



International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism

ISSN: 1367-0050 (Print) 1747-7522 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rbeb20>

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To cite this article: Rukmini Becerra-Lubies & Manka Varghese (2017): Expansive learning in teachers' professional development: a case study of intercultural and bilingual preschools in Chile, International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, DOI: [10.1080/13670050.2017.1325832](https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2017.1325832)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2017.1325832>



Published online: 16 May 2017.



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Expansive learning in teachers' professional development: a case study of intercultural and bilingual preschools in Chile

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ABSTRACT

As colonial legacies, racial dynamics, lingering discrimination, and even violence against Indigenous people and children, especially the Mapuche people (the focus of this study and the largest Indigenous group in the country), continue in Chilean society, research on how their teachers learn and how they perceive their learning has become even more necessary. Understanding the learning development of educators in Intercultural and Bilingual Education (IBE) preschools for the education of Indigenous peoples is the focus of this study. In this context, the overall research question of this study is: What learning occurs for teachers in IBE preschools in the Metropolitan Region, Chile and how does this learning happen? Using Engestrom's expansive learning model (2001) and an ethnographic approach, this study found peer learning to be a critical but untapped resource for teacher learning in this setting, and also found there to be differences between Mapuche and non Mapuche teachers' understandings of the goals of their learning. Implications point to setting up teacher learning based on a model of peer learning which focuses on Mapuche educators contributing more than they currently do to the learning of non-Mapuche teachers in IBE preschools.

KEYWORDS

Expansive learning; mapuche people; intercultural and bilingual education; teacher learning; early childhood

Introduction

Understanding the learning processes of teachers in Intercultural and Bilingual Education (IBE) preschools with regards to IBE is fundamental if we consider that the public policies that seek to revitalize Indigenous languages and cultures in Chile have not been linked to renewal processes in teacher training, i.e. training professionals with the specific knowledge and skills for Indigenous contexts. To the contrary, initial teachers' training in Chile prepares student teachers for homogeneous professional performance, executing centralized curricula (Turra 2012) and pedagogically attending to the average student belonging to Western culture (Turra, Ferrada, and Villena 2013).

This uniform and untailored teacher preparation stands in contradiction with other public policies in Chile. Although the IBE Program in Chile has implemented major initiatives for preserving Indigenous languages and cultures, it has omitted specific actions linked to teachers' training for teaching in these types of schools. Hence, this implies that there is no systemic training policy in higher education aimed at education for, or from, the Indigenous peoples. Thus, teachers working in Indigenous schools assume a task for which they have not been trained (Turra 2012). In this regard, public policies have run contrary to the literature that considers teachers' performance to be a key element of any educational transformation (Fullan 2002; Aguerrondo 2004; Vaillant 2005; Turra, Ferrada, and Villena

2013), since IBE is somehow expected to function without prepared teachers. In fact, a significant number of studies have shown that teachers do not know how to teach in IBE contexts, that they develop a series of practices in their pedagogical processes that are not particularly inclined to considering anything Indigenous, and also manifest prejudice and bias toward the cultural practices of Indigenous peoples (UNESCO 2005).

Due to significant flaws in teacher training programs, a growing number of authors have proposed that teacher preparation in Chilean IBE schools should adopt an intercultural approach, with knowledge of Mapuche and Indigenous issues (Quilaqueo 2007; Quilaqueo and Quintriqueo 2008; Álvarez-Santullano et al. 2011; Quintriqueo et al. 2014), with a consensus that teachers should develop a non-ethnocentric teaching practice in the Mapuche /non-Mapuche inter-ethnic context, in which the cultural heterogeneity of the students is not a source of conflict, but rather an opportunity for building a space for dialog and communication, furthering knowledge, respect and acceptance between the different socio-cultural groups (Turra 2012). Nonetheless, the majority of these studies arise from essentially theoretical-propositive discussions. That is, these studies have shown that teachers are not prepared, and have proposed what they should learn for IBE contexts. However, they do not currently shed light on the learning processes occurring in institutions (Olate and Henríquez 2010; Williamson et al. 2012; Turra, Ferrada and Villena 2013).

Thus, the purpose of this study was to show the learning processes for teachers in IBE preschools in the Metropolitan Region, Chile, when in contact with members of Mapuche communities.¹ In line with the theoretical framework we propose, this study seeks to answer the following questions: Why do teachers learn? What do they learn? And how do they learn?

