

# **Mapping Indigenous Knowledges in the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium**

## **Abstract**

The foundation of the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) was due to the resistance to the negative impacts of academic colonialism and neocolonialism. In the 21st century, affirming indigenous knowledges, establishing recognized accreditation mechanisms for indigenous higher education institutions, as well as forming indigenous knowledge systems have become increasingly important for indigenous sustainable development worldwide. In order to reconstruct indigenous subjectivity educationally, politically, economically, and socially, the legitimacy, inevitability, and effectiveness of providing multiple platforms through the operation and development of the global-based indigenous organizations, such as WINHEC, are essential advocacies for balancing various conflicts between indigenous and non-indigenous populations. The purpose of this paper is to map and juxtapose diverse indigenous issues within WINHEC. The emerging research question from this study is to identify if WINHEC's goals, visions, mission, and practice can be substantively translated into a reality for indigenous peoples and how this internationally-oriented indigenous organization can contribute to the indigenized accreditation framework and decolonizing paradigm. Seeking a productive dialogue between indigenous and critical scholars, we construct a re-visioning of critical pedagogy and a re-grounding of Paulo Freire's (2000) pedagogy of the oppressed in local, indigenous contexts. We merge the indigenous and critical methodologies termed crucial indigenous pedagogy by Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 2) and relevant indigenous theories as our theoretical framework, and use the specific methods of literature review, archival and discourse analyses. The data of our sources derives from the WINHEC archives and pertinent literature. Positioning our guiding theoretical framework from a social cartography perspective, we map WINHEC's role in the multisectoral approach outlined by an indigenous accreditation mechanism with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analytical structure. According to our evaluation of the effectiveness of the WINHEC's services and programs, we argue that WINHEC accreditation and organization is successful, legitimate, and an imperative mechanism for both indigenous and non-indigenous worlds. The conclusions highlight factors that both facilitate and hinder the development of indigenous academia and the construction of

knowledge systems. The implications of these findings to theory, policy, and future research are discussed.

**Key words:** WINHEC, indigenous knowledges, indigenous higher education, indigenous critical pedagogy