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Toponymic education and practice and international cooperation: Training courses in toponymy

Toponymy Training Courses Impact in Brazil, 2007

Submitted by Brazil**

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In an effort to broaden the debate on the need to implement in Brazil the United Nations resolutions for toponymic standardization, the Brazilian *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE) is promoting discussions and training on the many issues that it involves. First, the working plan of IBGE on geographical names was discussed and redesigned during the IV National Conference of Geography and Cartography, which included a round-table on the Brazil Geographic Names Data Base (*Banco de Nomes Geográficos do Brasil – BNGB*). The report of the round-table included a recommendation to design and implement training programs in order to strengthen the actions towards standardization of geographical names in IBGE and in Brazil, connected with international actions linking the program with Latin American countries and the Portuguese-speaking community worldwide. As a result, IBGE proposed a training program for 2007 and by June 2007 had already promoted two courses. A third course is planned for the second semester. It is expected that the Coordination of Cartography will propose a similar training program for implementation in 2008.

In 2007, *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE) promoted toponymy courses through its Escola Nacional de Ciências Estatísticas (ENCE), which is responsible for the implementation of the Annual Training Plan (PAT) of IBGE. Following the approval, by the IBGE Committee for the Coordination of Training, of a program proposed by the Coordination of Cartography, the PAT 2007 included courses in toponymy, two of which were held in the first semester and enrolled 33 students each. With the support of the Pan-American Institute for Geography and History (PAIGH), the second course was the International Course on Applied Toponymy that PAIGH holds yearly in a different country of Latin America through the Working Group on Toponymy of its Commission of Cartography, and was hosted by IBGE in its headquarters in Rio de Janeiro. Around 30% of the students enrolled in this second course work in other governmental agencies, states and countries and, in consequence, the course represented an important step towards the construction of the national and international network for toponymy standardization and its capacity. The last PAIGH course held in Brazil was in 1992.

The Coordination of Cartography proposed and got approved this series of courses after having two representatives in the 2006 international events supported by the United Nations: the 23rd session of UNGEGN in Vienna and the International Toponymy Course held in Maputo, Mozambique, in September 2007, by the UNGEGN Working Group on Training. IBGE is very thankful to the Mozambique delegate at the 23rd session, Luís Abrahamo, and his team, for the invitation and support given to the Brazilian representatives in Vienna and Maputo. A note of thanks must also be directed to the chairperson of UNGEGN, Helen Kerfoot, the convener of the Working Group on Training Training Group, Ferjan Ormelling, and instructors Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu, Peter Raper and Lucie Möller, who kindly agreed on the use of the contents of their presentations at the Maputo course in the Brazilian training program courses.

First Training Course on Toponymy: Collection of Geographical Names

The first course promoted by IBGE in 2007 was a five-day course centered on the field collection of names. Five instructors were involved in the organization and writing of teaching materials, as well as the planning of the fieldwork planned for the third day of the course. The first day of the course was totally dedicated to the presentation of the main points of national

standardization, according to the United Nations Manual for the Standardization of Geographical Names. The teaching material used for this part was the unedited translation of the Manual that was done with the support of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History through the 2006 Project for Technical Cooperation in Geographical Names in Latin America coordinated by Moema José de Carvalho Augusto. The course had 33 students enrolled, from all parts of Brazil, all of them working for IBGE.

The teaching materials were enriched by publications that were only possible thanks to the support of an international cooperation program between Brazil and Canada. The documents were produced as part of the National Geospatial Framework Project (*Projeto da Infra-Estrutura Geoespacial Nacional – PIGN*), an international cooperation project coordinated by IBGE and the University of New Brunswick in Canada. PIGN is sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through an international agreement with the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, *Agência Brasileira de Cooperação* (ABC). The PIGN goal is to contribute to social equity in Brazil through the development of a modern national geospatial framework that will allow future progress in land reform, environmental management, and natural resource development. Impacts caused by the adoption of a new national geospatial framework include technical issues affecting government agencies and private companies, and social impacts such as good governance. PIGN's main technical goal is to support Brazilian efforts to realize the national adoption of a geocentric coordinate system (SIRGAS2000) compatible with modern satellite technologies such as the Global Positioning System (GPS). In all, this project aims to assist the resolution of disputes between various agencies with accurate, consistent, and easily available systematic geographical information, including geographical names.

The three publications supported by PIGN were:

- (1) The UNGEGN brochure “Consistent use of place names” (2001) - *Grupo de Peritos das Nações Unidas em Nomes Geográficos* (500 copies)
- (2) The Canadian “Principles and procedures for geographical naming’ (2001) - *Princípios e procedimentos para a nomeação geográfica* (200 copies)
- (3) The Canadian “Guide to the field collection of native geographical names” (1992) - *Guia de coleta de campo de nomes natives* (50 copies)

On the final evaluation of the results of the course on collection of geographical names, the instructors heard that the course was a real need that was finally fulfilled. One of the instructors expressed specially well the importance of the training when he pointed out that regardless of the technological improvements that are bringing enormous changes to the cartographic production procedures, the collection of names will always have to rely on human hands. Therefore, human resources capacity must be built and renewed whenever possible.

International Course on Applied Toponymy

The support of PAIGH was also very important for the success of the second course, initially planned to be a five-day introductory course about standardization of geographical names. Aware that PAIGH holds an yearly course on Applied Toponymy through the Working Group

on Geographical Names of its Cartography Commission and wanted to hold the 2007 course before the conference in August, the president of IBGE proposed and got the approval of the Secretary General of PAIGH to host the course at IBGE headquarters in Rio de Janeiro in May 2007, after consultation with the instructors from the United States of America and from Honduras. The coordinators of the training program also agreed to make adjustments in the agenda so that a ten-day course could be held. Taking into account the fact that the course was offering a good opportunity to start building the needed network for standardization in Brazil and Latin America, other institutions interested in standardization were also invited to send a representative in order to be trained to be part of the planned network that will help to implement a program for the national standardization of geographical names. From the 33 students enrolled, around 30 percent were workers from other institutions that work in partnership with IBGE in geographical names and other themes.

IBGE takes the opportunity to thank the instructors and their institutions, as well as the Secretary General and the Technical Cooperation officers who promptly acted towards the implementation of the idea once it was approved by the officials. The coordinator and course designer, Mr. Roger Payne (from the United States of America) and instructors Mr. George Troop (from the USA) and Mr. Ramón Rivera (from Honduras) not only showed complete knowledge of the theme and the field practice but also were very sensitive to local needs, making adjustments to the program when asked. Local speakers were also invited to show the work that is already being conducted in Brazil regarding standardization and toponymy research. Special thanks are expressed for the participation of Dr. Maria Vicentina de Paula do Amaral Dick, professor at the University of São Paulo for more than 30 years, where she leads research projects and teaches Toponymy and Ethnolinguistics of Toponyms.