

From Disillusionment and Abandonment to Autonomy: Zapatista Bilingual Indigenous Education in Chiapas, Mexico

A Case Study in Alternative Meanings of “Development”
(Preliminary Finds and Discussion)

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1. Introduction

As Bretton Wood’s lofty overall, long-term goals, objectives, assumptions and unintended consequences are examined and “development,” the operative social construct, is targeted and increasingly contested -- so too, the assumed role of education as development’s engine for modernization. Although there is a plethora of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), unilateral and multilateral organizations involved in “development” work, it is the World Bank (WB) that leads them in the conceptualization and practice of “development.” This construct’s profound power and broad enveloping reach is such that even the severest criticism never goes beyond its grand scheme, but stays there, trapped as a variant, a reform or even as radical change -- but always falling within the all encompassing ideological and political net of capitalist “development.” ([1](#))

On January 20, 1949, still reeling from, perhaps, the most devastating of human tragedies, mesmerized by U.S. military and industrial might, but euphoric that at last, a Marshall Plan had ushered in a new era of peaceful

fraternity, the world listened to Truman's inaugural presidential speech.

We must embark (President Truman said) on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdevelopment areas. The old imperialism -- exploitation of foreign profit -- has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing.(2)

Since January 20, 1949, at a moment when the U.S. was undisputedly the world's most powerful military might, Truman's words successfully rode a political, ideological, and psychological tsunami wave and were able to transmogrify the world into "developed" and "underdeveloped." (3) At that moment, very similar to the moment we live today, the U.S. was not only the most powerful country on earth, but also the model of development. Then and now, to reach that coveted development state, it was and is the task of all governments to establish an educational system that teaches development and thus, brings the country into the international economy. The systematic transference of knowledge from this "higher" source consisted essentially of learning how to be, how to become like the United States; that is, an electoral democratic state with a developed (hi-tech) industrialized base, which produces for export and has a liberal economic capitalist system. To do this, Third World countries needed an intense infusion of capital, capitalist style management, infrastructure and technology.(4) Everyone agreed, education was and is key to sustaining this type of development project.

In Mexico, as in most Third World countries and former colonies, with some remaining non-Western roots, the role of education during these last 52 years can be generally said to be one of subservience to the needs of the state.(5) In turn, the Mexican government has, at times reluctantly, and at other times slavishly, for the most part accepted the status of underdeveloped and has been trying to reach First World status ever since. To unleash its productive forces and join the world market, Mexico needed to train and educate its civil society.(6) As noble as "Human Development" is rhetorically, within the overall trickle-down strategy practice of the World Bank, it has only led to the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.(7)

Education is critical to the World Bank trickle-down strategy; that is, it is critical to solving the macro-economic problems. But this top-down strategy seems to accentuate the crisis of the vast majority of civil society at the micro-economic level. In Mexico, during the 6-year reign of the Salinas administration, for instance, which was carefully managed by the IMF (International Monetary Fund), eleven new billionaires were developed and the overall number of people living in poverty grew to 40%.(8) This story has been repeated throughout Latin America and globally, with few exceptions.(9) Over the last 52 years, under the guidance and purview of the World Bank and the IMF, the disparity between the rich and the poor in Mexico have grown to obscene proportions, thus the question "development for whom?"

The purpose of this paper is two-fold: first, to look at a set of data at ground level that examines a Mexican Bilingual Education program in the state of Chiapas and that I have recently confirmed to have been supported by the World Bank,(10) and secondly, to examine a case of non-response to World Bank's development, which focuses on creating autonomous education politically and economically independent of the state and of the World Bank.

