

## **University Education in an Indigenous Context: the Mapuche case in Chile**

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**ABSTRACT – University Education in an Indigenous Context: the Mapuche case in Chile.** The article presents research results on the strengths and limitations of university teaching in an indigenous context, according to the voices of the teaching staff in Araucanía, Chile. The methodology is qualitative and uses grounded theory in conjunction with content analysis. The main results reveal an urgency to increase awareness and training among university teaching staff to articulate western and indigenous knowledge in professional training. We conclude that there is an urgent need to incorporate the intercultural educational approach in higher education to move past standardization in teaching processes from an intercultural epistemological pluralism.

**Keywords: University Education. Higher Education. Intercultural Education. Interculturality. Indigenous.**

**RESUMEN – Educación Universitaria en Contexto Indígena: el caso Mapuche en Chile.** El artículo presenta resultados de investigación sobre las fortalezas y limitaciones de la educación universitaria en contexto indígena, según las voces de los docentes en La Araucanía, Chile. La metodología es cualitativa y utiliza la teoría fundamentada en complementariedad con el análisis de contenido. Los principales resultados revelan la urgencia de sensibilizar y capacitar a los docentes para articular saberes occidentales e indígenas en la formación profesional. Concluimos que es urgente incorporar el enfoque educativo intercultural en la educación superior, para superar la homogeneización en los procesos de enseñanza, desde un pluralismo epistemológico intercultural.

**Palabras-clave: Educación Universitaria. Educación Superior. Educación Intercultural. Interculturalidad. Indígena.**

## Introduction

Higher education has historically been characterized by its elitist nature and the monocultural nature of its educational processes, regardless of the social and cultural diversity that it serves (Arias-Ortega; Quintriqueo; Valdebenito, 2018). In Chile, the population served in higher education is characterized by its high composition of indigenous and non-indigenous students, who receive a single, standardized, western Eurocentric professional training that does not consider social, cultural and epistemic diversity.

The review of scientific literature identifies issues in higher education associated with both the logic of how to address professional training, as well as the specific issues faced by indigenous students. These issues concern: 1) the lack of professional preparation among teaching staff to respond to the needs of indigenous students who have received an inferior education at school prior to university. This is evidenced through the lower scores historically obtained by indigenous students at school (Arias-Ortega; Quintriqueo, 2020); 2) university dropout rate among indigenous students as a result of socioeconomic factors, for example family expenses such as monthly tuition, transportation costs, purchase of reading materials, etc. This is compounded by emotional factors such as moving away from the nuclear family and their community, as well as a detachment from the institute of higher learning, where teaching methods do not adjust to their own educational ways of learning, based on the sociocultural framework (Arias-Ortega, 2020; Maheux et al., 2020); 3) higher education is seen as the imposition of exogenous models to follow, which do not consider indigenous pedagogy and education when training new professionals (Gauthier; Blackburn, 2014; Pidgeon, 2016; Joncas, 2018); 4) misunderstandings in the teaching and learning method, which from the indigenous perspective is focused on being situated, holistic and experience-based, a process that involves the fundamental participation of the older generation to preserve the transmission of their own knowledge (Toulouse, 2016). Contrarily, from the western Eurocentric logic, the teaching and learning methods in education are situated in memorization and writing (Toulouse, 2016; Campeau, 2015). These aspects constitute epistemological tensions in the way of thinking about professional training, where a significant gap arises between the indigenous training culture and the training culture of academic institutions; 5) there is a detachment of indigenous students from institutes of higher education, which do not represent their needs, but rather constitute a “social good” that they are implicitly forced to learn (Joncas, 2018); and 6) there is a gap between community life and life in higher education, where academic demands end up distancing students from their community needs and dividing them between their interests, their personal projects and the needs of their community. These issues overlap with the challenges faced by professors of higher education in responding to the needs of their indigenous and non-indigenous students.

Higher education in La Araucanía, Chile, is characterized by its location in a territory with a high indigenous population. According to data from the National Socioeconomic Characterization Survey (CASEN), the Mapuche population in these territories represents the majority of the indigenous population in the country, with 79.8%, equivalent to 1,745,147 inhabitants (CASEN, 2017). Likewise, there is a lack of equality in higher education both in terms of access and permanence. This is reflected, for example, in the fact that the indigenous population enrolled in higher education is smaller than the non-indigenous population. There are differences between 2% and up to 9% of indigenous students in higher education (Arias-Ortega, 2020). This statistic alone indicates the existence of a serious problem and the reproduction of educational inequality in indigenous contexts.

The objective of the article is to present the results of research on strengths and limitations that university teaching staff face when teaching in an indigenous context.

