradually I deciphered the next set of particulars of the culture, and so on. It was a never ending cycle through which I continued to learn as much about myself as I did about them. Along the way, I faced some tough questions, like "Why am I here?", "Who am I?" or worse yet, "Who am I to do what I am doing?" These were questions which I rarely asked myself in my own familiar cultural world.

The previously un-encountered context placed the demand of extracting 'useful' knowledge from all past experiences. Extending and scaffolding from that allows for organising the new information into yet another knowledge base. It is a continuous process of acquisition and adaptation. By being in an entirely different context and facing unfamiliar challenges, the knowledge I had disappeared or was modified, and new knowledge was created. From this personal experience, I draw the conclusion that the nature of knowledge is ephemeral and constructive.

As the research progressed, I was constantly asking myself questions to challenge my conceptions of the process of designing a culturally-relevant curriculum. What do I know about how to design it (in spite of designing lesson plans to impart information on a daily basis as a teacher)? How can I make sure that what I did is culturally relevant (and not just alluding to token cultural subjects

superficially)? Is this it? Have I got it right? Is there a way of verifying or is it much more dynamic than that? Is indigenous knowledge something that can be broken into concrete bits and structured as lessons in a formal curriculum? On what basis do I determine what the most appropriate approach is for the development of curriculum suitable to the educational needs of the Movima students? Ultimately, the curriculum that was created wrapped within it the tension existent between indigenous and school knowledge. This tension was mitigated by finding the middle ground, a compromise of sorts. The aim was to apply content to context and create lessons palatable in cultural substance and adequate in academic skills for the age group intended.

8.3.4 I, coloniser?

For indigenous people, decolonisation of research is a large part of the process of recovering the stories of the past. Smith (1999:39) says:

We don't need anyone else developing the tools which will help us come to terms with who we are. We can and will do this work. Real power lies with those who design the tools – it always has. This power is ours.

It is exactly this sentiment which I sympathised with. Being non-indigenous raised the question for me of whether or not, as an outsider, I could truly experience their reality and design research which would bring out insights that would contribute to ameliorating the situation. Oddly enough given my thinking, Smith (1999) speaks of an unfortunate preference expressed by some indigenous communities in choosing a non-indigenous person over an indigenous one to conduct research. There are a number of reasons this happens. Sometimes it is based on a deeply held view that indigenous people will never be good or credible enough, that indigenous researchers may divulge confidences within their own community, or that the researcher may have some hidden agenda. The insider dynamic enveloping the indigenous researcher demands a great degree of sensitivity, skill, maturity, experience and knowledge in order to work these issues through. As this is quite difficult to manage, for quite legitimate reasons, the indigenous researcher may not be the best person to do the research.

Differences in cultural perspective have enormous implications for all aspects of our behaviour. I do not believe it is absolutely necessary or possible for an outsider to comprehend fully the subtleties and inner workings of another cultural system before he/she is able to perform a useful role in that cultural community. What is essential however is to understand how cultural forces

can impact peoples' lives. As a researcher, one has to be willing to set aside one's own cultural predispositions to convey respect for others' view points. I would like to give an instance of this happening to me. On one occasion when we were out turtle egg gathering on the beach, we found a mound of sand under which were lots of eggs. We were all very excited as it was the first one we found that night. The villagers had been saying that there were fewer turtles now than ever before. As a man began taking out the eggs, he counted. "...twenty two, twenty three, and that's it, twenty four". As he took out the last egg, I asked him if he was going to leave a few eggs, or even one, in the nest. "No" he told me, "*we are too hungry*". But I said, "*if you leave none, there won't be any turtles hatching from this pile*". To this he replied, "*it's true but I can't think of that now. The flood wiped out our crops this year. I have to take all the eggs. We are hungry now*". As much as I found myself opposed to this, I refrained from continuing along this line. In my capacity as an outsider, someone removed from the hardships pressing in on their survival, I didn't feel I had the right to object too much. Though they must somehow abide by the laws of nature and resource management in maintaining the balance of production/consumption and natality/mortality, at this moment, their action did not make sense to me. They would have done the same, whether I was there or not, and I felt that it was not my place to pass judgment on them. At the same time, I felt that I would implicate my researcher stance of non-interference.