II. Background

Recently, current World Bank President, James Wolfenson, has once again sounded an alarm reminiscent of McNamara's 1973 warning.(11) However, today, Wolfenson alarms us of a crisis of much worse cataclysmic proportions. In Wolfenson's words, "Today, across the world, 1.3 billion people live on less than one dollar a day; 3 billion live on under two dollars a day; 1.3 billion have no access to clean water; 3 billion have no access to sanitation; 2 billion have no access to electricity."(12) So, even though, the World Bank does not deny the undeniable facts, it sees itself as a non-factor in creating this tragedy. On the contrary, the World Bank believes that, had it not been for its efforts, things would be much worse.(13) According to the World Bank, it has done everything it can to eliminate illiteracy but the explosive population rate growth has dwarfed its efforts.(14) While the World Bank stresses the training for efficient managers, cultural traditions and corrupt government officials have been obstinate factors resisting change.(15)

While the World Bank faults growing populations, corrupt governments, and market errors for today's conditions, many critics of World Bank development point to the World Bank's marriage to market-driven economic growth policies and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) for the global situation.(16) These critics do not negate the population explosions as a problem, but point out that the main factor is that the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other supra-national institutions, through the facilitation of the concentration of capital and

power, perpetuate increasing poverty, disparity, and inequality. In turn, poverty, disparity, and inequality engender insecurity and a survival attitude that leads to population growth.(17)

Critics point out, that the World Bank supports economic stability over economic morality.(18) Critics indicate that the supra-structure -- World Bank, IMF, WTO (World Trade Organization), NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), etc. – supports, and has a history of supporting, dictatorships and anti-authoritarian corrupt regimes that have had a history of squandering and pocketing national treasuries as well as development loans.(19) In general, the criticism is that to the supra-structures, economic stability is much more important than democracy. Mexico is an example of a country with a long history of corruption that has maintained relative stability for over 70 years, but has accomplished stability through what critics called the “perfect dictatorship.” The “apodo” was in reference to the perfect balance between bribery, fraud, favors, nepotism and fascist treatment of the poor. The perfect dictatorship of the Partido Institucional Revolucionario (PRI) ended after 71 years of rule, on July 6, 2000. On that day, Vicente Fox, from the Partido Nacional de Acción (PAN), ex-president of Coca-Cola, Mexico, and an avid supporter of free trade, a neoliberal economy and the World Bank’s development policies, won.

In late 1994, the World Bank loaned Mexico a massive educational loan of 412 billion dollars to be applied to bilingual education in the 10 poorest states of Southern Mexico.(20) Although a follow-up to a much smaller 1991 educational loan, the timing and size of this one seems to suggest that the World Bank and the government were reacting to the Zapatista uprising of January 1, 1994, which affected Mexico’s South. By then, a newly elected President, Ernesto Zedillo, had promised to reform the completely shattered and failed government of Carlos Salinas Gotari and this was the perfect justification to shore up the damaged image of the PRI, desperately struggling to hold on to power.

In Chiapas, the institution of Bilingual Education, administered by the Secretaria de Educación Pública (SEP), has played a key role in the domination and exploitation of the indigenous people and in the repression of their struggle for social justice.(21) For the last 30 years, particularly, in the face of growing inequalities and suffering, the PRI's institution of bilingual education had been used to create consent and conformity through the inculcation of state ideology.(22)

On January 1, 1994, a small, but well-organized group of Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, Mam, Zoque, Lancandon, Mixe and Chol Indians, all from the Mayan language group, calling themselves the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, (EZLN), rose up in arms. In the Zapatista declaration of war, neoliberalism is identified as the main target and source of their extreme impoverishment and marginalization and adequate bilingual indigenous education, devoid of the ideology of the state, is one of the 13 original demands and goals.(23) The indigenous Zapatistas accused the government education of being one that destroys their language, destroys their culture, and is only for the purpose of controlling them. In response to neoliberalism and their particular educational needs, the Zapatistas have developed an alternative educational autonomous pedagogy that is defined and administered by the indigenous communities and which is independent of the ideological impositions of those in power.

The Zapatista uprising was and is directed at the World Bank, WTO, NAFTA, GATT, a supra-structure that takes the state away from the people and gives it to market forces, and a neoliberal state system that is complicit in allowing itself to be sold to the highest bidder.(24) Immediately after the uprising, the Zapatistas turned their efforts to constructing a new educational system, one that has nothing to do with the World Bank definition of development, but one based on what Zapatistas call autonomy.

