



# **New Students, New Institutions: Challenges for Academic Legitimation and Social Sustainability of intercultural universities in Mexico**

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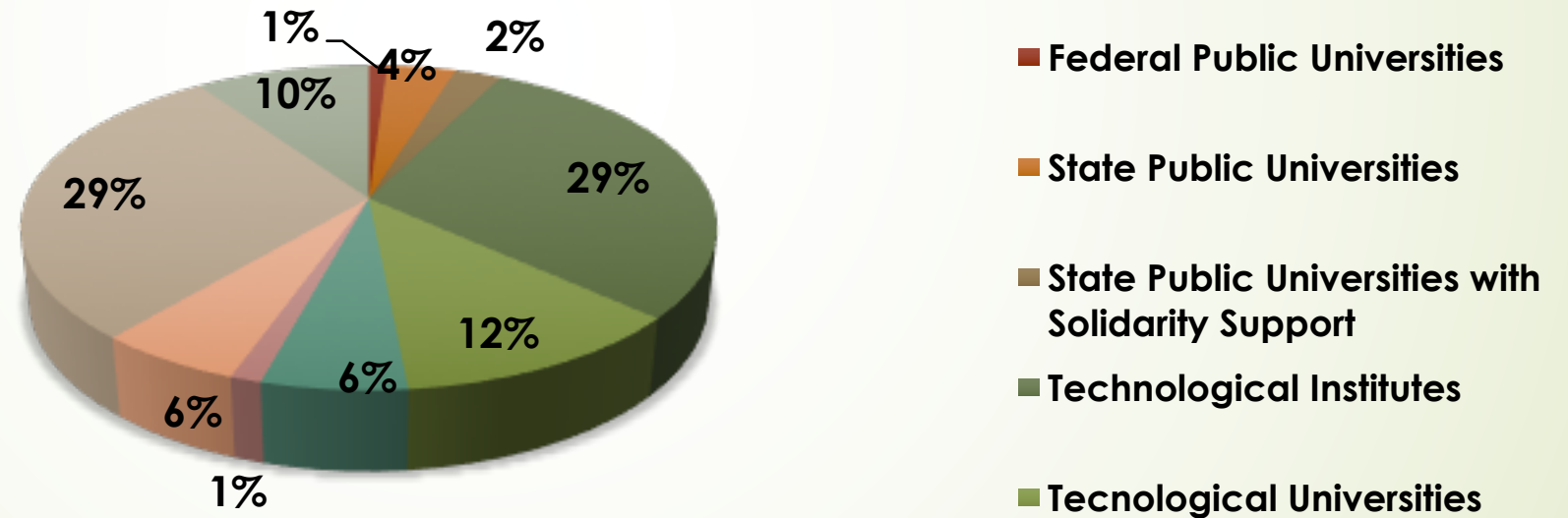


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# Public Higher Education Institutions in Mexico (2014-2015)

## Public Higher Education Institutions (2014-2015)



# Diversification as a major trend of transformation

- Mexican Higher Education System (HES) is hierarchical and segmented in terms of legitimacy and social recognition of the diverse establishments that comprise it.
- The new Higher Education Institutions (HEI) contribute to scale up the number of municipalities with an "offering of proximity"; that is, satellite campuses or new HEI with undergraduate programs, few student welfare services, little cultural activities and low capacities of research.
- In Mexico, not all the new institutions are linked with innovative project. Much of them are second choice opportunity of access for students.
- The quality of HEI in a situation of incipient / intermediate consolidation is a problematic issue, regarding quality measurement norms and concrete results.
- The new HEI have to establish their legitimacy in the field of higher education and in their local environment: although they receive resources from federal aid programs, they have difficulty consolidating themselves as an innovative and different model in a context of pressure from isomorphism.



# New students

Linked with growth's enrollment:

In 2000 , 33% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 were in school; in 2015, 44% of people in this age group were attending some educational center. The gender gap is a little over one percent.

<http://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/poblacion/asistencia.aspx?tema=P>



# Heterogeneity : a characteristic of new students

- ▶ The heterogeneity of students has increased, as a result of public policies aimed at a territorial redistribution of educational supply and at equity.
- ▶ The diversity of students includes family background and incomes, cultural situations, educational trajectories, academic performance and relationships with HEI: from heirs to pioneers.
- ▶ High percentages of new students are not selected by exams by public traditional universities. In a context of personal academic failure, they go to public new institutions, as an functional alternative but not as a free decision.
- ▶ The main issues for those institutions concern: equity in relation to admission, competitiveness in relation to graduation, convenient attention to non conventional students, efficiency and efficacy of organizational model.



