

EDUCATION AND EMPIRE:  
Colonial Universities in Mexico, India and the United States  
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**ABSTRACT**

This article reviews the educational policies of Spain and England in their most emblematic colonies, Mexico and India, respectively, and compares them to those of the United States. Mexico and India share one important historical feature: both were colonies in which the native population greatly outnumbered European colonists and in which native cooperation was crucial to the colonial enterprise. In both cases, the European powers felt compelled to educate members of the native elites to conduct the business of empire for them. In contrast, the United States was a "white colony," in which Europeans displaced the local populations, which were relatively small and consisted mostly of bands and tribes, as opposed to the states and empires found in Mexico and India. Thus, Europeans carried out the work of the colonies themselves or with the help of slaves imported from Africa, instead of relying on the indigenous population. After gaining independence from England, the United States developed an empire of its own, acquiring an immense amount of territory, mostly from the old Spanish Empire, which had controlled roughly half of the present land mass of the continental United States. In addition, the United States obtained sovereignty over other strategically important territories such as Alaska, Hawaii and various Pacific islands, and it unofficially controlled much of Latin America, which came to be considered its "backyard." This enormous expansion of its territory and areas of influence transformed the United States into a world power and created new colonial populations, such as Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians and Hispanics. The United States has always been reluctant to see itself as an empire, a political construct seemingly in conflict with its self-image as a defender of freedom. After all, the country is a democracy that established itself in opposition, first to the old British Empire, and then, to the old Spanish Empire, and its national myths glorify this opposition. Many Americans consider colonial conquest incompatible with the values of self-rule and self-representation that underpin the American republic. Thus, the country has a tendency to ignore its own record of colonial acquisition. This article reviews some key moments in the history of universities in the United States, with a view toward understanding the connection between education and empire. At present, the number of non-white people in the United States is increasing at such speed that some states are already majority-minority, that is, they have more people of color than whites, and the entire country is expected to become majority-minority in a few decades. Acknowledging the colonial history that transformed the country into a multicultural superpower would help revitalize its democratic ideals and create a higher level of inclusiveness, without which it will be difficult for its higher education system to meet the complex needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Keywords:** Colonial universities, ethnic minorities and higher education

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If, as the saying goes, knowledge is power, the reverse is also true: power needs knowledge to establish and perpetuate itself.<sup>1</sup> That is why every major transformation in the economy, from the development of agriculture to the information age, has resulted in educational changes. It is also why all empires have educational policies, whether implicit or explicit, concerning their colonial subjects. This includes the United States, a modern empire that historically has been reluctant to acknowledge its status as such, a status conflicting with its self-image as the world's first secular democracy--the foremost defender of freedom. Nevertheless, in the process of becoming a superpower, the United States has gained dominion over other peoples. Like other empires, it has had different educational policies over time in response to changing circumstances. At the beginning, the tendency was to deny education to subjugated groups, such as black slaves, who often were not allowed to learn how to read or

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to John Douglass, who read the first draft of this article and offered helpful comments.

write, and Native Americans and Hispanics,<sup>2</sup> who were marginalized and neglected, if not explicitly forbidden to acquire an education. But there also was a trend towards providing education in order to facilitate assimilation. Both trends are justified by the needs of empire: While knowledge can be seen as leading to subversion, it can also lead to higher levels of productivity and, therefore, be perceived as a positive force by decision-makers. The various controversies regarding the education of minorities in the United States today are connected to this debate, which has not been unique to this country. In this article, we will review the educational policies of Spain and England in their most emblematic colonies, Mexico and India, respectively, and compare them to those of the United States, a country built with territories that once belonged to the old Spanish and British empires, which in turn had taken them from indigenous populations. To provide a context for this examination, we will first review some key moments in the history of higher education, with a view toward highlighting the connection between knowledge and power.<sup>3</sup>

### Education and Empire

As José Ortega y Gasset (1997 [1930]) noted, strong economies produce strong educational systems, and not the reverse. Indeed, each advance in the evolution of education has been a response to progress in the economy, beginning with the first formal schools, which were established in the Fertile Crescent--an area of the Middle East endowed with a combination of abundant water and useful plants and animals making possible the transformation of hunter-gatherers into farmers (Diamond, 1997). A grain storage economy required record-keeping, which led to the invention of writing in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium BC (Lucas, 1994). The first formal schools date from the third millennium BC and were dedicated to training scribes, who recorded grain transactions. These schools, located in temples or palaces, provided training in all known disciplines, from accounting to etiquette. All grain storage economies had similar educational systems, including not only the Sumerians, the Akkadians and the Egyptians, but also the early civilizations of India and China and the native empires of the Americas, among others (Tejerina, 2011; Lulat, 2005).

The Greeks introduced important innovations in education, including moving teaching from palaces and temples to the agora, or marketplace, of their city-states, whose system of self-government required citizens with public speaking ability. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the sophists provided rhetoric skills, teaching students to defend all sides of an argument, so that they could prosper by becoming good orators. This kind of education was challenged by the philosopher Socrates (c. 469-399 BC) whose goal was to find universal truths. Like the sophists, Socrates conducted his pedagogical exercises in the marketplace and other public spaces, but Plato (c. 428-348 BC), who based his studies on speculation and logic, had his own teaching facility, called the academy, as did Aristotle (384-322 BC), who engaged in work based on observation and classification in his school--the lyceum. The intellectual impact of Greece increased during the Hellenistic period, reaching Alexandria, which became famous for its great library, which was called museum or "temple of the muses." A research and teaching center of sorts, the museum was a state-supported institution of higher learning (Cowley & Williams, 1991).

The Romans adopted the ways of the peoples they conquered, particularly the Hellenistic Greeks, whose educational system became the core of the Roman curriculum. Thus, rhetoric reached new levels of accomplishment with Cicero (106-45 BC) and Quintilian (c. 39-c. 96 AD) and was a crucial component of the Roman legal system. The Roman Empire is an example of the subordinate relationship of education to the economy. As the Romans acquired more power, they needed to increase their knowledge base to be able to run their affairs effectively. Greece provided the necessary expertise. With it, the Roman Empire became very advanced, with cutting-edge technology and a single language in all of its numerous provinces, which were connected by a well-constructed road network and mail system. Thus, the Romans saw a strong connection between education and empire.