### **University Teaching in an Indigenous Context**

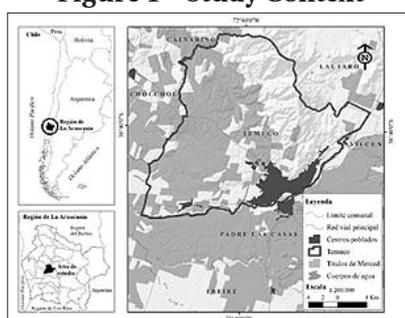
Currently, teaching in higher education is characterized by its complexity in both the realm of intercultural educational relationships and in the interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous subjects during the professional training process, where the colonial history imposed on the indigenous community has left its mark on interethnic relations (Mateos; Dietz; Mendoza; 2016; Köster; Dietz, 2020). Likewise, teaching in higher education is complex, as a result of the diversity of the student population served, which is characterized as being diverse in social, cultural, economic, territorial and linguistic terms. Students who are professionally trained in higher education come with their own frames of reference. They coexist and are incorporated into indigenous and intercultural educational contexts, and university teaching must respond to their needs (Bergeron, 2014; Vargas-Moreno, 2014; Reyes; López, 2015; Banks, 2016; Cruz, 2016; Jeaninn, 2017).

In this perspective, university teaching faces the challenge of incorporating aspects of intercultural coexistence between subjects belonging to different societies and cultures, which implies establishing validation processes of the other as a legitimate other (Tsukanova, 2017; Peñalva; Leiva, 2019). In university teaching in indigenous educational contexts, the subjects who interact should assume a symmetrical positioning of their own frames of reference with the intercultural educational relationship that they establish in their professional training process (Arias-Ortega, 2021). This is in articulation with the disciplinary domain being taught, to offer an education with social and cultural relevance (Gaete; Morales, 2011; Orтели; Sartorello, 2011; Rodríguez; De León; Galarza, 2015; Krainer et al., 2017). An identification of the aforementioned problem requires understanding the challenges faced by university teaching from the voices of the professors themselves, in order to promote intercultural pedagogical practices in higher education.

## Methodology

The methodology is qualitative and its level of scope is exploratory-descriptive to understand the strengths and limitations faced by professors of higher education in their own voices, in their pedagogical practices in the Mapuche context (Gauthier; Bourgeois, 2016). The paradigm is interpretive, which assumes the social construction of knowledge from the logic of the subjects involved in the object of study (Savoie-Zajc, 2009; Denzin; Lincoln, 2015). It aims to reflexively capture the social meanings attributed by professors to their university teaching in an indigenous context. The study context is in a regional university located in the Mapuche territory of La Araucanía, Chile, which is geographically framed between 37° 35' and 39°37' South Latitude and from 70° 50' West Longitude to the Pacific Ocean (INE, 2014), according to Figure 1.

**Figure 1 – Study Context**



Subtitle Note: Región de la Araucanía = Araucanía Region / Océano Pacífico = Pacific Ocean / Océano Atlántico = Atlantic Ocean / Región de la Araucanía = Araucanía Region / Región del Biobío = Biobío Region / Área de estudio = Study Area / Océano Pacífico = Pacific Ocean / Región de Los Ríos = Los Ríos Region / Leyenda = Legend / Limite comunal = Municipal border / Red vial principal = Primary road system / Centros poblados = Populated areas / Temuco = Temuco / Títulos de Merced = Ownership titles / Cuerpos de Agua = Water bodies / Escala = Scale.  
Source: Prepared by the authors with support from Arc GIS 10.4.

Study participants include nine professors, seven of whom are women and two are men, with ages ranging from 31 to 45 years and with 5 to 17 years of experience in university teaching. The participants teach at a regional university located in Mapuche territory in La Araucanía, Chile. The participant selection technique is intentional, not probabilistic (Fortin, 2010).

The data collection instrument is the semi-directed interview, in order to ask about the experiences, strengths and limitations they have faced in their university teaching in indigenous contexts. The information analysis technique is grounded theory through an open and axial coding process, in complementarity with content analysis (Quivy; Campenhoudt, 1998). This is designed to reveal nuclei of themes of an abstract order, endowed with meaning, from the perspective of the pro-

ducers of the discourse until achieving theoretical saturation. In the coding for the identification of the interviews, a correlative number is incorporated, then the number in which the professor's statement is found in the hermeneutical unit of Atlas ti 7.2 is added in brackets, as follows: (Interview 3 [131:131]). We clarify that the study involves ethical safeguards that consider the use of informed consent and adhere to the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (CONICYT, 2013).

## Results

The research results emerge from content analysis applied to interviews with professors in complement to grounded theory. The professors' testimonies constitute a knowledge base that provides empirical evidence, explaining the conceptual, procedural and attitudinal contents that affect professional training. The results are organized within the framework of a most recurring central category in the testimony of professors of higher education.