This article, therefore, seeks to contribute to the existing literature on what knowledge, attitudes and skills teachers should have for intercultural bilingual education (e.g. Ipiña 1997; López 1997; Serrano 1998; Trapnell 2003; Schmelkes 2007), the growing body of research on the learning that occurs in encounters between teachers and Indigenous communities in Latin America (Delany-Barmann 2010; Trapnell 2011; EIBAMAZ, UNICEF and Finland 2012) as well as the importance of the connections between student teachers and local communities (Zeichner and Melnick 1996; Murrell 2001; McDonald, Bowman, and Brayko 2013).

The context: IBE preschools in Chile

Historical roots of the problem

In the relationship between the Chilean state and the Mapuche people, the State opted for the social and cultural assimilation of the Mapuche into Chilean society, an endeavor pursued throughout the twentieth century. A century later, however, the Mapuche people – who were thought to reside exclusively in the rural areas, segregated, marginalized, and hidden – reappeared in the Metropolitan Region, the center of Chile's nation-state (Imilan 2009). This is especially relevant because the urban society of Santiago² has historically imagined itself as culturally 'white' and homogeneous. However, the 1992 national census was the first one to include the country's Indigenous population, revealing that 7.7% of the population of the Metropolitan Region was of Mapuche origin, constituting 44% of the total Mapuche population in Chile (Imilan 2009).

It should be noted that even though the Mapuche migration from rural to urban Chile was motivated by the availability of more economic and educational opportunities for the Mapuche people, most urban-based Mapuche people live in dire circumstances, in precarious shanty-towns that have sprung up around Santiago, while enduring ongoing ethnic discrimination (Imilan 2009). When not overlooked, the Mapuche people are made visible through stereotypes. The media reinforce these prejudices with pictures of land occupations in Southern Chile and armed battles with landowners near the villages, conveying a negative image of 'poor,' 'violent,' and 'uncivilized Mapuche' (Aravena 2007).

Given the hostility and discrimination against the Mapuche, their isolation, and their marginalization in Santiago, as well as the need to recreate their personal identity, Mapuche organizations have

emerged to confront these issues (Abarca 2005). These organizations have denounced the usurpation of land, and have requested political mechanisms for returning those lands. Additionally, these organizations have defended and requested the protection of the integrity of their culture and knowledge. Some of these groups also participate in IBE preschools, mainly organizing cultural events.

A symbolic turning point: intercultural and bilingual education

Chile is one of the Latin American countries with the lowest numbers of Indigenous Peoples, which has probably had a bearing on the late acknowledgment of cultural diversity by the State, and consequently the delay in measures taken in this regard.

In the education realm, through the General Education Law, the Chilean Ministry of Education recognizes the principle of interculturalism, and proposes that as a general objective in schools that have a high percentage of Indigenous students, preschool education should include the ability of students to understand and express simple messages in an Indigenous language. This approach is in line with the national and international legislative framework (e.g. Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization [ILO], Indigenous Law No. 19.253, General Law of Education 20.370) which obligates the Chilean Government to consider in its education policies the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Indigenous Peoples, and the need to build intercultural relationships in the educational environment. The following table summarizes some of the relevant articles of this law (Table 1).

An important measure was the implementation of the Intercultural Bilingual Education Program, in 1996, to meet the requirements of these Conventions, and the demands made by Indigenous peoples themselves in Chile. In the last few decades, this program has designed a series of initiatives for teaching Indigenous cultures and languages in primary and high schools, and more recently, in 2007, has focused on preschools, in association with the National Board of Preschools.³

In order to strengthen intercultural education in these preschools, a working agreement was subscribed between the National Indigenous Development Corporation (CONADI⁴) and the National Board of Preschools in 2008, for the purpose of incorporating Indigenous Language and Culture Educators (ILCE), running training courses on interculturalism and preschool curricula for preschool educators, and hiring educators with Indigenous ancestry with experience in interculturalism. Today, the IBE Program in Chile requires IBE preschools to work in collaboration with Indigenous communities to offer a more meaningful education to children, and that representatives of these communities work as Indigenous Language and Culture Educators (PEIB-MINEDUC 2014, 43). However, it has not offered any guidelines on how to select such individuals.