With the rise of Christianity and the collapse of the Roman Empire, religious schooling grew, replacing secular instruction in the early Middle Ages, a long period of cultural isolation in which learning was mostly confined to remote monasteries. After the fears that the world would end in the year 1000 were left behind, innovations such the invention of the wheeled plow and a three-year crop rotation, instead of two, resulted in increased food production, leading to a cash economy with a strong urban merchant class (Pedersen, 1997). This new economy required highly trained managers, and the educational system adapted in order to meet this need. Thus, in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, the cathedral schools added secular learning to their curricula and, in the 12<sup>th</sup>, a new kind of institution was created, the "studium generale." According to Harold Perkin (2006: 159), this was the accidental product of a period in which tensions between church and state, caused power to be "up for grabs," a circumstance allowing this new institution to establish itself by playing off one against another. The "*studium generale*," later called "universitas," which means "corporation," was modeled after the merchants' associations. This new institution, which was international in character and used Latin as the language of instruction, offered three degrees--bachelors, masters and doctorate--in fields such as law,

<sup>2</sup> In this article the terms "Hispanics" and "Latinos" are used interchangeably, in accordance with González, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The historical outline offered in this article relies primarily on González, 2011.

medicine, theology and the liberal arts. In a businesslike fashion, these degrees constituted an exchange of tuition money and academic effort for a certificate that would entitle the recipient to engage in a lucrative occupation.

At the end of the Middle Ages, with the emergence of nation-states and the discovery and colonization of numerous territories, the economy underwent a deep transformation and became global. In the 16th Century, merchants became more sophisticated as they became involved in international trade. Government also grew more complex, creating large bureaucracies, employing members of both the nobility and the bourgeoisie. This called for a well-rounded education like that of the Greeks or Romans, whose works became fashionable during the Renaissance, when the *studia humanitatis* or humanities became the companion piece to the *studia divinitatis* or theology. In the following centuries, the sciences were added to the humanities and the vernacular replaced Latin as the language of instruction.

The colonization of America took place when Europe was transitioning from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The first universities in the Americas, which were those established by the Spaniards in the 16th Century, followed the style of European universities of that period. While Spain, having discovered and laid claim to the New World, conquered vast amounts of territory at great speed, England entered the colonial scene later, focusing its efforts on the lands not occupied by the Spaniards in North America. The evolution of its colonial colleges reflects that history, which begins in the 17th Century. One issue to consider is the stage of development of each empire at the time of colonization. The Spanish Empire rose to power very quickly in the early 16th Century with the Catholic Monarchs, Fernando and Isabel, who in the space of one generation unified their respective kingdoms by their marriage, conquered Granada, bringing the reconquest of Muslim Iberia to an end, and engaged in exploration, opening up immense new territories for conquest with the discovery of America. While other European kingdoms were still relatively small and weak, Spain became a large and well organized country--the first modern nation--with state-of-the-art technology, including advanced navigation techniques, and a powerful military. In 1492, it transitioned easily from the reconquest of Granada to the conquest of America. For the next one hundred years--the "Golden Age"--Spain's power was unparalleled. Following the death of Felipe II in 1598, however, the Spanish Empire began a long period of slow decline lasting three centuries and culminating in the loss of its last colonies to the United States in 1898.

As the Spanish Empire was declining, other European countries were positioning themselves to take its place. These included France and England, which competed with Spain for power for centuries, gradually becoming stronger as it got weaker. France became very powerful in the 17th Century under Louis XIV. With the defeat of Napoleon in the early 19th Century, England assumed the mantle of leadership and became the most powerful country in Europe and the world. Although it had lost much of its American territory in the War of Independence resulting in the creation of the United States, it acquired vast territories in Asia and Africa and became an economic and military superpower, a situation lasting over a century and coming to a close with World War II.

In order to understand colonial education, it is important to be aware of the time period in which each colony was established and of the amount of power wielded by the metropolis when it created institutions of higher learning in that location. Generally, empires excel at education when they are at the peak of their power. This is certainly the case with the three countries we will review in this article. As we shall see, the first Mexican institutions of higher learning were established at the peak of the Spanish Empire's power and were very advanced. Their subsequent decadence coincides with that empire's decline. English attempts to establish higher educational institutions in India became more successful as its empire became more powerful towards the end of the 19th Century, making it eager to use knowledge to advance its agenda. Independence did not bring distinction either to universities in Mexico or to those in India, which continued to struggle, because both countries remained poor. As for the United States, an English colony established and lost before the British Empire became really powerful, it did not have truly important universities until the country became not only independent but also very rich, an empire on its own right, with higher education's best era coinciding with the peak of the country's power after World War II.

### Mexico

Spain, which was the most powerful European nation at the time of the colonization of America, had a long tradition of using knowledge to enhance power. During the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, Christians settled the territories taken from Muslims by providing local people with education, religious and otherwise. Following the end of the reconquest in 1492, universities were established in various Andalusian towns, such as Sevilla, Granada, Baeza and Osuna. Thus, the Spaniards were accustomed to providing education to conquered populations, which explains why they were so quick to establish universities in the Americas. In fact, the first Latin American universities were created in the 16th Century, that is, at the same time as many European universities (Benjamin, 1965: 11-12). The first institution of higher learning in Latin America was the University of Santo Domingo, seat of the first colony in the New World (Góngora, 1979: 22). Created in 1538 by a papal bull, the University of Santo Domingo had four schools: Arts, theology, law and medicine.

In the 16th Century, at the height of the Spanish Empire, the University of Salamanca was one of the most distinguished in Europe, and other important institutions of higher learning also were created. The conquest and colonization of the New World took place during this high point in Spanish culture, when universities were established in all Spanish territories inside and outside of the Iberian Peninsula. This included Italy and the Low Countries (Ajo, vol. 2, 1958: 177-209), as well as the Americas.

In the New World, Spain encountered extensive Native American empires with complex cultures and indigenous educational institutions. In Mexico, the Aztecs had sophisticated and demanding schools to prepare the offspring of the nobility for public service, offering both scholarly and military education: "head and heart," as they called it (González & Padilla, 2008: 4). There also were schools for the children of the more modest classes, who were destined for the lesser ranks of the military as well as for administration and commerce (Weinberg, 1995: 34-35). Using assimilation practices they had employed successfully with Muslims during the long reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, the Spaniards set out to educate the Indians to help them run the empire. This effort focused particularly on the children of the native nobility, whom they gave a western education, using Spanish as the language of instruction. Indeed, immediately after the conquest of Mexico, Hernán Cortés requested that Emperor Charles V send clergymen to convert and acculturate the Indians (Sánchez, 1970). Spain was in the middle of its "Golden Age" and had many brilliant writers and scholars. Accordingly, the first viceroys of Mexico were patrons of the arts and supported the establishment of schools and printing presses, which published books on numerous scholarly subjects, including Indian languages (Fernández-Armesto, 2003).

The first teaching institution in the Americas was the school for Indian children established in Texcoco in 1523 by Fray Pedro de Gante, who later led the excellent Indian school of San José de Belen de los Naturales in Mexico City. The latter offered Spanish and Latin grammar, music, and fine arts. While some students were introduced to trades such as shoemaking, carpentry, and tailoring, others were prepared for government posts. This school had a system of peer mentoring, and older students helped younger ones, serving as instructors in neighboring towns. Many such Indian schools were created during the first eight decades of the colony. Among others, Vasco de Quiroga's community schools, based on Plato's *Republic* and Moro's *Utopia*, offered instruction in trades and agriculture, in addition to elementary education. None of these schools offered university-level education, in spite of their sophisticated character (Weinberg, 1995: 57-58).