### Teaching and Learning in Indigenous Contexts

The central category, "teaching and learning in indigenous contexts," refers to how professors develop their professional practice, taking into consideration the social and cultural diversity of their students, both in the disciplinary content that is taught and in the intercultural educational relationship that they establish with the students in their pedagogical practices. These are factors of vital importance for the development of teaching from a social and cultural relevance approach, and for promoting the learning of all students regardless of their social, cultural, ethnic and linguistic origin. This central category obtains a total of 119 recurrences in the professors' discourse and is made up of the strengths and limitations subcategories with their respective codes (See Table 1).

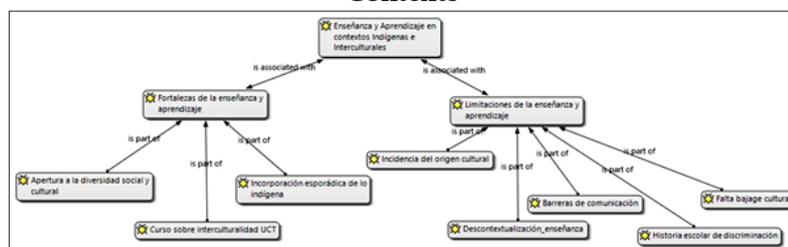
**Table 1 – Teaching and Learning in Indigenous Contexts**

Central category	Subcategories	Codes	Recurrences	%
Teaching and learning in indigenous contexts	Strengths	Openness to sociocultural diversity	29	24
		Classes on interculturality	11	9
		Incorporation of indigenous aspects	8	7
	Limitations	Incidence of cultural origin	25	21
		Decontextualization of teaching	15	13
		Communication barriers	14	12
		History of discrimination	11	9
		Lack of cultural background	6	5
	Total Central Category			119

Source: Prepared by the authors with support from Atlas 7.2 software.

The subcategory “strengths of teaching and learning in indigenous contexts” is made up of the following codes: 1) “openness to socio-cultural diversity” obtains a total of 29 recurrences, equivalent to 24% of the total recurrences in the participants’ testimony; 2) “classes on interculturality” obtains a total of 11 recurrences, equivalent to 9% of the total recurrences in the participants’ testimony; 3) “incorporation of indigenous aspects” obtains 8 recurrences, equivalent to 7% of the total recurrences in the participants’ testimony. The subcategory “limitations of teaching and learning in indigenous contexts” is made up of the following codes: 1) “incidence of cultural origin” obtains a total of 25 recurrences, equivalent to 21% of the total recurrences in the participants’ testimony; 2) “decontextualization of teaching” obtains 15 recurrences, equivalent to 13% of the total recurrences in the participants’ testimony; 3) “communication barriers” obtains 14 recurrences, equivalent to 12% of the total recurrences in the participants’ testimony; 4) “history of school discrimination” obtains 11 recurrences, equivalent to 9% of the total recurrences in the participants’ testimony; 5) “lack of cultural background” obtains 6 recurrences, equivalent to 5% of the total recurrences in the participants’ testimony. The central category, its subcategories and codes are presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2 – Teaching and Learning in Indigenous and Intercultural Contexts**



Subtitle Note: Enseñanza y Aprendizaje en contextos indígenas e interculturales = Teaching and learning in indigenous and intercultural contexts / Fortalezas de la enseñanza y aprendizaje = Strengths of teaching and learning / Apertura a la diversidad social y cultural = Openness to social and cultural diversity / Incorporación esporádica de lo indígena = Sporadic incorporation of indigenous aspects / Curso sobre interculturalidad UCT = Class on interculturality / Limitaciones de la enseñanza y aprendizaje = Limitations of teaching and learning / Incidencia del origen cultural = Incidence of cultural origin / Barreras de comunicación = Communication barriers / Falta bagaje cultural = Lack of cultural background / Descontextualización enseñanza = Decontextualization of teaching / Historia escolar de discriminación = History of school discrimination.  
 Source: Prepared by the authors with support from Atlas 7.2 software.

### Strengths of Teaching and Learning in Indigenous Contexts

Within the framework of university teaching in indigenous and intercultural contexts, the subcategory “strengths of teaching and learning” refers to the professors’ capacity to appropriately develop

their professional tasks on a level of curricular planning and methodological, pedagogical and didactic aspects in their disciplinary area. “Strengths of teaching and learning” imply that the professor must master a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are integrated into their pedagogical practices, in order to achieve successful performance regarding pre-established elements of quality that ensure the schooling and educational success of all students in their professional training.