Nevertheless, whilst in the field and now, writing up my thesis, I became conscious of a dilemma and felt ambiguity in my 'anti-colonial' project. Have I not become complicit in the process of colonising knowledge to give my own contribution validity? Have I not taken from the Movima knowledge which was sacrosanct, and justified getting it for the purpose of creating a curriculum which 'helps' them? Have I encroached and they simply accepted? Had I not come along and offered to do this, would it have been done? How would they have 'saved' their own culture? Would the communities have thought it necessary to do something to improve the educational outcomes of their children? Did I 'colonise' them in the name of education?

In thinking about the answers to these questions, I rationalise that my intention had never been to 'take away' from them. Indeed I had come in from the outside, proposed and compelled the initiative, but I aimed to practice indigenous methodology. I heard their voices and then articulated them with discursive authority in my thesis. To be sure, I imposed my meaning and presumed interpretation on the knowledge as presented by the people who live the experience. This however is, I believe, unavoidable in any research. The communities were starting to offer

traditional dance and language classes to counter the impending extinction of their culture. What they had not thought possible was the coalescence of the two distinct fields of culture and schooling merging into a new vision of education for their children. With regard to that, I must confront my idealistic notion about PAR. In reality, it did not all 'come' from the local people, I instigated it. Through PAR though, I may have empowered some locals to carry on with the project.

So, did I 'colonise' their knowledge? When doing research with marginalised populations, it is a foremost consideration that research should give back to the community. In my own justification, I can say that this project would not have happened without the communities' permission and cooperation. I like to view this research as sharing their knowledge, rather than stealing it. As an outsider, I will take what I have learned from this occasion and apply it to similar situations in the future. Additionally, perhaps somewhere sometime along the research process, I have capacitated some people in the communities to believe that they too can, as Smith (1999:42) puts it, "make sense of our own world while also attempting to transform what counts as important in the world of the powerful", and in that way, for the knowledge that they gained from participating in the research to be made useful locally to benefit the community.

8.3.5 Time

Another methodological issue is the length of my stay. As a researcher I have to work with what the situation offers in a number of ways in order to produce the relations that I think will give the most advantageous data. Time is obviously an element in this. I would have liked the luxury of more time. As it were, all I can do is to be reflexive about what went on in the field and not just take situations as they happened for granted, keeping in mind that time is a crucial factor.

This shortfall does not necessarily mean that the results obtained are invalid, but rather that the time should be seen as a limitation of the research. A longer duration in the field would have allowed for an expansion of all of the following: work with more participants, cross comparisons of observational and interview data, and establishing deeper relationship with the key collaborators. Though I did do all of the above to a certain extent, the constraints of time must be acknowledged as it does pose a restriction on the universal employability of the data.

In addition, because of the time constraint, I did not get all the benefits associated with action research. Good action research emerges over time in an evolutionary and developmental process, as individuals develop skills of inquiry and as communities of inquiry develop within communities of practice. Action research is potentially emancipatory. It leads not only to new practical knowledge but to new abilities to create knowledge. The development of these abilities takes time as it is a living evolving process of coming to know. I sowed the seeds of PAR in the communities and, hopefully one day the fruits will be harvested. Since I conducted the pilot in Mapajo, El Peru and Santa Ana, I have been in communication with one of my collaborators. Disappointingly, he informed me that he has not had the opportunity to return to any of the villages that we conducted our pilot in and that communication with the elders has been haphazard. He therefore could not update me on developments regarding community involvement in education. He also informed me that he has input into the EIBAMAZ project with the observations that we made during the pilot, but that it was progressing slowly. They have not yet reached any of our pilot villages.

8.3.6 Language and data analysis

One of the chief reasons for choosing to do research in Bolivia was my desire to return to South America where I grew up. I longed for the opportunity to again live in and work in a Spanish-speaking environment. As an immigrant twice-over, I have had to learn to speak new languages, Spanish and English. As I reflect upon the experience of my field work, there were two analytical languages involved in the process, the 'language of the data' which was Spanish, and the 'language I think in' or my 'philosophical' language, which was English. The dilemma that it posed in working in two languages was how to capture adequately the essence of the participants' views, fortunately for me expressed in Spanish and not in Movima, and to do it justice in presentation and interpretation in English. For some researchers, they express a blurring of lines between them as when they "would slip between the two languages during analysis" (Srivastava, 2006:216). Personally, I did not find this to be the case. Due to my fluency in Spanish acquired through years of living and working in the language, I had always been aware that certain words or phrases are specific only to Spanish and could never be accurately and exactly translated into English as such, making do with a flowery description as a best approximation. In transcribing the interview material, I made the decision not so much to translate word by word but rather, to convey

through a revamped structuring of words and sentences, the meaning that I thought was originally intended by the informants in Spanish. In order to do this, a tacit knowledge of the field context in which they were uttered is crucial in increasing the validity of the translation of data through a strategy of conceptual equivalence. Temple (1997:607) notes that:

Translation/interpretation is inseparable from the application of a theoretical perspective. Both provide accounts which assume a position that has been constructed using a different language.

For my data analysis then, I did not translate transcripts before formal analysis but kept them in Spanish. This would, as Srivastava (2006:217) puts it, “minimize the application of an external theoretical linguistic perspective (that of English) onto a set of data and keep them in their ‘authentic’ form, before the application of other external theoretical perspectives”.

8.3.7 Researching back to myself

I would like to speak of the personal process I underwent through conducting this research. Marshall (2001:413) suggested thinking about the personal process of research from three interrelated perspectives:

First, from an existential perspective as the here-and-now struggle with one’s being-in-the world; secondly, from a psychodynamic perspective which views current patterns of experience and behaviour as rooted in unresolved distress from earlier (often childhood) experiences; and thirdly, from a transpersonal perspective which views individual experience as a reflection of archetypal patterns of the collective unconscious.

This quotation spoke to me. I saw myself coming to this research with a desire and will to be part of a project which would do something positive to change the educational situation of the indigenous people of Bolivia. Because I have been offered many good opportunities since those days suffering racial mistreatments, what I confronted in my motivation to do the research was this drive to calm the disquiet between my fortunate personal situation and others, with whom I identify strongly, who have not been so ‘lucky’. I am transforming my life by doing research, gaining more glimpses of myself by acknowledging and playing with the different positionalities which I occupy. One of the first things I recognised is that the more I learned about the Movima culture, the more I found out about myself.

This field work has conveyed to me something deep and meaningful about who I am, the summation of life experiences from which I emanate as an Asian woman of Taiwanese descent, migrated across oceans and continents to lands where I was the minority and forced to learn the language to integrate better and to survive. I understand traditions, roots and their importance but have allowed them to be subsumed by prospects offered by the dominant society. For this reason, I feel I sympathise with the place where indigenous people find themselves. This experience has exposed an important message to me: the commitment to continue advancing the rights of indigenous people, especially as it pertains to the field that I could be useful in, education.

8.4 Claims to knowledge

Having carried out this pilot, I will present my original contribution to knowledge as a composite response to the three original research questions.

1. How can traditional knowledge be incorporated into a culturally-relevant curriculum for the primary schools in the Movima people's traditional homeland?
2. To what extent might it be possible through curriculum development to value and sustain traditional cultural knowledge of the Movima people?
3. How can we learn from this pilot study about the process of developing a culturally appropriate curriculum for indigenous people?

It is not possible to create an idealised indigenous curriculum because the Movima people are no longer living in a way that makes it possible to identify a singular culture which is outside and separate from the dominant national culture of Bolivia. The vast majority of the Movima are in daily contact with a wide range of cultural traditions and practices which impinge on their own traditional customs.

Indigenising curriculum is possible to do but it requires full community participation which is precisely what makes it difficult, far harder than straightforward prescription. It is not possible to have a place-based curriculum prescribed from the centre. Because it is context based on the locale, it becomes less the role of the Ministry and more the role of the teacher and the community.

Though local epistemologies and culture are domains that influence the content and purpose of schooling, there are other complex relationships involved in educational development. Political, cultural, religious, social and organisational structures between the local, national and global domains of culture must be looked at.

Traditional knowledge is difficult to characterise. Rather than being fixed and generalisable, it is context-specific, mutable and immanent. It derives not just from the knower but from the interaction of the knower and the inquirer. It is dialogic and the research has shown that bringing it into the curriculum might involve a process of dialogue.