Charles V thought of bringing the sons of the Indian aristocracy to Spain for their university education, but in the end he decided to open an institution of higher learning in the New World, the Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco, which was established in Mexico City in 1536 and directed by the well-known historian Fray Bernardino de Sahagún. This college had an extensive curriculum, including Spanish and Latin grammar, religion, philosophy and science, in addition to Indian languages. The professors were Spanish scholars trained in various European universities and, later, also Indian scholars trained at the college. The school's students were very successful in obtaining positions as teachers, mayors, governors and the like. This was not the only institution of higher learning in Mexico. There were others, like the Colegio de Tiripitío, established by Fray Alonso de la Veracruz in Michoacán in 1540. As a result of all these teaching initiatives, Mexico had a well-educated Indian elite which was very effective at administering the country on the Spaniards' behalf. This happened very quickly, and the Indians provided professionals "to the conquerors before half of the conquistadores were dead" (Castañeda 1938: 11).

Resentful that Indians had access to higher education while they had to travel to Spain for university-level training, some Spaniards complained. In addition, there was a need to train mestizos, that is, those of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry, who for the most part did not have access either to Indian schools or to a Spanish education. There were some schools for them, but these were not sufficient. The desire for education on the part of all social groups resulted in a request for "a university of all the sciences where the natives and the sons of the Spaniards might receive instruction" (Castañeda 1938: 13). Emperor Charles V complied and in 1551 ordered the establishment of the University of Mexico to teach Spaniards, Indians and mestizos. The Indian schools declined with the arrival of the university. Much later, in the 18th Century, Spain revived Indian education at the missions established across North America, but these offered mostly elementary and vocational training (MacDonald, 2004).

Hernán Cortés, the conqueror of Mexico, had made provisions for the creation of a university in his will. Although his vision was not implemented at the time of his death, it was shared by such influential leaders as the bishop Fray Juan de Zumárraga, and the viceroy don Antonio de Mendoza (Lanning, 1940). One argument used to persuade the emperor to do this was that Indians should be trained in the same way as the conquered Moors were when the University of Granada was established at the heart of the last Muslim kingdom in the Iberian Peninsula. Spaniards believed that there was a strong connection between education and empire. Accordingly, the Franciscans wrote a letter in support of the university, arguing that Spain did not become powerful until it became learned and that Greece and Italy had lost their importance because they had lost their mastery of knowledge (Méndez Arceo, 1952). The great esteem in which Spaniards held education is well-documented by contemporary commentators such as the scholar Pablo Giovio, who noted that in Spain individuals who were not interested in learning were not considered noble (Méndez Arceo, 1952).

The University of Mexico, which opened its doors in 1553, followed the model of the University of Salamanca, and its faculty had degrees from Salamanca, Alcalá, Valencia and Paris (Lanning, 1940). Salamanca was one of a handful of European universities authorized to offer Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Chaldean by the Council of Vienna in 1312 (Pedersen, 1997; Góngora, 1979: 19-21). Since these languages were of no use in America, they were replaced in the curriculum by Indian languages, which made the University of Mexico the first in the world to offer non-classical languages (Lanning, 1940). Knowledge of Indian languages was essential for the management of the empire, and many Spaniards spoke them (Sánchez, 1944: 12). In fact, one important reason for the establishment of a university in Mexico, instead of sending students to Spain, was to prevent both Indians and Spaniards from losing their knowledge of Indian languages, which was a firm requirement for many colonial jobs (Méndez Arceo, 1952).

The Spaniards established many other full-fledged universities in Latin America. The University of Lima, planned by Francisco de Pizarro, the conqueror of Peru, was founded by Charles V in the same year that the University of Mexico was chartered, and it admitted Indians and mestizos from the beginning (Góngora 1979; Ajo, vol. 2, 1958: 141). By the 17th Century, the Spaniards had created universities in Argentina, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Guatemala (Benjamin, 1965: 13). In the 18th Century, additional universities were established in Chile, Venezuela, Cuba and other Latin American countries (Benjamin, 1965: 13). The first Latin American universities offered all degrees, including bachelors, masters and doctorate. Following the medieval university model, the doctoral degree was not based on original research but rather on the defense of a thesis with the help of the three key disciplines of logic, rhetoric and dialectic (Góngora, 1979: 36).

Latin American universities admitted not only Indians and mestizos but also blacks and mulattoes, although never in very high numbers. Over time, the numbers of non-white students at these institutions of higher learning declined. Indeed, Latin American universities, which started as multicultural and dynamic institutions became conservative enclaves for the *criollos*, or descendants of Europeans. In some cases, due to the Counterreformation, the Spaniards were reluctant to offer too much education to the Indians, fearing that they might become heretics (Weinberg, 1995: 58-60). In general, however, the crown protected the Indians with regulations, including one stating that the Indian nobility should be considered equivalent to the Spanish nobility (Lanning, 1940). In spite of these initiatives, by the 19th Century, there were very few Indian students at Latin American universities.

When the wars of independence started, there were twenty-three colonial universities, which were considered bastions of traditionalism (Lanning, 1940; Góngora, 1979: 49). The independence movement in Latin America was connected to events taking place in France in various ways. First, in the 18th Century, the Enlightenment created an atmosphere favorable to change, leading to the French Revolution and to independence movements, such as the one which created the United States. Second, at the beginning of the 19th Century, the Napoleonic invasion of Spain left the Spanish colonies to their own devices, including self-government by means of *juntas* or committees of local leaders. When King Ferdinand VII returned to the throne and abolished the freedoms the Spanish people had enjoyed during that period of self-government, the colonies revolted and, after a series of wars, gained their independence. These wars can be considered civil wars, since the majority of the fighters were *criollos*, or descendants of Spaniards, some of whom favored independence from Spain and some of whom did not. To complicate matters, some independentists were liberal, and others were conservative. Indeed, the leaders of the new Latin American republics were not necessarily more democratic than the Spanish authorities they replaced. From the point of view of race relations, independence did not translate into progress. In fact, independence made things worse for Indians, who lost their rights as subjects of the Spanish crown. Their presence at universities, which had been declining over time, became negligible. The era of the great Indian schools and of great universities open to Spaniards, Indians, mestizos and others was long gone and forgotten.