In this case study, I analyze a key educational planning document, developed by the Zapatista regional educational commission, “Comision Regional de Educación,” (CRE)(25) that expounds on the autonomous response to the current conditions they live in. I will also utilize the initial findings of a survey of 99 indigenous bilingual teachers that I conducted in Chiapas, while there on a Fulbright Fellowship. This case study is an attempt to offer a better understanding of the underlying premises and assumptions of the Zapatista alternative model; one that is born from the decision to abandon any further reform efforts that the World Bank and the capitalist state is willing to accept, and one that chooses instead to create an autonomous independent model outside of the long reach of the World Bank.

III. Methodology

This paper is a case study of one response to the ill effects of development of market economies in a globalized economic setting. In this paper, I endeavor to answer the question of; in what ways did education not serve the needs of the local population as well as what are the people doing about it? The time and space for this paper did not permit for an in-depth analysis but only for the type of initial analysis that nevertheless brings out some of

the salient themes.

In 1996, I received a Fulbright Fellowship, which ultimately made possible a survey of 99 bilingual teachers working throughout most of the 111 municipalities. The findings of the survey that I will deal with here will be limited to language use, teacher assignment, and community-based school, or in the World Bank's language, autonomy. These three particular items were selected because the World Bank showcases them as strategies that the World Bank utilizes.

While in Chiapas, I was there under the auspices and support of the Centro de Investigaciones Humanísticas de Mesoamérica y el Estado de Chiapas (CIHMECH), an affiliate of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)

Instrument

The instrument for the survey was a questionnaire which is much easier to see and for you to examine than for me to describe. (See [Appendix A](#)) The purpose of the survey was multi-fold. From the survey, I was hoping to address the questions of the internal efficiency of the indigenous school system of Mexico. Specifically, I was interested in the pattern and method of assignment of bilingual schoolteachers in a geographic setting where different indigenous groupings are not only present contiguously, but also overlapping and in some cases coexist within the same communities, as in the jungle communities of Chiapas. I was also interested in finding out more about the particular method of bilingual education.

Limitations

Since, January 8, 1994, Chiapas, Mexico has been virtually under siege by federal military forces. The statistics vary from source to source, but the most conservative informs us that there are at least 60 thousand federal troops surrounding the Zapatista Communities. In addition to federal troops, state troops are also heavily present in the Highlands and Jungle areas of Chiapas where most of the Zapatista autonomous communities exist. Worst and most dangerous are the existence of at least 19 paramilitary groups, or death squads, that maraud the state causing terror indiscriminately. On more than one occasion they publicly stated that they could hardly wait to kidnap, capture and torture "one of those gringito friends of Bishop Samuel Ruiz," a Catholic Bishop known to support the human and civil rights of Indigenous peoples. Fortunately, I am of Mexican descent and actually qualify for dual citizenship, so I had the possibility of trying to blend in. As careful as I was, I wasn't able to totally escape the vigilance of anti-Zapatista forces. I was warned and advised that they knew I was a friend of Samuel Ruiz. While I was there, several of my friends, from one of the NGO coordinating bodies, operating out of San Cristobal, were kidnapped and tortured.

Frankly, I was surprised that the Mexican government would allow me to carry out a study of the role of Zapatista women. Everything went well until it was time for the Mexican government to issue my visa. My visa was denied last minute, but I immediately appealed. Through the appellate process, I was able to stay in Chiapas, but also understood that very important and powerful forces did not want me there and that I better watch my step. Through secure methods taught to me by journalist and NGO friends, I learned to get around the most dangerous situations and carry out three separate but related studies on: "The Feminine Factor within the Zapatista Movement," "Bilingual Indigenous Education" and on "The Autonomous Community."

