CURRICULUM CHANGE AND COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACHES: A WORLDWIDE PERSPECTIVE

THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING

A NEW CURRICULUM FOR

LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

IN GUATEMALA

Abstract

The intention of this article is to present the way in which a proposal was put forward for a national basic curriculum for the lower level of secondary education in Guatemala, within a general curricular reform of the education system. In this process, the International Bureau of Education and UNESCO’s national office in the country provided technical advice. The article examines the socio-cultural and educational context, some conceptual foundations for the curricular reform, the construction of the curriculum for lower secondary education, some features of the proposed curriculum and the outlook for the future. The process of

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curriculum construction included a diagnosis, drawing up a strategy for reforming the first cycle of secondary education and preparation of the proposed curriculum. Likewise, the authors present the steps that must be taken in order for the national basic curriculum to be adopted, subject, amongst other factors, to the availability of funding.

Introduction

An Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace was signed in Guatemala in 1996 following negotiations between the Government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG) that had begun in the mid-1980s. The Peace Agreements, especially the Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1995) and the Agreement on Socio-Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation (1996), laid the foundations for educational reform. Ten years after the signing of the Peace Agreement, a new national curriculum was introduced in Guatemala for pre-school and primary education. In 2007, consultations are taking place concerning the proposal for a core national curriculum for lower secondary education (ciclo básico del nivel medio).

The aim of this article is to outline the process of developing this curriculum proposal as a new experience. In the case of Guatemala, UNESCO, through the International Bureau of Education and its office in the country, has provided assistance and technical support. This support has been used to optimise the human and financial resources for the training of Central American technicians in the theoretical and methodological aspects of the pedagogy of integration made available by UNESCO, the Educational and Cultural Council of Central America (CECC) and the Ministries of Education of the Central American countries. This article is divided into five sections: (a) socio-cultural and educational context; (b) basic conceptual aspects of curriculum change; (c) developing a curriculum for lower secondary education; (d) some characteristics of the proposed core national curriculum and (e) looking ahead. The section on the process of curriculum development includes a diagnosis, formulation of a strategy of change for lower secondary education and preparation of a curriculum proposal. The final section outlines the steps that remain to be taken once the core national curriculum has been approved, subject, amongst other factors, to the availability of funding.

Biographical note: continued

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