After independence, many new universities were created (Benjamin, 1965: 14-15; Góngora, 1979: 50-52). During this period, Latin American universities were influenced by the French higher education model, which resulted in the creation of self-contained research institutes (Shils & Roberts, 2004; Góngora, 1979: 55). Positivism also had a great impact on Latin American universities, particularly in Mexico, where it was linked to passionate anti-church positions (Góngora, 1979: 60-63). While new schools were created in 18th Century Mexico to study mines, botany and fine arts from a modern perspective, the University of Mexico remained unchanged (Marsiske, 2006: 16). Thus, an institution that had been very innovative during the 16th Century was extremely old-fashioned by the time Mexican independence was declared in 1821. Associated with conservative values, it was attacked by liberals and closed several times in the course of the 19th Century, until its final demise in 1865. To replace it, a series of professional schools were created. Thus, at the end of the 19th Century, Mexico had a variety of specialized institutions of higher learning but lacked a university. This situation changed in 1910, when the university was reestablished by combining the various institutions of higher learning then in existence and naming the resulting institution the Universidad Nacional de México (Sánchez, 1944: 69). The Mexican Revolution, which started a few months later that year, affected the

development of the university, which became part of its project of national renewal, taking on the role of a state-building institution (Ordorika & Pusser, 2012: 190-192). In the following decades, public universities were established in the various regions of Mexico, but the Universidad Nacional de México, renamed Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, or UNAM, remained the most important and prestigious institution of higher learning in Mexico.

After the student revolts of the 1960s, the country expanded its higher education system and greatly increased university enrollments. During this period, the private educational sector grew as well. The economic crisis of the 1980s brought downsizing measures for public higher education, while the private sector continued to grow (Rodríguez & Ordorika, 2012: 221-223). Since the mid 1980s, Mexico has been trying to enhance research and graduate education (Didou-Aupetit & Remedi, 2008: 238). In the 1990s, the only part of public higher education that experienced true expansion was the technological sector. The private sector continued to expand and by the end of that decade, it had almost one-third of undergraduate student enrollments in the country. As in most countries, private universities tend not to be as good as public ones, with exceptions such as the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México and the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económica, which are well respected (Malo, 2007: 223). In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, there has been an effort to expand public higher education, and the private sector has slowed its growth, in part, perhaps, due to problems in the economy diminishing people's ability to pay high tuition fees (Rodríguez & Ordorika, 2012: 223-226). In response to government incentives, public universities became more businesslike, forcing the private sector to adopt similar policies in order to compete. If public universities continue to expand and improve, the private sector may shrink and lose relative importance, which would be a development contrary to the trend in most other countries (Rodríguez & Ordorika, 2012: 238-239).

Mexican universities have suffered from a variety of problems, starting with the failure to recognize higher education as a career, a problem shared by other Latin American countries, where most university professors have traditionally been part-time, forcing them to take on multiple jobs and interfering with their ability to achieve scholarly distinction. A related problem is the political nature of the decision-making process, which has been in the hands of government ministers who, for the most part, lack academic backgrounds (Sánchez, 1944: 84 & 106). A paucity of trained leadership, and constant policy changes as each government attempts to institute its own educational reform, has resulted in discontinuity and inefficiency. Although the situation has improved a good deal in recent decades, these structural problems have not completely disappeared, among other things, because Mexico is still a developing country (Casanova-Cardiel, 2006: 881-882; Maldonado-Maldonado, 2011: 326-329).

One hundred ninety-three years after independence, Mexico is still unsettled in many ways. The rate of university enrollment is around 22%, which is a bit low compared to 25% in many developing countries (Malo, 2007, 217; Kamat, 2011: 277). However, the country's economy is expanding, and it has an extensive higher education system of solid quality, which is in a position to grow and improve. Although only one of its universities is included in the Shanghai Jiao Tong Academic Ranking of World Universities, its position there is relatively high: UNAM is one of the top 200 universities ranked, ahead of all other universities in Latin America and all in Spain, as well as ahead of many universities in other European countries. It would appear that Spain's decision to bring state-of-the-art higher education to Mexico in the 16th Century had a lasting effect on this country's institutions of higher learning, creating a tradition of academic excellence. If the economy becomes stronger, it would not be unrealistic to expect to see more Mexican universities enter the top 500, with some of them joining the University of Mexico in the upper half of that group.

In terms of internal diversity, while the old Spanish Empire's assimilationist policies succeeded to a large degree, and most Mexicans are of mixed Indian and European ancestry, there are numerous indigenous groups that are marginalized and neglected because they have retained their own languages and cultures. They suffer from low standards of living, and their access to education is quite limited. In fact, only around 1% of them go to college. Although there have been some measures to address this problem, these clearly have been insufficient. By contrast, the situation of women in Mexican higher education today is relatively good, as they comprise approximately 50% of university enrollment. Women began to attend the university in the 1870s, but they did not reach a large percentage of the student body until the 1990s. Today, it is normal for women to attend college. But this does not necessarily translate into obtaining employment, and women's rate of participation in the workforce is low compared with that of men earning similar degrees.

## India

On December 31, 1600, Queen Elizabeth I granted a royal charter to the British East India Company, allowing it to establish trade in India. Throughout the 17th Century, the East India Company's business ventures in the subcontinent expanded from embarking on trade voyages to establishing a visible stronghold in the region. The Company developed its own military to assert its economic privileges in India and to protect its market from other European traders. Of significant importance was the 1757 Battle of Plassey, in which the East India Company defeated the Nawab of Bengal and began a period of Company rule that lasted until 1858.

The success of the British East India Company was heavily reliant upon relationships with local elites. Like Mexico, India was a conglomerate of large states and was heavily populated. Thus, Company rule advanced the notion of acculturation to the local institutions and systems through a policy of Orientalism (Basu, 1978). Expanding trade remained the primary interest of the British, and attention to education was minimal. What educational endeavors the Company embarked upon supported the preexisting systems of knowledge.

The Calcutta Madrasa, established in 1781, and the Sanskrit College in Banaras, founded in 1792, exemplified the Orientalist policy of this period (Tickoo: 7). These colleges were created to produce a steady supply of Indian employees who would assist in the administrative and legal functions of the Indian courts (Basu, 1978: 54). Financial support of these schools was seen as affording "important advantages" to the British (Duncan, 1999 [1792]: 78). Such schooling, then, was a matter of economic and political convenience and served the best interests of the Company. During this period, the English established a college of their own, dedicated to the study of native languages, which was used to train officials. It was called Fort William College and had campuses in Calcutta and Bengal (Ghosh, 1983: 10).

As the Company expanded, and the lifestyles of the British in India became more lavish, its monopoly came to be regarded as a threat to the moral and political standing of England, especially amidst the development of the English Evangelical reform movement (Viswanathan, 1988: 86-87; Ghosh, 1995: 18; Zastoupil & Moir, 1999: 5). Seeking to leverage its governmental power over the Company, the British Parliament weakened its monopoly in the 1813 charter renewal (Webster, 1990: 404), which provided provisions for schooling and allowed missionaries wider access throughout India (Viswanathan, 1988: 86-87; Bellenoit, 2007). This effectively was the first official directive towards establishing an educational system, mandating that funds be set apart for the improvement of literature and the introduction "of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India..." (Zastoupil & Moir, 1999: 91). But due to the war with Nepal and the Indian states known as the Maratha, little new was done in the way of education for the next decade (Zastoupil & Moir, 1999: 8-9).