Delimitations

This Case Study is an initial presentation. I will delimit the presentation of finds to those that relate to "assignment," "language use" and "autonomy." In the presentation of autonomy, which is the most extensive, I will look at all the document developed by the Zapatista Education Regional Commission (CRE) composed of Zapatista "promotores culturales" (bilingual teachers). I will mainly present a text analysis of a planning document prepared after a year of discussions and reflections by Zapatista bilingual teachers. While the Case Study is mainly a qualitative exercise, it uses quantitative methods as well.

IV. Theoretical Framework

In this Case Study, I utilize what many academicians call a Radical Constructivist framework. The writings of Gustavo Esteva, Wolfgang Sacks, and others have not only been critical of the grand narrative that "development" conjures but are also critical of the critiques of the World Bank's "development" construct. Overall frameworks of Freire, Gramsci and the Zapatista philosophical and theoretical writing especially influence this Radical Constructivist perspective. Beyond the constructivist that are critical to the point of reform, radical constructivism sees possibilities and senses tendencies outside the capitalist envelope.

V. Findings

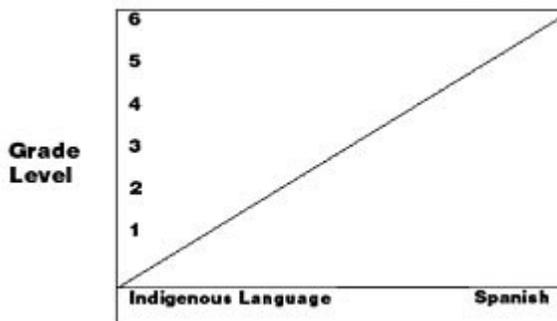
Survey Finds

I will first present the finds of the survey to the question on language use by simply looking at Question 3, which asks; Do you teach in the language of your students? Yes or No. Thirty one percent (31%) of the respondents answered "no" and sixty-nine (69%) answered "yes." We can further break down the respondents according to categories or codes taken from their written textual explanation of what they mean by "yes" and "no." For now, we know that from this group, more or less 1/3 of the children are not getting any instruction in the maternal language in a bilingual program. The second value I will examine is the pattern of assignments; specifically, I wanted to know how many of the teachers were assigned to communities where they lived. A comparison of demographic data reveals that only seventeen percent (17%) of the respondents taught where they resided. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the surveys showed that the teachers lived in a different municipality.

Preliminary Discussion of the Findings

The preliminary finds together seem to suggest that at least in 1/3 of those surveyed, there is no bilingual education going on. That is, in many cases, indigenous children receive instruction in Spanish under the rubric of Bilingual Education. A further look at the written explanation could help us understand why the indigenous language was not used in these situations. A quick look at the grade levels seem to show that the grades ranged from 1 to 3 for those that did not use the indigenous language. One possible explanation is that teachers are following a transitory strategy and using indigenous language only for the purpose of learning Spanish (See graph 1, [below](#)). But even if this approach was used, the third grade seems a little early for complete phase out of the indigenous language and full use of Spanish. The strategy according to one school director at Urastro Urbina Primary, in San Cristobal de Las Casas, is to start with the mother language and phase out the use of the indigenous languages at 1/6 increments every year until by the 6th grade. By the 6th grade, instruction is expected to be completely in Spanish.

Graph 1. Transitory Bilingual Strategy(26)



Another explanation seems to be that schools in the City of San Cristobal might be made up of children from several language groups, in which case, teachers have very little choice but to teach in Spanish. Another possible explanation could be that Bilingual Education is to an extent another rhetorical concession to Indigenous people who have been demanding equality of languages.