From the voices of professors, the “openness to diversity” code is recognized as a strength of teaching and learning in indigenous and intercultural contexts. Through this, professors indicate that awareness in their professional work regarding the incorporation and openness to social and cultural diversity constitutes a necessary factor to make progress in professional training, from a contextual approach to the reality and origin of their students. This implies considering their particular specificities, which establishes a closer intercultural educational relationship with the students, to initiate the educational processes. In relation to this, one testimony indicates that: “[...] I focus on empathy, it has more to do with soft skills [...] taking into account both the opinions and the histories of people who have obviously agreed to share things about themselves” (Interview 3 [131:131]). In this sense, professors indicate that in professional practice, openness to social and cultural diversity considers two essential factors. The first is associated with an openness to diversity within the framework of disciplinary knowledge, which implies the progressive incorporation of the students’ educational knowledge and ways of knowing. Depending on their frame of reference, this may be indigenous knowledge or their own cultural knowledge, in the case of immigrant students. Testimony included the following:

I tried to focus on western knowledge as it appears and is described in the literature, and from my ignorance on the indigenous aspect, I asked the students how they saw this knowledge in their context, their reality, what they thought of that western knowledge and how it related to indigenous thinking (Interview 2 [67:67]).

Based on the testimony, we can infer that in the teaching and learning processes, the capacity that professors develop to articulate with the background knowledge held by students, whether they are indigenous or of a cultural origin other than Chilean, is a strength. In this way, pedagogical practices incorporate their own educational knowledge and ways of knowing into teaching, which allows students to acquire more contextualized and significant learning. In the teaching of the disciplinary realm, this implies the articulation of this knowledge with western knowledge, ensuring learning from a territorial, social and cultural relevance approach. Regarding the second factor, an openness to the students’ own social and cultural diversity allows professors to establish a closer educational relationship with them, based on mutual trust and esteem, which has an impact on ensuring schooling and educational success. Likewise, it allows professors to be more critical in their professional role and expand their pedagogical practice from

a perspective that implies the reality of the other. In relation to this, one testimony indicates that: “[...] perhaps a more flexible approach to educational contexts, I think, is important because if you are too structured, there is no room for different knowledge, nor acceptance of other ways of doing things differently” (Interview 1 [103: 103]). Consequently, an openness to the social and cultural diversity of students invites university teaching in indigenous and intercultural contexts to incorporate this reality into the professional training program and into pedagogical practices. This contributes to the availability of professional training from an intercultural approach, ensuring teaching and learning processes that are relevant to the challenges of the 21st century.

In relation to the “classes on interculturality” code, from the voices of professors it is seen as a strength that the institute allows them to take courses on interculturality, which contributes to their professional practice. The following testimony expresses this: “[...] when you first start at the university, you receive training on the educational model, on topics like this [interculturality]” (Interview 9 [98:98]). In the testimony, professors recognize that when they first start teaching at the university, they are given courses on topics and on the educational model that guides what they do and how they do it. However, they consider that these orientation activities on interculturality are sporadic and very general, and they fail to provide an adequate understanding, for example, of how to approach interculturality in coherence and consistency with different disciplines such as health and education. Following the same logic, professors in general show interest in the sustainability of these courses or talks on interculturality over time, to ensure the mainstreaming of the intercultural stamp in the different faculties. In relation to this, one testimony indicates that: “[...] we received training when we first started to teach at the university. There were some courses offered that were intended to get all professors on the same level of knowledge on interculturality issues, but that was a long time ago, there have been no refresher courses” (Interview 4 [42:42]).

In the professors’ testimony, another aspect they consider a strength in the teaching and learning processes relates to the mainstreaming of respect and appreciation for diversity in the different curricula of the university programs. From this perspective, professors consider that the institute’s discourse is coherent with the guidelines in the common plan. The following testimony adds that: “[...] I think [interculturality] is incorporated, because there are subjects, courses, electives, activities that relate to interculturality, but I would say that it is not the essence in higher education” (Interview 9 [42:42]). When analyzing testimony, we can see contradictions. Although they recognize the coherence and existence of university courses on interculturality, in general, they claim that these are not commonplace in day-to-day professional practice. The contents and articulation of disciplinary and indigenous knowledge are relegated to the will of the professor. It is up to the professor to offer professional training from an intercultural educational approach in practice.

Finally, another relevant factor that they consider a strength and that facilitates the teaching and learning processes relates to the contribution of social networks in disseminating scientific and normative literature that are accessible to anyone interested in the subject. Likewise, they recognize the existence and availability of different courses, talks and seminars on interculturality on the Internet for free. The professors' testimonies assert that there is a wide range of articles outside the university on an international level, as well as seminars and courses that take a closer look at this subject. Although these opportunities for self-training continue to be an option for professors, they are voluntary and not an academic requirement. In relation to this, one professor indicates that: "[...] I have seen quite a few optional seminars available online, which are advertised online, are promoted online, and most of them are free seminars" (Interview 2 [99:99]). Based on the testimony, we can infer that since training courses on interculturality are an option and depend on the will of each professor, they do not have a major impact or provide sustainability in professional training. This does not form part of an institutional practice that ensures their systematic incorporation into the training of new professionals, both on a curricular level and in pedagogical practices.