In 1823, the East India Company established the General Committee of Public Instruction to formally discuss the future of education in the colony. The commission was comprised both of members who identified with the traditional Orientalist approach to Indian education and those favoring the growing Anglicist movement, which championed western knowledge and English language instruction. Within the wider educational debate, British Evangelical missionaries were important in shaping the Anglicist model and arguing for it to replace Orientalism (Basu, 1978: 56; Ghosh, 1995: 18). Some influential Indian elites, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, favored the Anglicist viewpoint and urged Indians to take up western knowledge (Zastoupil & Moir, 1999: 15-17).

The Orientalist and Anglicist debates erupted in 1834, when it was proposed that the Calcutta Madrasa be reorganized according to Anglicist principles of western knowledge and language instruction. The Governor-General of Bengal, Lord William Bentinck appointed the Anglicist Thomas Macaulay president of the Committee of Public Instruction in 1834 (Ghosh, 1995: 21). Shortly after his appointment, on February 2, 1835, Macaulay would deliver his famous *Minute on Indian Education*, in which he challenged the Orientalist interpretation of the 1813 Charter reform's education clause, arguing that educational funds should promote literature in English and training in western sciences (Zastoupil & Moir, 1999: 161-173).

Macaulay made a case for the superiority of English learning--that is, western knowledge--to serve as the foundation for education reform in India (Seth, 2007: 1). In accordance with the *Minute*, Governor-General Bentinck enacted the English Education Act of 1835 and redirected educational funds from schooling in the vernacular and local belief systems to instruction in English (Viswanathan, 1988: 93). Though English was never intended to completely replace local languages in education, it was heralded as the proper language of instruction for the upper tiers of British sponsored education. This policy institutionalized a colonial hierarchy in India where western knowledge was privileged as representing progress and forward thinking. This differentiation had a direct effect on the social status of those Indians who were trained in the new colonial schooling curriculum, distinguishing them from their counterparts as "English" Indians, that is, "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Zastoupil & Moir, 1999: 171).

Though the decision to move towards English education was presented as a moral and intellectual imperative, it served the direct economic and political needs of the changing colonial system. By 1833, the Company was in a state of financial instability. By creating a class of Indian workers who could serve, as Macaulay noted, as intermediaries or "interpreters" (DeSousa, 2008: 64; Seth, 2007: 19-20; Basu, 1978: 60), the colonial government established a new consumer base for British goods (Basu, 1978: 58).

These new Indian colonial workers would not only buttress the economic enterprise of the Company but also aid the broader organization of colonial Indian society. The new Anglicist education was targeted toward elite Indians, such as Raja Ram Mohun Roy, with the rationale that their new westernized knowledge would influence the classes below them (DeSousa, 2008: 64). The "downward filtration theory" or "filtration theory" (Ram, 1983: 95; Basu, 1978: 59), as it was called, directed educational reform away from a large-scale education of the local population to the education of the upper-classes via select English universities and schools. Education in local languages became less important, as more and more government positions required English (Seth, 2007: 19). The policy was reformed in 1854, under the Wood's Despatch, which sought to rectify the disparities caused by downward filtration by establishing education for the general population, in addition to calling for the creation of English-style universities, which took place in 1857 (Ghosh, 1975: 37). Fort William College closed during this period, as the study of native languages became less necessary. Not everyone was happy with the decision to introduce English education, which, it was feared, would lead to independence just as it had in the American colonies (Ghosh, 1983: 402). Indeed, English education made challenging colonialism possible (Bhagavan, 2003: 4).

In 1857, while new universities were being established, resistance to British colonial rule came to a head with the Sepoy Mutiny, in which Indian troops serving in the East India Company's armed forces began an uprising in Meerut that grew to incorporate other discontented factions of Indian society. The revolt proved violent as the Company responded forcefully to repress the rebellion. By 1858, the Mutiny was over. The British Crown had intervened, dissolved the East India Company, and taken over rule of the Indian colony. The 1858 India Act marked the official beginning of colonial rule by the British empire, or the Raj. All educational decisions were now under its direction.

Addressing the argument that poor educational conditions were a contributing factor to the Sepoy Mutiny, the Despatch of 1859 called for more direct government funding of education for the masses by means of local tax revenues. Nevertheless, government involvement in the creation of new schools remained limited due to the colonial administration's lack of organizational and financial resources. Instead, there was a reliance on private schools, resulting in varying curricula throughout the colony (Bellenoit, 2007; Whitehead, 2005: 24).

Higher education during the Raj was decentralized, with each state taking care of its needs in its own way. Funding for universities came mostly from private sources.

The first Indian universities were established in 1857, in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, following the University of London federal model, as the Oxford-Cambridge model was too expensive for such a vast territory (Banerjee, 1957; Tikekar, 2006 [1984]; Tapas, 1999; Thyagarajan, 2006; Pillay, 1957; Tickoo, 1980: 14). At that time, Oxford and Cambridge were experiencing an identity crisis due to the influence of the German research university model, while the University of London, as an examining institution for students from a variety of colleges, offered a utilitarian example that could be followed by colonial universities (Bhagavan, 2003: 11-12). At first, these were examining universities that granted degrees in arts and science, law, medicine and engineering and supervised affiliated colleges but did not conduct teaching or research (Ghosh, 1983: 13). They did not develop teaching and research activities, including graduate programs, until well into the 20th Century (Tickoo, 1980: 27-28). As western education became very popular, more universities and affiliated colleges were created. Indian universities favored the humanities over the sciences, since their main mission was to prepare the native elite for administrative careers (Perkin, 2006: 187; Jayaram, 2006: 747-749). The study of both English and Indian languages was emphasized. Instead of attending Indian universities, native students could go to England for their college education, and many well-to-do young Indians did so, as did the children of the English, who did not attend Indian universities.

In 1902, the Indian Universities Commission found that Indian students at the university level had poor English fluency. Instruction in English in the local schools was ineffective, because students were taught content matter in English before they had a working understanding of the language (Ram, 1983: 179). The Commission highlighted a need for learning in the vernacular but made no attempt to delineate this process. The Commission also argued for more direct government oversight of universities. These recommendations became a matter of official decree through the Indian University Act of 1904. These new restrictive policies drew criticism from a burgeoning nationalist movement.

At the forefront of the effort resulting in the 1904 University Act and other general educational reforms at the dawn of the last century was Lord George Curzon, who served as Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905. Curzon saw education as a method of defeating nationalist fervor (Ram, 1983: 222). The passage of the 1904 Act took place within a larger political context, including the rise of the Indian National Congress. Established in 1885, the Congress had developed into a political party that challenged the stability of British imperialism (Basu, 1978). As a product of the Anglicist system of education, these Indian leaders represented both the intended product of colonial education, the colonial subject, as well as the eventual cause of its demise, the colonial resister (Whitehead, 1995).