"Empty Pockets Never Make the Grade..."
Billy Holiday...God Bless the Child

Text Analysis - Themes

The document that I have here analyzed is put forward by the Center for Economic and Political Investigations of Community Action (CIEPAC), titled "Education and Indigenous Autonomy"(27). This document mainly consists of excerpts from a 90-page document put out by the Zapatista Comision Regional de Educaci3n. In the analysis, I found, through qualitative text analysis, eight (8) categories which are:

- Theme I Mexican government education's main aim to control and oppress Indigenous People
- Theme II Mexican government education is not relevant to the rural indigenous community and doesn't support its real development and sustainability.
- Theme Mexican government education's overall goal is to integrate us through

III	homogenization.
Theme IV	Autonomy allows us to learn in our own culture and language and for education to be relevant.
Theme V	Autonomy puts the burden of change on ourselves -- we take full responsibility. Autonomy is a process of complete change.
Theme VII	The goal of autonomous education is the continued autonomization of the autonomous community.

"Y con el amor nacio una flor de la basura ..."
 Quetzal...Sing the Real...Vagabundo

Analytic Discussion

In this limited space I will only be able to give annotated briefs on each one of these themes. But before we get into that, it is important to mention that one of the daunting tasks that confronts academics and researchers is to tease out what is World Bank supported and what is uniquely state-initiated and perpetuated or actions of the state carried out independently of the World Bank and the rest of the supra-structure. The World Bank's rhetoric includes criticism of a lack of democratic statescraftsmanship.(28) While the World Bank rhetorically criticizes states corruption and lack of democracy, we have already mentioned that there is plenty of evidence that suggests the World Bank prefers, values and prioritizes political and economic stability many times more than human rights.(29)

Mexico is a neoliberal capitalist country and a product of globalization, characterized by growing inequality and diverse social classes whose interest, necessities and demands are not only different but, in some cases, diametrically opposed. By definition, Mexico's economic disparity cannot exist without the existence of social, political, and cultural inequality.(30) It is estimated that at present 40 million of its 100 million population live in dire poverty. Only one of these classes has dominance and appears as the supreme arbitrator in a scenario of constant contradictions.

When Mexico is off-balance and stability falters, the World Bank is upset because political instability is not a good atmosphere for business. The assumption in this analysis is that the World Bank wants to have it both ways. Just enough exploitation, but not too much, and efficient statespeople should know when things are too much to be sustained and supported. Forty percent below the line of poverty in Mexico might be the level of poverty that is acceptable for the Mexican government and for the World Bank at this time.

The first assumption then is that the World Bank is complicit with the state in the oppression and exploitation of the people, consequently severe discipline isn't applied as long as the state doesn't cross that aguante (tolerance) threshold which is, of course, different for different countries and different in different periods within the same state. In this sense, statescraftsmanship can be said to be the art and science of sustainable exploitation of the majority, to obtain the most for a minority with the least amount of disruptions for the most powerful ruling few.

The second assumption is that the dominant class, which is today represented by several political parties, controls the state and maximizes its use to intervene in the social political life of the country in order to ensure its perpetuation.(31) To this end, Mexico's Education and Language Policy has historically been seen as one of the principal institutions through which the state puts forth its ideology and imposes its view. Now, with these lenses firmly located, I am ready to look at the themes in the Comisión Regional Educativa (CRE).

Theme I. Mexican government education's main aim to control and oppress indigenous people

To the indigenous Zapatista community, state "Education is just another way to oppress, mistreat them."(32) To the Zapatistas education is a powerful ideological instrument that the state uses to control them. The ideological potency of education rests, partly, on the importance that the Indigenous people give education. Mexican government education's goal was "to keep us in the dark, so that we wouldn't get to know our own reality, how we are being mistreated and what is the reality of our country," the document states.(33) In addition, in the collective ambiance, to put down others (albeit indirectly) through competitiveness is not OK. Corporal punishment of children is another method that is not OK in the indigenous communities, yet it is a common practice in the schools. "If the child doesn't bring in his or her homework or doesn't answer correctly the official teacher will commonly hit him/her with a ruler. This teaches the child to be afraid and to be discouraged.(34)

Theme II. Mexican Government Education is not relevant to the rural Indigenous Community and doesn't support its real development and sustainability.

