

Policy Debates and Indigenous Education: The Trialectic of Language, Culture, and Identity

Abstract

Indigenous people represent a significant amount of our planet's cultural diversity. It is estimated that about 4,000 to 5,000 languages are still spoken by indigenous peoples. Most indigenous people suffer, in one degree or another, from poverty, discrimination, and marginalization issues. Indigenous peoples make up about one third of the 900 million extremely poor rural people living on the earth. Indigenous languages, cultures, and identities are increasingly disappearing due to government policies that often prevent their preservation or systematically aim at assimilating indigenous peoples into mainstream societies. In this paper we explore several policy debate topics and the increasingly important role higher education institutions play in preserving indigenous knowledge and languages.

Key words: language, culture, identity, indigenous education