In terms of the code "incorporation of indigenous aspects in the teaching and learning processes," the professors' testimonies maintain that this practice, even if sporadic and only an interest of some professors, has still favored the teaching of students. This is because it forms a strategy to adapt disciplinary ways of knowing to the local reality. The following testimony expresses this: "[...] [there are compulsory courses that incorporate an indigenous person into the teaching staff], the first version involved a Mapuche professor with a non-Mapuche professor and later it was just Mapuche professors" (Interview 5 [41:41]). There are two fundamental elements that can be seen in the testimony. The first is associated with the articulation of western and indigenous knowledge in pedagogical practices, represented through two culturally different subjects. This could promote the comprehension of a disciplinary phenomenon or field from an intercultural epistemological pluralism. This undoubtedly contributes to the training of professionals committed to their specific social, cultural, political and epistemic environment. The second element relates to how this symmetrical teaching practice between culturally different subjects becomes an isolated experience in which contextualized and articulated teaching is relegated to other non-western knowledge, to a single subject, in this case, the Mapuche. This limits progress on the co-construction of knowledge from points of agreement and disagreement in ways of knowing, ways of doing and ways of being, in which the articulation of the western and indigenous episteme is of vital importance. However, the poor systematic articulation of this type of pedagogical practice makes it impossible to make progress on the installation of an educational model sustained in an intercultural educational approach that is coherent and consistent with the seal of the institute.

In this sense, another problem identified by professors is the incorporation of indigenous knowledge for articulation with western knowledge. As this is optional, it is not coherent with the institutional discourse of the university in terms of interculturality. The professors indicate that the sporadic incorporation of indigenous knowledge into pedagogical practices is justified initially by the lack of interest among some professors, and subsequently by the lack of information among professors of indigenous knowledge, which consequently limits its incorporation into teaching and learning practices. The following testimony expresses that: “[...] incorporating an intercultural educational approach is voluntary, regardless of having an institutional seal, a value linked to diversity and a competency that is present in all degree programs, but how this unfolds [in the classroom] is up to the will [of the professor]” (Interview 5, [93:93]).

In conclusion, the voices of professors reveal that the incorporation of indigenous knowledge in articulation with western knowledge is not a universal practice and is relegated to the competencies in the common curriculum. These are primarily associated with voluntary actions carried out by individual professors. There are no mandatory actions and/or evaluations of intercultural pedagogical practices for those who teach in a university setting.

### **Limitations of University Teaching in an Indigenous Context**

From the voices of professors who teach in institutes of higher learning in indigenous contexts, it is clear that there are limitations on their educational activities, which hinder the professional training of indigenous and non-indigenous students. In the framework of university teaching in indigenous contexts, the subcategory “limitations of teaching and learning” refers to elements that hinder the capacity to teach. From the voices of professors, factors that constitute limitations to the teaching and learning process relate to: 1) the incidence of students’ cultural origin; 2) decontextualization of teaching; 3) communication barriers in intercultural contexts; 4) the history of school discrimination experienced by students, which has left its marks on their educational performance; and 5) the lack of cultural background among students and professors, who on occasion do not look beyond the local and regional context, resulting in factors that limit their academic success from a global and local perspective.

From a critical reflection of their professional practice, the voices of professors recognize that the incidence of students’ cultural origin on occasions limits the teaching and learning process. This is in consideration of the fact that among professors, there is a negation of the cultural origin of their students and of their educational pathway. This results in the omission of issues that students may experience in their education or the educational gaps that they may have as a result of the schooling that they received and that historically has characterized La

Araucanía with educational inequality in comparison to the national level and on an urban/rural level. Likewise, in their testimonies, professors recognize that there is a wasted opportunity to work in collaboration with students to rethink teaching and learning from a more participative and co-constructive approach. In this collaborative process, professors become simple mediators in the learning process, progressively abandoning the hierarchy and supremacy held by their disciplinary realm. In relation to this, one professor indicates that:

[...] as a professor, I only recently realized and gave visibility to the fact that the context of origin affects the teaching and learning processes [...] before this, I just did my job and implemented the content from a single vision, thinking that science was very structured. In the chemistry classes I have taught, we never considered that a student's origin could vary their knowledge [...] now I realize that it is important to consider the context of origin of students in their teaching and learning processes. It has to do with how they perceive many things. If I don't consider this, then I am telling them that what they know doesn't matter, that it is irrelevant knowledge and that what really matters is what I am saying as their professor (Interview 1 [39:39]).