One of the important points about government education was that it told stories, but the stories were never about the indigenous and their ancestors or their communities. "The stories were about those living in the city." This theme is interesting because in development relevance is a point that is ubiquitously recognized yet seems not to be put into practice.(35) Further research needs to be done to uncover why education in the rural environment is particularly difficult to carry out. If education is about modernizing and development, perhaps teachers are still married to the definition that rural life is intrinsically backward. Putting forward a positive view of rural life and one that aids in the developmental goals of rural life would be oxymoronic to most promoters of modernization. Another example of this minimalizing attitude of the rural area is the lackadaisical inconsistency of the rural government teacher.

The Zapatistas accuse that "Government teachers come in twice a week then they go and pick up their bimonthly check. ... They teach for pay -- they don't teach from their heart."(36) As we saw earlier from the survey, 83% of those surveyed are not living in the community in which they are teaching.

Theme III. Mexican Government Education's overall goal is to integrate us through homogenization.

The Zapatista perspective is that government education is just another means of taking away and negating their culture and their rights. "In government education children are encouraged to lose their indigenous culture and rights."(37) The document stresses that government education would like to erase the history of the indigenous people. "We are forced to learn Spanish and therefore we are forced to learn their ideas and their way of thinking." If education doesn't stress the acculturation mission, and instead highlights the enculturation goal, then students will perhaps want to be someone else before they are themselves. The document stresses that in these situations of cultural and language imposition, "children end up being ashamed of being indigenous."(38) On a very practical level, the Zapatistas complain that state education taught children how to be disrespectful to their parents.(39)

The Zapatista analysis is that "what the government wants is for us to pick up their ways." As Ponton, Brice, and others have pointed out, the history of education has been one at the service of the needs of the state, regardless whether the state is democratic and not one of primarily following the mandates of the people.(40) Here is another instance of the World Bank, at least rhetorically, agreeing that mother-tongue education is superior to trying to impose a second language. Yet, at best, bilingual education is transitional and Spanish becomes the goal, once more putting what is Indigenous in a lower category in a clear hierarchy of global languages.

Theme IV. Autonomous education allows learning in our own culture and language and for education to be relevant.

Counterpoised to the three criticisms of government education, the CRE makes several suggestions as to what to do differently. "If we want to be able to keep what we haven't yet lost, we had to decide to do things differently."(41) What comes across in the text is an absolute resolve to teach children in their own language. Language is the carrier of a culture's ideas and language cannot be separated from culture. In the CRE, there is a strong belief that the application and reinforcement of cultural traditions and language is necessary to accomplish the type of education that benefits and supports the community. In their words, "Autonomous education understands that education is a vital part of forming community, and as such needs to strengthen respect, which is the centerpiece of our culture."(42) The importance of respect was stressed throughout, pointing out that it was not OK to humiliate another child. "What we want most is that there be respect, that there be respect among and between us in our communities. Our ancestors respected each other very much."(43) It is this deeper meaning of culture and role of language that perhaps the World Bank doesn't apply. The state's tendency, notwithstanding some excellent teachers, seems to be that of assimilate through negating that the difference exists.(44)

In terms of educational goals, the document stresses the desire of the Zapatistas to learn how to read and count but also "to learn how to tell stories about ancestors,"(45) that is the art and knowledge that goes into oral histories. Another goal stressed is the aim of education to teach about "el campo"- the land, because it is also part of the culture.(46) Already, in one of the schools that has been established, children are learning about the "Milpa" the corn plot and about beans. In one of the schools, they have their own "hortaliza," vegetable plot, where children are learning about the campo.

Theme V. Autonomy puts the burden of change on ourselves -- we take full responsibility. Autonomy is a process of complete change.

“We began to reflect on our own authority (rights, obligations, and controls) over education and as we began to get organized -- we began to do autonomous education.”(47) This statement of the CRE gives us a glimpse of what the Zapatistas call "Autonomia de Hecho," or de facto autonomy. To accomplish this, the Zapatistas do not feel that they have to ask anyone except their community for permission. Given the above criticisms of government education they felt that they had to create something new. But, before they could create something new they had to change their own way of thinking of who is the authority in education.

