

EDUCATION FOR ALL: TRAINING TEACHERS IN INDIGENOUS AREAS

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Education opens doors for all individuals and communities. It is central to providing children, youth and adults with the skills necessary for achieving better living standards for themselves and for their communities. As such, education is the crucial foundation for reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

The changes taking place in today's world have a powerful and immediate influence on the nature and functions of the professional educators, whose role is to mediate between students and the world around them. To address this challenge, the educational system must concern itself with developing, supporting, and improving its most vital resources - teachers, principals, supervisors, and counselors - to enable them to cope with their important responsibilities.

According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), there is a severe shortage of teachers worldwide. An estimated 18 million additional teachers are needed globally, if Universal Primary Education is to be achieved by the year 2015. An even greater number of teachers will be required if adequate provision for secondary, higher, technical and vocational, or non-formal education is to be assured. This shortage of qualified teachers is one of the biggest challenges to achieving the Education for All goals. Moreover, education does not reach all. In many developing countries, poverty, geographical isolation, gender, ethnicity and language are mighty obstacles to overcome on the path to education. One way of tackling these challenges is by increasing the number and quality of teachers in marginalized and disadvantaged communities.

THE OFRI CENTER: TAKING STEPS TO MEET THE CHALLENGES

To meet this challenge, the Aharon Ofri International Training Center designed a special program geared towards training teachers in indigenous areas. The program's main objectives are to expose educational personnel from marginalized communities to the newest educational trends and methodologies, and to create a multiplying effect through the training the trainers approach.

The first seminar, for twenty-two teachers from Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, took place at the Ofri Center in January 2009. Among the participants were senior lecturers at teachers colleges, primary and secondary school supervisors and principles, and coordinators of teachers enrichment programs.



PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM

The three-week seminar addressed issues faced by today's professional educational staff and included the following criteria and aims:



Developing a master plan for primary and secondary education in indigenous communities.



Providing tools for equitable and quality education for all school-age children, including those with special needs.



Creating tools and guidelines for curricular development.



Educating the educators on teaching methods for specific subjects-matters (such as science, language, etc.), as well as for interdisciplinary subject areas.



Providing guidelines for establishing pedagogical resource centers, regionally and locally, to use for teacher training and support.



Enabling participants to choose the methods and tools suitable to the particular needs of their environments.



Prepare a base for future teacher training activities according to the needs of the different countries and institutions.





Daniilo García Cáceres and Pablo Chimborazo, of Ecuador, participated in the "Training Teachers in Indigenous Areas" course, held at the Ofri Center in Jerusalem from January 10 to February 5, 2009, for teaching professionals from Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru. On their return to their country, they designed and implemented an educational program for professional updating of schoolteachers in indigenous areas. This is their report.

The training program was designed to impact the educational arena from the bottom up. The results would be reflected in the improvement of the education methods in the education establishments of each participant, which would then be reproduced at the regional level, and finally, on a national scale. The program was also placed under the official auspices of the Israeli Embassy in Ecuador and had the institutional support of the "Runacunapac Yachac," the Rural Autonomous Network of Community Educational Centers, and the Bilingual Intercultural Provincial Department. Accordingly, the certification that the participants will receive from the program will give them academic backing in their professional careers.

Methodologically, the program is divided into two modules for each part which incorporate themes including:

- Interculturality and cultural revaluation



- Intercultural education and teaching practices in rural contexts
- Empowerment and motivation of teachers in the improvement of their pedagogic attitudes
- Learning methodologies
- Pedagogic currents based on constructivism
- Curriculum design based on appropriate implementation practices
- The teacher as community leader
- Values in education

On March 18, 2009, the program was inaugurated at the main square in Simiatug, before the entire community. Proceedings were led by the Ambassador of Israel in Ecuador, with the participation of indigenous local authorities and the Ecuador alumni in Israel, including Raúl Añapa, Pablo Chimborazo, and Danilo García, as well as former Ecuadorian alumni from other MASHAV courses.

The training program was carried out with great success. Participants included thirty-eight teachers from the bilingual intercultural education centers of thirty different indigenous communities within the Simiatug parish, effectively fulfilling the objectives set in the program design. Former alumni Danilo García and Pablo Chimborazo assumed responsibility for the different activities carried out during the course.

The next stage of this ambitious program is slated to be carried out in Esmeraldas Province, the hometown of another MASHAV courses alumnus.



Lectures and discussions were led by Israeli experts in various fields, and included analysis of educational planning through written material and professional visits. The South American teachers met with local institutional administrators and got acquainted with projects at the national and regional level. Upon completion of the seminar, the participants prepared a final project, based on their own professional interests.

The program also included study tours to different types of schools (at all levels), educational centers, such as centers of science and art universities, teachers training institutions, and pedagogical resource centers.

In conjunction with the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the global agenda, the Ofri Center is committed

to contributing to human capacity building worldwide, based on knowledge and experience accumulated by the State of Israel.

Educational professionals all over the world face the challenge of providing quality education to meet the new demands of the 21st century. Through its seminars, workshops, guidance, and training, the Ofri Center works to address this challenge. Teachers play a crucial role in achieving quality Education for All. The Ofri Center endeavors to ensure that their role is clearly articulated and further reflected in national policies, which will eventually foster a motivated, valued, and effective teaching force. Education leads to empowerment – the surest guarantee of sustainable growth.