We can infer from the testimony that once the professors become aware of the importance of considering the sociocultural origin of the students, this facilitates the teaching process and contributes to their learning. By developing university teaching in an indigenous context, professors recognize that the differences constitute a wealth in the teaching process, which should be considered, and that therefore, we should avoid standardizing students on both an educational and cultural level. This implies considering students' origin and their schooling to facilitate their insertion into university life, as these constitute factors that can affect their learning process. In relation to this, one professor indicates that: “[...] several of the students in my classes come from rural areas, have studied in rural schools, perhaps have little experience with the urban world, with adapting to university life. There are barriers that limit their learning” (Interview 9 [40:40]). The professors recognize that origin affects and limits teaching, given that students, for example, from rural settings have greater socioeconomic difficulties. In relation to this, one professor added that: “Well, it's quite difficult for them [students who come from rural backgrounds], everything is twice as difficult at the university, due to communication, structure, because many times they don't understand the reasoning behind something” (Interview 1 [81:81]). Based on the testimony, we can infer that the effect of students' cultural origins goes beyond their ethnic background and involves their prior education. For example, the following testimony expresses that:

[...] a student told me, professor, I am from Coyhaique and we never reflected on issues at my school. It was always basically that the teacher spoke and we wrote down and then they evaluated us, we never generated a space for conversation. I don't participate because I don't know how to think (Interview 9 [54:54]).

In this perspective, professors recognize that, for students, when faced with or given access to new technologies, these imply new learning, which sometimes occurs alongside professional training, and those who have not had access to this are clearly at a disadvantage compared to those with previous access. Therefore, this type of knowledge, even if considered superficial, ends up becoming a limitation in learning because students with indigenous and rural backgrounds have to work twice as hard. For example, knowing how to use the tool and then making progress towards its comprehension and utility in specific activities.

In this sense, it is vitally important that professors are aware of how students are affected by their previous schooling, the change in geographic location, leaving home and other aspects. This makes it possible for both professors and students to move beyond teaching and learning content and focus on a holistic education, establishing a true intercultural educational relationship with students in their professional training. This ensures the academic and educational success of all students, regardless of origin. Professors have identified the need to understand, for example, the effect of relationships established between professor and student in a university setting, given that these relationships are different from students' relationships in their primary and secondary school education. Testimony included the following: "[...] there is a closer community relationship [in primary and secondary education]. At university there is a little more distance between professors and students. I think that is one thing [that affects the teaching and learning processes]" (Interview 9 (40:40)). This implies that the professor must know the student, considering that university life is very demanding in academic terms for students who come from a different sociocultural world, making their professional training highly demanding, both academically and personally. A professor shares an experience with a student: "[A student] once said something like, I don't know what to say, because I see that my classmates have a tremendous vocabulary and ask questions and I really feel so insignificant that I cannot contribute in class" (Interview 9 [57:57]). From the professor's perspective, the student's ability to be transparent in explaining how they feel is a reality that not all students are able to express, but this undoubtedly affects their professional training process, even diminishing their self-esteem. It is imperative to be aware of these issues and to make a holistic contribution to professional training because this is a reality that can affect various students from other contexts, because university life goes beyond academics.

In relation to the decontextualization of teaching, professors identify this as a limitation of the educational process and generally recognize that their professional practices are characterized by addressing disciplinary content and practicing the profession without considering the need to contextualize these learnings. With respect to this, a professor shares how she developed her classes before she came to discover reflexive processes that have led her to become aware of the need to contextualize learning. She mentions that: "[...] I focused on my profession, implementing content, addressing content from a single, unidirec-

tional vision. In classes we never considered that origin could mean that knowledge varies” (Interview 1 [39:39]).

In her reflections, the professor is able to visualize the need to contextualize teaching to ensure the success of students in their professional training. In keeping with this, another professor comments that pedagogical practices generally do not contextualize the teaching and learning processes in terms of the ways of knowing borne by students as a result of their own frames of reference. Professors even recognize that on sporadic occasions in their professional experience, they have tried to contextualize teaching, but the lack of knowledge of students’ frames of reference, whether these are indigenous or a product of other cultures, limits this contextualization process. The following testimony expresses this:

[...] I have sometimes attempted to [contextualize disciplinary contents], but not systematically [...] I find that when I teach classes, students have all been standardized. Students speak from a place of discourse of a very hegemonic psychologist. I have seen little to no students mention that as a professional psychologist, they plan to work in Mapuche communities or with people of Mapuche origin, I have hardly seen this. I feel like these things haven’t really been positioned [contextualizing teaching] (Interview 6 [57:57]).