The drafters of the CRE document relate that an extremely important defining moment in the creation of autonomous education was the decision not to allow government teachers in the Zapatista communities any longer. They relate that the first teachers did not have any training nor financial support. In their words, “we had to find a way to develop our pedagogy and to make our own materials and to form a regional structure to get help to all the teachers.” This was an enormous responsibility that was formally something the state was in charge of.(48)

In detail, these first teachers relate the difficulties in the selection of teachers. They started with 36 teachers but only 9 of those are still teaching today. Fortunately, they picked up another 21 making today's total 30. An extremely important point here is the interdependence between the Zapatistas and supportive sectors of civil society. To train the teachers they talk about relying on an educational collective from Mexico City to provide assistance. This collective is today on its third year of actively training Indigenous teachers. Because they did not feel that the materials provided by the state were either relevant or helpful, the pioneering automotists created their own teacher training manual, that, in turn, helped the collective to focus its training.(49)

Theme VI. The goal of autonomous education is the continued autonomization of the autonomous community.

One of the overall and overarching themes that appeared in the CRE was that of autonomous education helping the goals of the autonomous community. Autonomous education is key to the development of the autonomous community. The autonomous community is key to the building an alternative meaning of development. Although the Zapatista approach as described here implies all the suffering and sacrifices implied in a revolutionary act, it is proof that it can be done outside of an unsupportive and exploitive state and outside of the “help” of the World Bank.(50)

V. Discussion and Conclusion

Resilience of the World Bank

The protests against the World Bank's globalizing activity seem to continue to grow. September 11 has imposed a pause on the anti-World Bank public activity given that this tragic event has sharpened internal contradictions and has prompted an opportunity to check the violent tendencies of a very small sector of the anti-globalization forces. Yet, albeit, the global disaster in the hand of the World Bank, it is clear that the entrenchment and imposing psychological hold of World Bank reality and model has plenty of staying power. This is what the World Bank calls sustainability. World Bank sustainability comes from a careful calculation of those that benefit from the World Bank model of neoliberalism balanced against those that don't. There has to be a critical mass that benefits and there has to be, at very minimum, the illusion of upward mobility. In the World Bank model there has to be discipline and fierce consequences for non-players and rogues. This carrot and stick model, having been set, the World Bank then attempts to carry out the cooptation of dissenters. However, those that have nothing to lose, the Freires and assorted “anarchists” such as the Zapatistas and the de-schoolers (Ivan Illich et al) are harder nuts to crack and World Bank advocates try to ignore or discredit their point of view.

The World Bank seems to have a history of a practice that, at least to many observers, is antithetical to its rhetoric. Of particular importance to Coombs (51) was the alarming report given by Robert McNamara, in October of 1973, then president of the World Bank. Some of the alarming facts included that although the World Bank and the development community had done its best, “800 million people in the developing world -- 40 percent of the total -- were living in absolute poverty. (By this he meant that they were not just relatively poor) “but, living on the ragged edge of sheer survival. And their numbers were growing.” (52)

The development community headed by the World Bank was rightfully alarmed and began to make adjustments and donors began to insinuate (impose) this new paradigm, which on the whole consisted of paying attention to the human component, to human development (Coombs).(53) It sparked some urgency and during the '70s this

urgency, combined with oil windfall in the OPEC countries, produced a push for some countries, but then sputtered, and all the new human development indicators again started to decline. But it seems to have led to a series of reforms that led to doing the same thing a little differently. Key to the reforms, however, was the re-centering of education as one of the human development indicators. But as long as the focus is kept on reform (the lesser or two evils) the World Bank will survive. Of primary importance to the World Bank is to keep the discourse within the political-economic confines of neoliberalism.