In reviewing the favourable reactions to the pilot project which was limited to a few activities in a short time interval, we could consider its expansion to a whole curriculum. To begin, a culturally-relevant curriculum for a certain indigenous group would have to be structured along the same worldview, beliefs, values and lifestyles of that indigenous population. It would give to the students as much as possible about their own immediate world as well as the larger world in which they are situated, and the inter-relationships between the two. It would break away from the conventional categories of subject matter (social studies, science, language arts, math, etc) and create categories that are more in tune with how indigenous people experience the world around them. It would also be cross-curricular to reflect the inter-connected holistic aspect of the world as upheld by many indigenous populations. The local culture must be integrated across the curriculum, rather than as an add-on component for a few hours a week after attending to the "real" curriculum. The baseline for the curriculum should be the local cultural community, with everything else being built upon and grounded in that reality. Materials produced for students should "engage and motivate students to participate more fully in the process of understanding how knowledge is created, systematized, modified and shared" (Ignas 2003:57).

In order to carry out the above however will involve a different, more participatory and inclusive effort. This is difficult to obtain. Rather than a whole curriculum going down the indigenous route, it would be better to have a pluralistic approach which met the participants' needs for something that honoured both indigenous and mainstream ways of thinking. The Movima people inhabit a world which sits on the threshold between Movima and mainstream culture and they both need to be acknowledged. The mainstream culture is the only one currently on offer so it is in creating the indigenous elements that the work needs to be done. It will have to be so or else the indigenous elements will only be imposed from outside instead of being truly local. It is possible to

add to the curriculum elements which honour traditional knowledge and civilisation. This resuscitates an interest in their cultural backgrounds and reinforces identity, a factor which has been found to play an important role in scholastic achievement for indigenous students.

Top-down and bottom-up cooperation and reinforcement are necessary for the provision and sustainment of a culturally-relevant indigenous education. Whether or not EIBAMAZ actually has the resources in facilitating and enthusing the communities, whether they could manage to give sufficient development to teachers so that they can reconceptualise their practice and whether these teachers would have the motivation to persist, all of these would affect its success.

8.5 Final thought

Alongside these claims to knowledge, a small scale piece of research such as this inevitably highlights what cannot be known. Would a culturally-relevant curriculum affect the educational experience of indigenous students to such an extent as to improve their academic achievement? If indigenous pupils were to learn new skills and concepts through the medium of their culture, how would this show in academic indices of truancy and drop-out rates? Would the data indicate a reduction in the gap when compared to non-indigenous students? Would there be a significant recovery of traditional customs? How would this experience stand up when six years later these pupils move to a secondary school where the environment changes considerably? These questions can only be answered by conducting a longitudinal study over many years. The answers found can provide some insights to the type of education best suited for indigenous people, as well as for multi-ethnic and multilingual societies.

This pilot on culturally-relevant curriculum made me realise that curriculum can be simply a course of study, a compilation of data to be learned, or not. There are deeper issues about curriculum encompassing epistemological questions related to the production and consumption of knowledge, knowledge as it is conceptualised, the relationship between cultures, the definition of successful learning, the competition between all forms of knowledge production and the purpose of education itself. Semali (1999:99) is of the opinion that:

...curriculum studies/curriculum development should devote attention to the process involved in the generation and validation of curriculum content and the fact that some groups of people benefit from the 'certification' of certain forms of knowledge while other groups don't.

Although an intercultural bilingual education program would not, by itself, save any language or culture, it can complement other community efforts by supporting indigenous language education, creating a positive community environment for place-based cultural studies and solidifying the foundation for further intensive second-language learning. Such a curriculum advances the goal of reversing language and culture loss, in addition to enhancing place-based multicultural education for all.

A culturally-relevant curriculum is only one component of many towards a solution intent on providing a more satisfying educational experience for indigenous students. It promotes proficiency in their own language, helps them navigate their local environments and aids in communicating with the surrounding landscape to serve their own well-being and future. But it requires government policy and political will to deal with contradictions between intention and practice. There would have to be an accompanying dedication to teacher training (introducing more indigenous teaching methodology at the formal school level, cultural sensitisation and awareness), learner-centred pedagogy and a rethinking of the concept of knowledge. Logistically speaking, there has to be established partnerships between education, training and employment stakeholders at the local level in the curriculum delivery. The dependence on foreign assistance cannot be overlooked either, as withdrawal of donor support will be problematic for the continuation of programs in indigenous education and research.

For the Movima however, there is no time to wait for external forces to revamp or indigenise the education offered to their children. They have to take the reins to stop their culture from disappearing altogether. The time to act is now.

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