Theoretical framework

Based on Engeström's expansive learning model (2001), we examined how teachers and ILCEs learn to become educators in IBE preschools. Engeström (2001) proposes that any effort expended in

Table 1. General law of education no. 20.730.

Article 28	In the case of educational institutions with a high percentage of Indigenous students, it will also be considered a general objective that students must acquire sufficient knowledge to be able to understand and express simple messages in an Indigenous language, recognizing its history and source of knowledge.
Article 29	In the case of educational institutions with a high percentage of Indigenous students, it will also be considered a general objective that students must acquire sufficient knowledge to be able to understand several types of oral and written texts, and express themselves orally in their indigenous language.
Article 30	In the case of educational institutions with a high percentage of Indigenous students, it will also be considered a general objective that students must acquire sufficient knowledge to be able to maintain fluidity in their Indigenous language and knowledge of the history and culture of their people.

understanding learning should address the following questions: (a) Why do they learn?, (b) What do they learn?, and (c) How do they learn? Hence we use the theory of expansive learning to understand the learning processes that occur in urban IBE preschools in Santiago, Chile.

A central component of the expansive learning theory is that, on the one hand, 'the individual could no longer be understood without his or her cultural means' and, on the other hand, 'society could no longer be understood without the agency of individuals who use and produce artifacts' (Engeström 2001, 134). The expansive learning theory is important for this study, not only for connecting individual learning to communities, but for conceiving knowledge as unstable. Engeström (2001) argues that:

Standard theories of learning focus on processes where a subject (traditionally an individual, and more recently, possibly also an organization) acquires some identifiable knowledge or skills, in such a way that a corresponding, relatively lasting change in the behavior of the individual may be observed. It is a self-evident presupposition that the knowledge or skill to be acquired is itself stable and reasonably well defined. (137)

In other words, it is assumed that there is a 'competent' teacher who knows what must be learned. However, Engeström (2001) clearly asserts that 'the problem is that much of the most intriguing kinds of learning in work organizations violates this presupposition' (137). Actually, in many cases, what must be learned is unknown by all the actors involved, and there are no specific experts who can deliver the required knowledge. As Engeström would say, knowledge is literally learned as it is being created.

Another important component of this theory is that knowledge 'is triggered by double forces or contradictory demands imposed on the participants by the context' (Engeström 2001, 142). In addition, expansive learning allows us to look for communities that are not well bounded for becoming collaborative subjects (Engeström 2001). This view is important for teachers in IBE preschools, since they have to manage different and opposing demands from, for instance, the national curriculum, the IBE curriculum, and the community and families' expectations.

Expansive learning theory is based on four core principles of activity theory. It is important to mention that this study does not use activity theory as its framework; however, we consider that it is relevant to summarize the following four principles to understand the central characteristics of expansive learning.

First, expansive learning theory emphasizes the fact that activity systems are multi-voiced, that is, a community of multiple points of view, traditions, and interests. The second principle is historicity. Engeström (2001) explains that 'activity systems take shape and get transformed over lengthy periods of time. Their problems and potentials can only be understood against their own history' (136). He emphasizes that history itself needs to be studied as the local history of the activity. Thus, for this study, this means that IBE preschools must be analyzed against the history of their local organization and against the more global history of the country. Third, expansive learning theory conceives contradictions as sources of change and development. Engeström (2001) clarifies that contradictions are not the same as problems or conflicts. He adds, 'Such contradictions generate disturbances and conflicts, but also innovative attempts to change the activity' (137). As a consequence of the third principle, the fourth principle claims the possibility of expansive transformations. Engeström (2001) states that 'as the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants begin to question and deviate from its established norms. In some cases, this escalates into collaborative envisioning and a deliberate collective change effort where 'activity is reconceptualized to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity' (137).