The resilience of the World Bank to growing criticism of overwhelming and shocking facts seems to come, also, from its ability to absorb and adopt criticism, the ability to morph and partner certain power sectors of critical society. Once the criticism is taken in, those criticizing become “stakeholders,” and the World Bank is able to effectively co-opt the force of their critique. One particular related World Bank survival strategy is appropriating the language of critical grassroots efforts. Due to this chameleon ability, the World Bank now champions such things as sustainability, sustainable growth, and autonomy, diversity, bilingual and mother-tongue education, just to mention a few. Because the World Bank is in global power and because of its vast control and connection to concentrated capital, its rhetoric is privileged. In layman’s terms: Money Talks

Given this, the work of scholars and critics to educate on their perspective of globalization and development education is much harder. But, for a second, let's look at the World Bank’s sequestered notion of autonomy. I don’t believe that the World Bank ever dealt with this notion before the Zapatista uprising. Today, the World Bank defines autonomy in a way that doesn’t seem to be much different from its definition of decentralization. At most, to the World Bank, acceptable autonomy is local control of monies allocated to local education.(54)

Table 1. brings out some of the important differences between neoliberal autonomy and Zapatista autonomy. Within neoliberalism a certain type of autonomy is allowed, which is a relative betterment in the direction of more involvement of the bottom. The struggle in the San Fernando Valley and other surrounding cities in the Harbor area of Los Angeles to become an independent city are good examples. Their campaign goal is to, within the neoliberal set-up, get a fairer share and they are usually headed by local leaders that could be better-positioned and directly connected to sources of power and funds if they were independent. Estevas calls this type of narrow autonomy localism.(55) The Zapatista autonomy is very different. It is not led by local chieftains but by the people and not interested in power within the present neoliberal global set-up. Instead, what these communities are interested in is a different type of state or style of governance with a much different relationship between those who govern and the governed. This Estevas calls localization, as opposed to globalization, and the main connection is with other communities in struggle.

Secondly, particularly in Third World or developing countries, their identity is wrapped up in accepting underdeveloped status, that is a deficiency status of needs, knowledge needs, managing needs, financial needs, etc. The existence of the accepting neoliberal nation and community is need-based.(56) Contrary to this, the Zapatista communities reject the undeveloped status and view themselves as having all the knowledge base that is needed to create an equitable and just world. In the words of a Zapatista commoner, “to be Zapatista, you have to have profound faith that the answers are within you.”(57) Zapatista autonomy is then asset-based and not dependent but independent of the government and has instead an interdependent relationship with other communities that are also struggling in this form. The World Bank model of autonomy does not go outside of but encourages the U.S. style of electoral representative democracy. Zapatista autonomy goes beyond representative democracy to participatory democracy where there is no more bottom-up relationships but circles and relationships between equals. The Zapatista political ethic is expressed in "Todo para todos y nada para Nosotros". Leadership has no monetary gain and is looked as a “charge” or “responsibility.”(58) To Zapatistas, it is not that representative democracy is not viable it is that it is corrupted by corporative style democracy where most decisions are made based on the influence of lobbyists and where legal corruption has clogged up the veins of communication.

In this neoliberal global setting, it is popular to support democratic autonomous communities as defined by the World Bank and to believe that you are supporting the poor who help themselves, while, at the same time, the World Bank supports industrial zones like the maquilas.

As the chasm between rhetoric and actions broadens, the truth threatens to catch up with the World Bank. But many are no longer waiting as they go from disillusionment and abandonment to autonomy.

Differences between the World Bank and the Zapatista Autonomous Model of Development	
Neoliberal – World Bank Model	Zapatista Model
Localism	Localization

Need Based	Asset Based
Dependent	Interdependent/Independent
Representative: Party based Democracy	Participatory Democracy
Supportist	Mutual Support
Reformist Resistance	Creative Resistance

(Links to [Footnotes](#), [References](#), and [Appendix A](#) open a new browser window for easy reference.)

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From Disillusionment and Abandonment to Autonomy

Footnotes

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