Based on testimony, we can infer that in general the study participants are aware of the decontextualization of teaching and how this affects the training of new professionals, from hegemonic approaches to understanding social phenomena.

Regarding communication barriers as limitations to teaching and learning processes, professors’ testimonies show that these are expressed in two ways. The first barrier is a communication barrier that occurs when professors have a different cultural background than their students, for example, immigrant professors with a different cultural frame of reference and in some cases a different language, which hinders communication with students. Testimony included the following:

Among the not so positive challenges, for example, is language. Even though I just said it is something positive, it is also negative, because the way that we express ourselves [different culture] in words, in meanings of words, requires learning a jargon (Interview 7 [30:30]).

In relation to this, when subjects are socially and culturally different and start interacting, this can generate epistemic tensions regarding the world conception held by both subjects, and when no negotiation is reached, the outcome can be negative. In relation to this, one professor indicates that: “[...] the conceptions that people have regarding knowledge are elements of education, beliefs, values, ways of viewing the world [based on cultural origin]. When faced with another way of viewing the world, this generates a contradiction” (Interview 2 [63:63]).

The second communication barrier occurs in relation to the student’s origin, depending on whether it is a rural, indigenous or urban context, which affects the forms of communication that they establish

with the professor, as well as their language comprehension. In addition, cultural capital is also a barrier that limits their learning. One testimony included the following: “[...] sometimes I have to mediate, to be consciously less categorical, but also tell the student, look if I say something, please understand that it is my personality [a product of my cultural origin]” (Interview 7 (32:32)). Along these lines, the professor adds that expressiveness depends on cultural origin and that on occasions, it can lead to cultural clashes with students, as well as verbal and non-verbal language and physical posture. These are challenges that require talking and establishing guidelines before starting to teach, because they have an impact on teaching. In relation to this, one professor indicates that: “[...] [my body language] can be seen as an aggression. If I point at a student [with my fingers], he may think that I am telling him off. We speak directly and emphatically, which might come across as aggressive” (Interview 7 (32 :32)).

The code “history of school discrimination” refers to how professors identify that the educational pathways of their students have been characterized by discrimination, which has marked their schooling process. The voices of professors reveal an existence of implicit and explicit violence, mainly experienced by students of indigenous origin or socially vulnerable groups. From the perspective of professors, this issue is a factor that limits teaching and that manifests, for example, as quieter students, with lower self-esteem and low participation, as a result of the traces of violence that the school has left on them, materialized in prejudice, physical punishment and asymmetric educational relations. In relation to this, one professor shares: “[...] the students commented on situations of discrimination, prejudice from teachers and classmates [...] a student who came from a rural school commented on her transition to an urban school that was characterized by humiliation and invisibility” (Interview 1 [67:67]). Professors indicate that they have not identified problems of discrimination towards their students in their professional training, but rather in their primary and secondary education. Some professors even share experiences that they have had in primary and secondary school when supervising professional internships. The following testimony is an example of this: “[...] I was teaching in an elementary school and honestly it was very tokenized. Everything related to the Mapuche people is only seen on the Mapuche New Year, or let’s dress up as Mapuche” (Interview 3 [139:139]). As can be seen in this professor’s testimony, this type of attitude is experienced by students every day in their schooling process. Professors are not aware of how this affects the development of their students’ identity, limiting their self-concept and self-esteem. For example: “[...] for me the main barrier is social. I feel like sometimes students are afraid to speak up or feel shy or fearful about saying things, and when they do, they speak in a quiet voice or make themselves smaller” (Interview 7 [52:52]). Added to the above, this example emphasizes that the subconscious and self-critical professional action is expressed in racist and xenophobic jokes between teachers, which are sometimes overheard by children. One testimony included the following: “[...] in this school, there were no teachers of

Mapuche origin and the jokes were pretty strong. For example, ‘since it’s the Mapuche New Year, let’s put a truck in the middle of the yard and burn it,’ was a joke among the teachers” (Interview 3 [139:139]).

In short, the professor’s testimony reveals a history of school discrimination of students which runs deep in primary and secondary education, whether through explicit or implicit violence. Likewise, it is an educational pathway characterized by discrimination that is generated when a student does not have access to the contents and curricular progression. This is the case in highly vulnerable contexts, which continue to build gaps between different types of students, as a result of their educational, social and cultural origin. In pedagogical and curricular terms, students are also victims of discrimination, not because they lack the capacity, but because they did not have access to the same quality schooling and development, which should necessarily be a condition for all students, regardless of the territorial context where their school education takes place.

Finally, in relation to the code “lack of cultural background,” professors’ discourses recognize that this has a negative impact on the teaching and learning process. For example, students fear opening themselves up to other opportunities. A professor expresses the following: “[...] they are not open to reading in other languages, for example, English. English is the world language of science. Not everyone is open to it. I still made it clear to them that they need to start now at the university” (Interview 8 [78:78]).