The concept of expansive learning has recently been employed by researchers to show or promote the connections between indigenous and Western knowledge in educational contexts. For example, Bang et al. (2012), in a study on the learning of science in students from historically non-dominant groups, used the concept of expansive learning for re-imagining ways to teach in classes, with a 'view of human meaning-making as fundamentally heterogeneous and multivoiced,

both within and between socially and historically constituted communities' (308). Specifically, the authors suggest that with this perspective, progress can be made towards desettling (a) 'historically constructed deficit discourses of nondominant students' and (b) 'the normative ontological and epistemological divide between nature and culture in science education' (308). Bang and Marin (2015) also propose that 'settling expectations' that can be perpetuated in STEM education 'can be transformed towards expansive learning' (531) and thereby disrupt those expectations, 'recognize Indigenous presence and futures and enable robust exploration of possible socio-ecological futures' (533). Botha (2011), furthermore, defends the idea that the concept of expansive learning can offer a theoretical framework for more inclusive and relevant teaching for the indigenous peoples of South Africa, since it embraces the contradictions and multiplicity of voices and directs them towards transformation.

Even though the concept of expansive learning has not been directly used in Latin America for explaining the phenomena that occurs in IBE, or with Indigenous peoples, it seems to be particularly applicable in the Latin American IBE context. It is important to mention that numerous authors have employed other conceptualizations of socio-cultural theories for understanding the relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge in school curricula (e.g. Luna 2015; Repetto and Carvalho 2015).

Methodological approach

In order to appropriately investigate the research question above, we addressed it from an ethnographic methodological approach (Merriam 2009). We selected a qualitative, multi-site case study methodology, because it enables conducting an intensive investigation of one or more instances of the same phenomenon. The multi-site case study was constituted by a group of two IBE preschools (Palqui Preschool and Alicura Preschool). First, using a *criterion sampling* (Merriam 2009) strategy, we selected the preschools. We focused on two preschools in the Metropolitan Region, in two cities characterized by a high presence of Mapuche students and Mapuche communities (Williamson and Gómez 2004). The following table summarizes the characteristics of the preschools (Table 2).

It is worth mentioning that this particular study uses a subsection of data collected for a larger project. For the larger research, we selected as participants the principal, two preschool teachers (a Mapuche and a non-Mapuche), the ILCEs and another relevant actor (this person was selected by asking the preschool staff to recommend a relevant actor for teaching Mapuche language and culture). With this selection, we expected to capture the views of different actors involved in teaching Mapuche language and culture in each institution. For this specific study, we focused on the

Table 2. Characteristics of intercultural and bilingual preschools.

<i>Palqui Preschool</i>	
Characteristics	No.
Year created	2010
No. of children	208
No. of preschool teachers	9
No. of teacher's assistants	18
No. of ILCEs ^a	1
No. of Indigenous children	25
<i>Alicura Preschool</i>	
Characteristics	No.
Year created	2009
No. of children	144
No. of preschool teachers	6
No. of teacher's assistants	14
No. of ILCEs ^a	1
No. of Indigenous children	13

^aILCE is the acronym for Indigenous Language and Culture Educator.

Table 3. Characteristics of the participants.

Name	Role	Ethnicity	Preschool
Gema	Preschool Teacher	Mapuche	Palqui
Miranda	Preschool Teacher	Non-Mapuche	Palqui
Jacinta	ILCE	Mapuche	Palqui
Rosa	Preschool teacher	Mapuche	Alicura
Corina	Preschool teacher	Non-Mapuche	Alicura
Elena	ILCE	Mapuche	Alicura
Romina	Relevant actor, teacher's assistant	Non-Mapuche	Alicura

experiences of the preschool teachers, ILCEs, and a preschool teacher's assistant, whose characteristics are summarized in [Table 3](#).

Data sources

There were four main sources of data: observation, interviews, group conversations and documents, which are briefly described in [Table 4](#).

Although all these sources were used for interpreting the results related to the research questions of this study, only the semi structured interviews (Patton [2002](#)) and the conversation groups were explicitly analyzed herein.

Interviews

These interviews were conducted in Spanish, the mother tongue of the participants and the researcher who conducted them. Given the length of the interviews, two of them, with a duration of 1–2 hours, were conducted, in a setting chosen by the participants themselves.

To elicit information in the first section of the interview, we addressed teachers' backgrounds, preparation, and attitudes toward their teaching, by asking questions such as: (a) Please tell me a little bit about your background as a teacher; how long you have been teaching in a Bilingual Inter-cultural preschool?; (b) How did you end up working in this IBE preschool? The main portion of the interview delved into teachers' experience, perceptions, and opinions regarding their relationships with the local Indigenous communities. During this section of the interview, we asked for instance: (a) Could you describe how the Indigenous communities participate in the school?; (b) Could you describe your personal relationship with an Indigenous community member?