# Why to choose intercultural universities (IU) to analyze the interrelation new HEI/new students?

Central place of innovation in terms of:

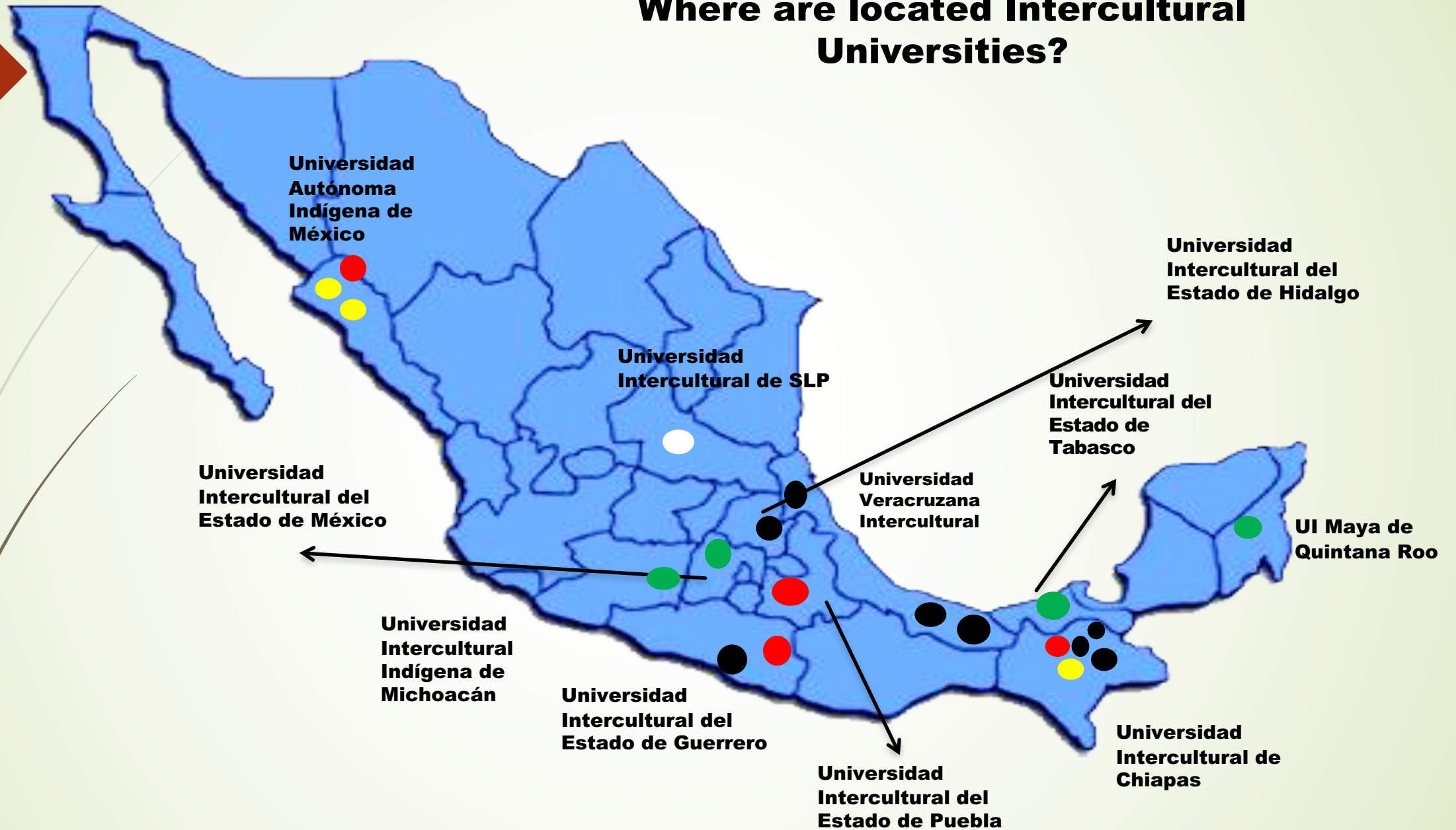
- ▶ Mission: Ensure the cultural and linguistic relevance of education, by adopting an intercultural approach (CGEIB , 2015: 12)
- ▶ Vision: Achieve an education system and public policies that guarantees equitable and respectful treatment between all Mexicans through intercultural, inclusive and quality practices for cultural and linguistically diverse populations (Ibid : 13)
- ▶ Principles : Respect the cultural identity of students in the context of quality education , develop skills for civic participation and mutual understanding , ensure appropriate conditions for learning, offer guidance to teachers and authorities in these areas, consolidate an educational community that includes parents and follows quality criteria for intercultural education (relevance / efficiency / equality / efficiency / effectiveness). (Ibid: 17-18)