Professors express the need for both students and professors to open up to other learning opportunities both internationally and nationally. This implies opening up to the idea, for example that the learning process involves looking elsewhere, that science is open and therefore needs to be in constant interaction with the world.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Based on the results of the study, the main discussion points relate to how professors can reflexively and retrospectively reflect on the how hegemonic the teaching knowledge transmission process has been to future generations of professionals in indigenous educational contexts through standardized processes. This reality of hegemonic professional training is consistent with the scientific literature on higher education experiences in other indigenous territories of the Americas, where the historical invisibility of the indigenous subject prevails in disciplinary knowledge (Lussier, 2004; Dietz; Mateo, 2011; Mato, 2019). Another point in question relates to how professors, through their discourse, assume that their pedagogical practices are characterized by the standardization of their students, denying them their own specificities as a result of their frame of reference. In teaching, it is assumed that all students learn in the same way and are able to acquire the same skills in the same amount of time. Based on the literature, this constitutes a problem, since it is a reality that does not exist in daily life, given the diversity and

heterogeneity of the students that are together in the same classroom (Köster; Dietz, 2020). We maintain that social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is the common point in institutes of higher education, which poses the challenge of rethinking other ways of approaching teaching and learning in professional training.

In this sense, it is not enough that professors, through their discourse and reflections, recognize the problems they face in their university teaching in an indigenous context, since relegating these problems to the discursive plane does not contribute to the generation of strategies and action plans to change these monocultural and hegemonic pedagogical practices. This raises the need to rethink professional training from an interdisciplinary perspective, to offer professional training from an intercultural perspective in which epistemological pluralism is one of its fundamental pillars. This could make it possible to revert the roots of a colonial and monocultural training that prevails in institutes of higher education as an educational hegemony in the university (Mato, 2019; Maheux et al., 2020).

The research results allow us to maintain that, in higher education, training in an intercultural perspective still does not constitute a topic that aims to mainstream its incorporation in current educational models. This is because they are still educational models brought in from abroad that do not adapt to the territorial reality in which the professional training process takes place (Arias-Ortega; Quintriqueo; Valdebenito, 2018). This means that training continues to focus on job skills or technical training, isolating the subject from their own specificities and characteristics, such as their origins and territories. The invisibility of the students' sociocultural origin constitutes a limiting factor in professional training, and therefore it would fail to respond to the needs and realities of the territory of origin.

In terms of these issues, it is urgent to increase the incorporation of intercultural pedagogy in training within institutes of higher education. Despite the existence of some courses, it is not enough to develop teaching and learning strategies with the basic intercultural approach. Furthermore, these training opportunities should become practices that are sustainable over time, ensuring a professional training that is progressively more sensitive to social and cultural diversity, characteristics of society today.

From this perspective, the incorporation of "exogenous" ways of knowing and knowledge to Western Eurocentric knowledge constitutes a way of decolonizing monocultural higher education. This is how thinking about diversity, essentially from the indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing to share and make collective constructions, will allow progress in education processes for all. This can result in the training of professionals with a perspective that is more in line with the needs of people and their contexts in the 21st century. Likewise, this would strengthen the processes of identity and self-recognition, but also the social recognition of diversity as a source of wealth to form intercultural

citizens. The transition from individual educational rights to collective educational rights is imperative, including ancestral knowledge and its worldview, from each of the sciences of knowledge (Köster; Dietz, 2020). Professor training is important, especially for professors of first-year students with indigenous identities with specific cultural characteristics, behaviors, ways of communicating and learning, depending on the context and culture. Likewise, there is a need for ongoing training that promotes debates and exchanges in university classrooms, to favor learning at the level of intercultural attitudes and values (Leiva; Bracóns, 2019; Sosa; Quintana, 2020). This implies paradigm shifts in professors, where it is essential that they are able to disclose their implicit theories and social representations regarding the intercultural educational approach. This would provide an understanding and give meaning to the issues associated with their disciplines, from a knowledge that has historically been invisible and denied in society in general and in professional training in particular.

In short, we conclude that higher education must assume the imperative challenge of promoting, on the one hand, the access and academic success of indigenous peoples from a social justice approach in an intercultural perspective. And, on the other hand, it must assume the social responsibility as an institute of higher education to offer the best educational experiences to students, so they can become highly trained professionals, capable of responding to their particular specificities, contributing to the global society and its communities, in particular, from a professional training with social, cultural and territorial relevance. Due to its location in indigenous territory, the university raises the challenge to professors to serve the population in attendance, considering their own educational knowledge and ways of knowing, their language and culture as elements that could be essential in thinking about professional training from an intercultural educational approach<sup>1</sup>.

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