**RCE GUATEMALA**

**“WISDOM DIALOGUES”**

1. **SHORT DESCRIPTION**

One of the challenges of RCE Guatemala is promoting changes throughout the educational system, so as to introduce a culturally relevant education, where cultural and linguistic diversity of indigenous peoples can be recognized. By this way, culture should be seen as central point of education for sustainable development and crucial for the future generations in order to preserve their identity.

Based on the above, we have carried out the project “Wisdom Dialogues”. In this project we have promoted academic discussions on traditional and universal knowledge in order to enrich the university curricula and to explore the possibility of introducing indigenous knowledge into the current academic programme.

These dialogues are conducted by a specialist who presents a short essay, based on empirical research or analysis of documents and personal reflection, which serves as a basis for defining a joint strategy for integrating indigenous knowledge and universal knowledge. The aims of the talks have been to start a debate within all academic units of the University about the articulation of the hegemonic western knowledge with the indigenous knowledge in the various programmes, disciplines and curricula, and to define strategies to operationalize agreements, rules and declarations related to cultural pluralism and multiculturalism at San Carlos University Strategic Plan 2022.

***2. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT***

In Guatemala, despite of having an indigenous population of about 50%, there is not yet a policy and ongoing programmes that allow greater access to higher education for indigenous youth, nor indigenous wisdom and traditional knowledge are studied in the dominant Western hegemonic model in all disciplines of higher education.

However several University statements on different world conclaves have recognized the value of interculturality and have recommended to all universities, the dialogue of knowledge. For example, the World Declaration on higher education for the 21st century issued by the World Conference on higher education in Paris in 1998 noted that one of the Central missions of higher education is to work together to understand, interpret, preserve, enhance, promote and disseminate cultures in a context of pluralism and cultural diversity.

In this same sense ruled the Regional Conference on higher education, held in Cartagena de Indias from 4 to 6 of June 2008, with the assistance of more than 3,500 delegates from all Latin American region. This International Conference recommended a greater attention to cultural diversity and interculturality in equitable conditions and mutually respectful. And also stated that the challenge is not only include indigenous, afro-descendants and other culturally differentiated people at the universities, such which exist at present, but transform them to make them more relevant to cultural diversity, and that it is necessary to incorporate the dialogue of knowledge and recognition of the diversity of values and ways of learning as core elements of the policies, plans and programmes in the sector.

Even our University has as its vision a plural University in its strategic plan towards the year 2020 and considered multiculturalism, environment and gender as the central themes in the whole curriculum, but so far has not been able to do reality these statements. In order to support the implementation of these policies we have promoted the project “Wisdom Dialogues”.

***3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES***

The RCE Guatemala, under the leadership of Instituto de Estudios Interétnicos IDEI, has developed this project, with the cooperation of other 4 stakeholders:

* Programa de Apoyo Académico a Estudiantes Indígenas
* Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales
* Museo Odontológico
* Radio Universidad

Cooperation and consensus have been the distinction of this association amongst the members of the RCE Guatemala. Some of the tasks in which they have been cooperating are:

* Selection and contact of University teachers
* Organization and administration of activities
* Conducting and participation in dialogues
* Broadcasting several dialogues and interview with some participants

4. ***Most innovative aspect of our case***

One of the most innovative aspects of our case is the creation of a space for a multi and interdisciplinary dialogues, as well as the possibility of enriching the University curriculum from an intercultural perspective.

* ***In which area has your Project contributed the most?***

To demonstrate that the value of a university education could be enriched by articulating two logics of knowledge: the traditional knowledge and the western knowledge.

For instance, we take the opportunity of some international debates like the Nagoya Protocol to evidence the importance of the relationship between genetic resources, biodiversity and traditional knowledge. Strategically this convention is a good way to discuss with teachers of faculties of law, agriculture, veterinary, international relations, politics about the rights of indigenous peoples regarding their intellectual property, biodiversity, wisdom, etc. and the significance of this topics into the teaching programs. It is also an excellent approach to discuss the relationship between Western knowledge and traditional knowledge, as we are interested in articulating these two types of knowledge into the University curriculum.

* ***What is the unique long-term sustainability element in your case?***

The recognition of the cultural values and the rights of indigenous peoples as central elements of education for sustainable development in our country and for the strengthening of the identity of future generations

* ***What, according to you are the critical factors that make your project successful?***

The decisive factor was the selection of subjects of common interest to involve teachers and professionals of diverse disciplines, especially in the hard sciences, in dialogue and debate that make it possible to open the University and see the importance of the knowledge of indigenous peoples.

* ***What, according to you, is a critical governance element that makes your project successful?***

*Offer the opportunity to participate to all those involved in the design and implementation of the project.*

* ***Are there any ethical, socio-cultural, political or economic dilemas? If yes, how have they been addressed****?*

*No dilemas until now.*

* ***¿What are the major institutional barriers that you have had to face and how have they been addressed?***

Intolerance in various sectors of the University towards traditional knowledge. Indigenous knowledge has been excluded at the University because they are considered knowledge arising from the superstition of the lack of science.

Showing the same voice of university professionals that TK can also teach at the University, with specific examples of the work that make some teachers in the areas of agricultural, technological and other natural sciences.

**5.** ***¿What are the major action that would enable similar activities to grow in scope, scale or impact?***

Establish a programme of continuous training for university teachers on education for sustainable development for the incorporation of TK in the University curriculum. With the intention to change the idea that traditional knowledge is empirical knowledge and originate from backward communities. It is important to transform this vision and incorporate that knowledge into the curriculum.