Curzon believed that education could breed a new generation of colonial sympathizers. The tightening of control over universities and mass education for the rural poor was structured to employ English as a mechanism to defeat the Indian National Congress by dividing the elite from the masses. The newly established teaching duties of the universities were to be conducted in English, while general education for the poor was to be in local languages (Ram, 1983: 222). This would, Curzon anticipated, create a class of Indian intellectuals who would champion and uphold British imperial rule against nationalist calls for reform and create an underclass content with the status quo and apathetic towards the nationalist movement.

Contrary to this theory, however, the new educational plan stoked the flames of rebellion. By 1920, the Indian National Congress's "non-cooperation" campaign was well underway, with Indian students resisting the system of colonial education (Seth, 2007: 166). Under the nationalist leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, students boycotted colonial universities and, as an act of resistance, created their own institutions of higher learning--the vidyapiths or nationalist knowledge centers that used the vernacular as a medium of instruction. Most of them closed quickly. The Gujarat Vidyapith, founded by Gandhi in 1920, was an exception (Bhagavan, 2003: 142 & 170). By 1921, education in India had been officially transferred from British colonial supervision to provincial control under Indian authority. It would remain so until independence in 1947, by which time there were a total of twenty-one universities. After independence, the number of universities grew rapidly to meet the aspirations of the population (Ghosh, 1983: 402).

During British rule, there was never a uniform system of education (Whitehead, 2005: 324). Instead, education shifted to meet the changing demands of the British Empire. Schooling served initially to maintain the economic interests of the colonial trade market through the conciliatory policy of Orientalism, and it switched to an Anglicist approach when this was needed to open up India to western knowledge, culture and consumerism. The system established under the Raj focused heavily on the upper tiers of education--university and secondary instruction--leaving elementary schooling unstructured and in a state of disarray. Similarly, this system focused on the education of Indian elites and those in urban centers, resulting in abysmal educational conditions for the rural poor (Lindert, 2004; Basu, 1978: 59).

These disparities outlived British rule and continue to shape educational circumstances in 21<sup>st</sup> Century India. For example, the colonial tradition of elites studying abroad has survived, and even expanded with the advent of the global economy. Accordingly, India now is second only to China in the number of its citizens studying abroad (Agarwal 2011: 45). The main destinations for Indian students are the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, although significant numbers also go to China, Canada, Singapore, Germany, Malaysia, New Zealand and Sweden. In the United States, Indian students constitute the largest international student group, ahead even of the Chinese (Agarwal 2011: 46-48; Goodman & Gutierrez, 2011: 86-87). Because India's young population is expected to grow, while China's is shrinking, India may well soon surpass China with respect to its numbers of students abroad (Agarwal 2011: 55-56).

Enrollments at Indian universities have been rising steadily for years. Nevertheless, as the number of students has increased, the quality of universities has declined (Jayaram, 2007: 88). In spite of these problems, the country aspires to improve the rankings of its research universities (Indiresan, 2007: 110-113). Because public universities are overcrowded, and the best are very competitive, private tutoring or coaching is very popular in India, where it constitutes an important source of income for academics. In addition, as in other parts of the world, there are a growing number of private universities, which fill the void created by the shortage of public university slots. Privatization, while useful in some respects, deepens inequalities (Jayaram, 2006: 755 & 765). Indeed college-going rates are not high in India. Although this country has the third-largest higher education system in the world, after China and the United States, university enrollment is only 10%, low compared to 25% in many developing countries (Jayaram, 2006: 747; Kamat, 2011: 277). There is growing pressure to improve access to higher education in India (Kamat, 2011: 282-283).

Upper-class Indians have access to the best universities and the most prestigious higher education institutes, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institutes of Management, the Indian Institute of Science, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and the National Law School of India University. But the quality of many public universities is deficient, and the poor still have insufficient access to higher education (Jayaram, 2006: 753-755; Kamat, 2011: 275).

Sixty-seven years after independence, India is still struggling with its higher education system. Yet the recent economic development of the country, which is emerging as one of the world's largest economies, bodes well for the future of its universities. At present, only one of its institutions of higher learning, the Indian Institute of Science, established during the Raj as an English-Indian joint venture, is among the top 500 universities, according to the Shanghai Jiao Tong Academic Ranking of World Universities. If economic growth continues, it would not be unrealistic to expect to see at least a few Indian universities join this group in the near future, with one or two of them entering the top half.

In terms of internal diversity, India continues to struggle with the problem of caste. Through a reservations policy or affirmative action system, members of marginalized castes and other disadvantaged groups, can attend public universities (Hasan & Nussbaum, 2012: 5). But their numbers continue to be small. By contrast, female enrollment at the post-secondary level is stronger, although there is still room for improvement. Women started to attend college in the 1870s. At the time of independence, slightly under 10% of university students were women. Today, this figure is over 40%, with great variations among regions, where rates of female enrollment range from approximately 30% to 60%. As in Mexico, many women college graduates do not obtain employment, so their presence in the workforce is considerably smaller than these figures suggest.

### The United States

Unlike Mexico or India, the United States was a "white colony," in which Europeans displaced the local populations, which were relatively small and consisted mostly of bands and tribes, as opposed to the states and empires found in Mexico and India. Thus, Europeans carried out the work of the colonies themselves or with the help of slaves imported from Africa, instead of relying on the indigenous population. As with the colonization of India, the settlement of the United States took place before the peak of the British Empire. Unlike India, which did not become independent until the 20th Century, the United States gained its independence in the 18th Century and developed an empire of its own in the 19th Century, acquiring an immense amount of territory, mostly from the old Spanish Empire, which had controlled roughly half of the present land mass of the continental United States. In addition, the United States obtained sovereignty over other strategically important territories such as Alaska, Hawaii and various Pacific islands, including, for a brief but eventful period of time, the Philippines (Hsu, 2013a), and it unofficially controlled much of Latin America, which came to be considered its "backyard." This enormous expansion of its territory and areas of influence transformed the United States into a world power and created new colonial populations, such as Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians and Hispanics, who became marginalized ethnic minorities in their home regions. Later, more Hispanics came to the United States from various parts of Latin America, especially Mexico. Given the unofficial control that the United States has exercised over their countries of origin, which belong to its sphere of influence, these newcomers can be seen, along with the original U.S. Hispanics, as colonized minorities (Blauner, 1987) for purposes of understanding their place in American society. In other words, the movement of Hispanics from Latin America to the U.S. can be seen as a movement of colonials to the metropolis, rather than as a typical pattern of immigration.

In terms of education, both first wave colonials, or groups first marginalized under the British Empire in North America (Native Americans and African Americans), and second wave colonials, or groups first marginalized under the U.S. empire (Hispanics, Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders), have been, and continue to be, underrepresented at American universities. The history of American higher education needs to be viewed against the background of the growth of the American empire: As it incorporated portions of the old British and Spanish Empires, as well as other territories, the ancestors of today's ethnic and racial minorities came under its territorial or extended control.