# Innovation and institutional model

- ▶ As HEI with “different” proposals to those traditionally put forward by traditional universities, IU must demonstrate that they represent an innovative scheme for the supply of educational services to a vulnerable group, in pedagogical and social perspectives. They have a lot of things to do and very few time to do it.
- ▶ Aimed as they are at indigenous students , they have to deal with controversial notions such as cultural diversity (versus social exclusión), teaching of indigenous languages (versus foreign languages), ethnic engagement of their students(versus freedom of personal choice) and the place of autochthonous knowledge in scientific culture.
- ▶ IU are a small part of HES in Mexico, in a quantitative approach. At the same time, they are an important and significant one in terms of the supply of ethnic based higher educational project. They contribute mainly to the completion of the right to access higher education for a specific group.

# Where are located Intercultural Universities?







# Some historical and geographical data

- ▶ 2004: First intercultural university opens in the State of Mexico/2015: 11 IU
- ▶ 2015-16: IU enrolled 14007 students (on a total of 3,741,094). 70 % are indigenous students.
- ▶ IU are receiving about one in four of indigenous students in HES (9,800 of these indigenous of a total of 39,743 self-defined as indigenous at national scale)
- ▶ Reliability of that estimated data is not very high, depending on the criteria used to define indigenous students: self-adscription, indigenous language, household composition, residence.
- ▶ IU have to deal with an age gap: although there is no data for the tertiary level, in compulsory education, the age difference in relation to the regulatory age for all school levels is pronounced in indigenous municipalities (over 40 % indigenous population) and worsens as one moves through up the schoolsystem.



# Barriers and innovative successful practices in IU

- ▶ Lack of information on the incomes/outcomes of IU and employability of graduates
- ▶ Participation of indigenous associations and families is more rethoric than effective
- ▶ IU are thinking their indigenous students as a vulnerable group
- ▶ Lot of the IU are confronting political and internal conflicts
- ▶ Repetitive offer of programmms
- ▶ Original teaching initiatives for transferring technical, disciplinary and instrumental knowledge to indigenous students
- ▶ Grants and fellowship programs
- ▶ Innovative international networks for empowerment and training of indigenous students and young women, at national and international scales
- ▶ Use of international resources for the academic recognition of "indigenous knowledge", mainly id disciplinary areas as agronomy





# Central issues for a research agenda on the IU and their students

- ▶ Intellectual: Who thinks about indigenous issues today? Anthropologists and ethnologists or indigenous graduates themselves, trained at national and international universities, with purpose of ethnic affirmation are confronting positions.
- ▶ Pedagogical: Are IU aimed at social reproduction or spaces for the consolidation of emancipatory teaching project?
- ▶ Ideological: In what way does the SIU participate in the reorganization and reconfiguration of indigenous elites which, in turn, generates tensions between traditional leaders, rooted in communities, and emergent leaders, characterized by their educational attainment ?
- ▶ Organizational: How to join social responsibility in relation to students and their environment to an academic project subject to imperatives of quality assurance that in fact deny the very nature of the problems addressed by the IU?



# Conclusions



- ▶ How to join social responsibility imperative in relation to students and their environment to quality assurance that in fact deny the very nature of the problems in which the IU are mired? How to deal with the imposition of schemes of bureaucratic, nonstrategic regulation? How to solve particular challenges owing to their ethnic makeup, with permanent tensions between the compensatory, affirmative action and attention to diversity?
- ▶ After a decade and a half in which IU, supported by various organized collectives and academic groups within institutions, mainly psychologists, educators and anthropologists, the sector is much more organized overall (that is to say, governed by institutional rules and standards) but in danger of routinization. While the degree of institutionality of intercultural higher education increased, there has been a decrease in its potential for innovation, its political relevance and its academic visibility.
- ▶ After fifteen years of projects that, though heterogeneous in their representations, strategies and goals, aroused strong interest among specialists and financial resource providers, government, civic and community groups, both nationally and internationally, the results obtained remain unclear and there is nothing to indicate that strengthening the sector is still the political priority.
- ▶ In this context, that's urgent to improve good data bases on the results and to hire qualitative evaluation of processes and results.