



Magdalena Herdoiza

Abstract

Equality is a pre-condition for “excellence” in higher education. Based on the understanding that education is a field where social, ideological and economic power are expressed, the general purpose of this presentation is to promote a collective reflection on equality as a requisite of quality in higher education. In current academic discourse, there is an emphasis on “excellence.” However, there has not been a serious analysis of the role of privilege inherent in the concept of “excellence” when it is devoid of a clear understanding of the social, economic and ideological challenges that people face as they seek to access an “excellent” higher education. On one hand, access is inhibited by conditions of exclusion, such as poverty; on the other hand, access is often restricted by dominant conventions that reproduce inequalities, such as the cultural codes that steer women toward care professions reinforcing gender roles. The regulatory environment in higher education further complicates matters, as criteria of equality are frequently excluded from models of evaluation and accreditation of institutions.

This presentation will highlight two case studies of interventions in and from higher education geared at addressing the problem of discrimination and inequality as a pre-condition for excellence — one at the macro policy level, in Ecuador, and one at the micro academic and service level, in Southern Indiana. The conclusion of the presentation will examine the pertinence of macro and micro interventions in higher education inscribed within a paradigm that assumes equal rights of education for all, an essential element for reaching excellence.

Bio

Magdalena Herdoiza has a Ph.D. in Sociology of Development, University of Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne, France and a Doctor in Pedagogy, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy. Following an academic career at the Central University of Ecuador, where she also directed the Center for Educational Research, in 1995, she started her academic work at US higher education institutions. In 2000, she joined the faculty of Indiana University Southeast, where she has taught courses and directed the graduate studies in education. She is the Director of the New Neighbors Center, which focuses on equal rights of education for immigrant students. Since 2002, she has led the Explorations on Diversity Education study abroad program, which takes place over the summer, in her native Ecuador. As an Ecuador Prometheus Scholar, she currently leads the public policy on equality for higher education. Among her professional contributions as an international

consultant are the Haiti National Plan of Education, and the Educational Reform in El Salvador.