The first college in the English colonies in North America, Harvard, was established in 1636, eighty-five years after the University of Mexico, which by then had already graduated thousands of students (Sánchez, 1970 [1944]). While Latin American universities were comprehensive institutions of higher learning generously supported either by the Crown or by the Church, the English colonial colleges in North America were neither full-service universities nor well-funded (Herbst, 1982) and had to resort to philanthropy in order to survive. The large and strong Latin American universities later declined, while the small and weak colleges in the United States became distinguished institutions of higher learning, because of the different economic fortunes of their respective regions.

The North American colonies were settled before England became a truly important power, so the thirst for knowledge that usually accompanies empire was not as strong as that in 16th Century Spain, which established top flight universities in its first American colonies at the peak of its power. When the Spanish Empire entered a long period of decline in the early 17th Century, the universities that had been cutting edge in the previous century slowly became antiquated. In addition, many of the Spanish colonies and their universities were established when the empire was already in decline.

The situation in the English colonies in North America was completely different. The territories the English occupied lacked large social formations like the Aztec or Inca empires. In addition, the English were not keen on acculturating conquered populations, a skill that the Spaniards had developed during centuries of Christian and Muslim interactions. Thus, while the Spaniards, using skills acquired during the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, acculturated Native Americans and used them to carry out most of the work involved in administering their colonies, the English focused on taking possession of the land, removing or isolating the Indians and doing the work themselves or with the assistance of African slaves. As a result, the English colonists did not see a need to educate indigenous peoples, and their colleges were white institutions. Although some colleges, such as Harvard and Dartmouth, initially expressed a desire to educate the Indians, they did not really follow through (Pfister 2009: 26; Wright, 1991:

433; Thelin, 2004). The few experiments in Indian education made by colonial colleges ended in disaster (Wright 1991: 442; Pettitt 1946: 6).

While the Spaniards had a single religion, Catholicism, the English belonged to a variety of denominations, mostly Protestant (Véliz, 1994). This led to the establishment of many colleges, so that each religious group could educate its members and leaders. Because of the long distances among population centers, however, colleges needed to admit students from other Christian denominations, so there had to be considerable tolerance, including representation of other religious groups on their boards of trustees. Thus, American colleges were flexible. Their student bodies included students from relatively poor backgrounds along with well-to-do ones, who made up the bulk of the enrollment. Most students were white. Indians and blacks were almost totally absent, as were women.

The English colonial colleges, whose goal was to prepare clerics and educate gentlemen who could succeed in any occupation, followed Harvard's curriculum, which was based on the combination of the medieval curriculum and a Renaissance focus on the Classics prevalent at Oxford and Cambridge (Rudolph, 1962). The study of modern languages and the sciences was introduced over time.

These colleges were established when England was expanding and creating an empire, a system disliked by the colonists, who ended up leaving it to establish an independent country and create an empire of their own. Independence made education more important, and the number of colleges increased rapidly. Yet George Washington's dream of creating a large national university for the new country never came true (Wheeler, 1926). Instead, the number of small colleges continued to grow, in part because they were good for local business, and cities and towns competed to open such institutions of higher learning all over the country.

In the 19th Century there was a proliferation of colleges, but none of them offered advanced degrees. Unlike the University of Mexico and other Latin American institutions of higher learning, which had graduate programs, these were not available in the United States, and students had to go to Europe to obtain degrees at that level. This circumstance put American scholars in touch with developments in Germany, which in 1810 had created a new kind of institution of higher learning, the University of Berlin--the first research university. While Latin American universities continued to follow the academic tradition they had imported from Salamanca in the 16th Century, American colleges imported the Berlin model in the 19th Century. This influence became particularly strong after the Civil War, when the nation became more prosperous and the number of American students who studied in Germany increased sharply (Benjamin, 1965: 39). Education was becoming a necessary companion to empire.

After the Civil War, the German research model was combined with the English teaching model by adding a graduate school to the undergraduate college (González, 2001). "The largest philanthropic bequest ever seen in the United States at that time" (Thelin 2004: 112) made possible the establishment in 1876 of the first research university in the United States, Johns Hopkins. According to Veysey, what made this event possible was "the blunt fact of the surplus capital that was newly available" (1965: 3). In addition, the leadership of Daniel Gilman was crucial. With the funds that had been made available to him, Gilman was able to implement his plan for a faculty-centered institution built around graduate education, with well-endowed graduate fellowships, laboratories and libraries (Geiger, 1986). Other colleges quickly followed suit and transformed themselves into research universities. This change was aided by the introduction of electives, an idea advanced by Harvard's president, Charles Eliot. The elective principle, which took into consideration the knowledge explosion and its call for specialization, made the transformation of the English college possible "by grafting upon it German ideals" (Rudolph, 1962: 305).

An important development around this time was the creation of the land grant universities, which had a practical orientation. With the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 and the Hatch Act of 1887, public universities focused on applied knowledge and service to society, developing the triple mission of teaching, research and service--an important contribution of the United States to the evolution of higher education. Thus, the lack of full-fledged universities ended up facilitating the transformation of the higher education model by the addition of research and service. At the same time, the colleges that did not become universities served to expand education options for students. It was the perfect higher education system for the modern superpower the United States was becoming. This system entered its Golden Age after World War II, a period characterized by the "three P's" of prosperity, prestige and popularity (Thelin, 2004: 260). After the country's victories in Europe and the Pacific, the GI Bill allowed millions of students to attend college. Following the call of Vannevar Bush's 1945 manifesto *Science, the Endless Frontier* and the launching, in 1957, of the satellite Sputnik by the Soviet Union, accelerating the space race, the United States made great investments in research, conscious of the connection between knowledge and power. The post-World War II era was unquestionably the peak both of the American empire and of its universities, which became the best in the world.

During that period, there was a growing awareness that not all members of the population had equal access to such distinguished institutions of higher learning. In terms of ethnicity and gender, social inequality of course had been present in the educational system from the start. As we have seen, colonial education was basically only for white males. Indians were excluded, except in a small number of cases, and blacks had no access to schools, let alone to universities. In fact, in many cases black slaves were explicitly forbidden access to such basic skills as reading and writing, activities that were regarded as subversive. Even after emancipation, the status of blacks was precarious, and their educational opportunities were far from adequate. The same was true of Hispanics, who lived on the margins of American society. In addition to ethnic minorities, white women had limited access to education, particularly at the post-secondary level.

This situation started to change after the Civil War, when colleges for women and minorities were established. Very small numbers of blacks were able to go to college before the Civil War, all of them in the North. After the Civil War, colleges for blacks were created in the South, including the HBCUs, funded by the Morrill Act. In addition, at the end of the 19th Century, a few schools devoted to the education of Native Americans were created, including the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania and the Hampton Institute in Virginia (Hsu, 2013b). Hispanics did not have colleges created specifically for them, and they had only sporadic access to higher education.

Throughout the first half of the 20th Century, access to college was difficult not only for colonial populations, such as Native Americans, blacks and Hispanics, but also for immigrant groups. For example, Jews suffered considerable discrimination in the 1920s and 1930s, when elite institutions of higher learning established quotas to reduce their presence in the student body, which would have been much higher if admissions had been based on grades alone. In the 1940s, many Japanese-Americans were placed in internment camps, which interfered with their college educations. The circumstances of these and other groups improved after World War II, when universities became more welcoming to students from non-traditional backgrounds. Nevertheless, Native Americans and African Americans, the two groups that had been subjugated in English colonial society, continued to suffer from underrepresentation at universities, as did Hispanics and other minorities colonized in the expansion of the American empire.

Indeed the numbers of minorities did not greatly increase until the civil rights movement, which prevailed as an indirect consequence of World War II and the Cold War following it. Among other reasons for the movement's successes were the competition with the Soviet Union for the allegiance of mostly non-white Third World countries and the consequent need for the United States not to appear to be a racist power. Moreover, people who had risked their lives to fight for the nation abroad could not easily be convinced to submit once again to racial segregation at home. And the intellectual effects of anticolonial movements made themselves felt within the United States and its universities.

Thus, the war and its aftermath made evident the need for internal reform in order to promote democratic relations among the country's various racial and ethnic groups. As with earlier superpowers, the peak of the American empire brought a realization that it was important to bring marginalized groups within the mainstream, and one way to do so was to provide them with access to higher education.

### **Parallels and Contrasts**

The circumstances of Mexico and India today are not totally dissimilar. Both are large developing countries that play a prominent role in their respective regions. Mexico is the second largest Latin American country after Brazil, and India occupies the same position in Asia with respect to China. In terms of gross domestic product (GDP), India's is 10th in the world, and Mexico's is 14<sup>th</sup>. And Mexico's per capita GDP is the 67<sup>th</sup> largest, whereas India's is the 133<sup>rd</sup>, according to International Monetary Fund figures. Although many people in both countries, including indigenous groups in Mexico and marginalized castes in India, are still very poor, each has an expanding middle class with increasingly high levels of education for men and women alike. Universities in both countries have been growing in numbers and in quality, and the challenges they face are similar. Most Mexican and Indian universities are far from the top of international rankings. There is massification and privatization in both countries' higher education systems. In fact, one way these countries have expanded enrollments is by allowing private universities to absorb student demand. Teaching styles are often old-fashioned, and the volume and significance of research is not as high as it could be. In part, this is due to an academic system that does not provide enough time and money for faculty members to be able to concentrate on their work. In addition, the academic system in each of these countries lacks flexibility, is very political, and causes promotions often to be associated with factors other than merit. In spite of these constraints, both countries are making considerable strides, and their best institutions of higher learning have realistic aspirations to becoming world-class universities.

These two countries share one important historical feature: both were colonies in which the native population greatly outnumbered European colonists and included advanced social formations, such as large states, and in which native cooperation

was crucial to the colonial enterprise. In both cases, the European powers felt compelled to educate members of the native elites to conduct the business of empire for them.

Spain, which, after centuries of wars against the Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, was accustomed to assimilating conquered populations, proceeded to acculturate Native American groups immediately after the conquest of Mexico in the 16th Century. First, it did so through special schools and then by opening universities to which indigenous peoples were granted access. Both schools and universities used Spanish as the language of instruction from the beginning, although Native American languages also were taught. Over time, as Spaniards and their descendants became more able to run the empire on their own, Native Americans progressively disappeared from the higher education system.

England, a nation that was less experienced at integrating people from other cultures, hesitated about the educational path to take in India, not engaging in acculturation until the 19th Century, when it opened the first universities. Similarly to Spanish practices, local languages were taught at these universities although the language of instruction was English. But in contrast with the Spanish Empire, whose universities accepted both Native American and Spanish students, universities in India were for colonials only, since the colonists sent their children to universities in England. In this sense, the first universities in India were closer to the paradigm of the Mexican Native American schools than to that of the University of Mexico. Not coincidentally, the universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, which taught colonials only, were modeled after the University of London, not Oxford or Cambridge, and offered limited degrees, while the University of Mexico, which taught colonists as well as colonials, was patterned after the top institution of higher learning in Spain at the time, the University of Salamanca, and was a full-service university offering all degrees. Along the same lines, universities in India were much less well-funded than universities in Latin America, which had strong backing from the Crown and the Church.

The different education policies adopted by Spain and England with respect to native populations reflect the characteristics of each empire. The Spanish Empire, where racial mixing was a common practice, was comfortable with integration at its universities, while the British Empire, which regarded racial mixing with apprehension, had a segregated university system. In each case, an effort to assimilate the native elite through a European university education was made at the peak of the empire, the 16th Century for Spain and the 19th Century for England. During the decline of the Spanish Empire following the 16th Century, and the rise of the British Empire before the 19th Century, both countries displayed an ambivalent attitude towards the education of natives. It was only at the peak of each empire that the connection between knowledge and power was seen clearly and consciously strengthened. During that period, Spain believed that it could not rule Mexico without the full cooperation of local elites, and the same was true of England in India.

In contrast, the United States has always been reluctant to see itself as an empire, a political construct seemingly in conflict with its self-image as a defender of freedom. After all, the country is a democracy that established itself in opposition, first to the old British Empire, and then, to the old Spanish Empire, and its national myths glorify this opposition. Many Americans consider colonial conquest incompatible with the values of self-rule and self-representation that underpin the American republic. Thus, the country has a tendency to ignore its own record of colonial acquisition. History books, which stress agency when referring to the conquests carried out by other countries, ignore it when it comes to the actions of the United States, whose conquests are often narrated in the passive voice as if the various territories that comprise it had somehow become part of this nation by themselves. The failure to recognize that the United States is a superpower, like others, created through the appropriation of territories previously controlled by other peoples, has prevented Americans from fully understanding and appreciating both their position in the world and their internal diversity.

As the United States, a country built out of parts of the old British and Spanish Empires, became an empire of its own, and its power peaked after World War II, it found itself dealing with multiple layers of internal diversity: those inherited from the old British Empire from which it had declared independence, those generated by the official or unofficial control of large parts of the old Spanish Empire and those resulting from its influence on many other peoples around the world. At present, the number of non-white people in the United States is increasing at such speed that some states are already majority-minority, that is, they have more people of color than whites, and the entire country is expected to become majority-minority before the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

When the overall number of minorities in the United States was relatively small, measures to defend their civil rights, including the right to education, were seen as political concessions. As demographic changes continue and the country moves toward a majority-minority population, however, the education of all ethnic groups becomes an economic imperative, since everyone's well-being depends on the nation's sustaining high levels of prosperity. This cannot be achieved if large numbers of people remain excluded from the university (González, 2002). In addition to educating all ethnic and racial minorities, the United States needs to reflect on its national myths and enhance its self-understanding. Acknowledging the imperial history that transformed

the country into a multicultural superpower would help revitalize its democratic ideals and create a higher level of inclusiveness, without which it will be difficult for its higher education system to meet the complex needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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