All interviews conducted for this study were recorded, with the participants' consent, using a digital recording device (iPhone). Digital audio files were stored on a computer and were transcribed using pseudonyms for all identifying information.

Table 4. Sources of Data.

Source of data	Description	Number
Interviews	Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, Mapuche community members and each principal, to gain their perspective and insights into the experiences of the teachers and indigenous community relationships.	21 h
Group conversation	In an effort to include the conversational preference of Mapuche ways of sharing knowledge, all the participants were invited to take part in a round-table style group conversation, with shared food.	4 h
Observation	The following events were selected: a) School meetings with Indigenous community members, b) teachers' meetings, c) classes and d) cultural school events.	19 visits
School artifacts and other documentation.	Schools documents, such as the mission of the schools and the background information of children and their parents, were incorporated in order to characterize the school and the context in which it is situated. Public documents obtained from the internet were considered for contextualizing the political and social situation of the schools.	336 pages

Table 5. Data analysis.

Themes	Categories
Why did teachers learn?	Career challenge
	Commitment to Mapuche children
What did teachers learn?	Learning Mapuche knowledge
	Learning to teach Mapudungun
	Learning changes
How did teacher learn?	Learning from others
	Experiences
	Family knowledge
	Learning by themselves

Group conversation (güxankawün in mapudungun)

In an effort to include the conversational preference of Mapuche ways of sharing knowledge, we invited all the participants of the study to take part in a group conversation. We organized the group conversation in a roundtable mode and shared food with participants. We held one group conversation at each preschool.

The purpose was to create a space in which joint groups of preschool and Indigenous members could discuss the issues they found relevant regarding their work. The meetings lasted two hours. Both instances were transcribed in Spanish, and only the sections presented in this article were translated into English.

Data analysis

We used an adaptation of Berg's model presented in Hancock and Algozzine (2011) for content/thematic analysis. For analyzing this article, we read the answers of the preschool teachers, ILCEs and teachers assistants regarding the processes of learning and teaching Mapuche language and culture. Using the theoretical framework of the study we identified three main topics for classifying the results: (a) Why did teachers learn?; (b) What did teachers learn in IBE preschools?; (c) How did teachers learn? We conducted an open coding process based on these topics, from which the categories presented in the following table emerged. With these categories, we created a codebook that was used for the final analysis in the Dedoose qualitative analysis software. After this codification, we conducted comparisons and contrasting between cases, participants and data sources, observing how the categories related to one another. Finally, we made conceptual-theoretical connections, establishing relationships between the categories and the theory (Table 5).

Finally, of the strategies for promoting validity and reliability that Merriam (2009) describes, we used triangulation using multiple sources of data (Miles and Huberman 1994), peer review with colleagues and skeptical colleagues (Miles and Huberman 1994) and rich descriptions to contextualize the study. In addition, member checks were used as a significant strategy for the analysis.

Findings: learning in IBE preschools: becoming an intercultural and bilingual educator

Why did teachers learn?

To understand what and how teachers learned by working in IBE preschools, we have to examine what motivations teachers had for working in these educational institutions. We found important differences between Mapuche and non-Mapuche teachers, but they all shared commonalities in finding their work as particularly challenging, in comparison to working in mainstream preschools.

Career challenge

We found that non-Mapuche teachers were motivated to work in IBE preschools because it represented a career challenge for them. Romina said that she had been working for 20 years in the

private educational sector and felt 'like nothing new was happening' (interview, Romina, September 16, 2014). All the non-Mapuche teachers agreed that IBE preschools are learning environments where they have the opportunity to learn something new 'every single day' (interview, Corina, September 15, 2014). Therefore, they all considered that working in the IBE preschools would enrich their teaching experiences.

From these initial motivations, new motivations emerged, prompting a strong interest in non-Mapuche teachers to learn the Mapuche language and culture. Nevertheless, this new interest was part of a desire to do a 'good job' (interview, Corina, September 15, 2014), or because it was their 'duty to learn new words' (interview, Romina, November 13, 2014), and not necessarily part of a larger commitment to the Mapuche revitalization project or to the creation of a more equitable society.

This lack of deep commitment could also be observed when talking about how they saw themselves in five more years; all the non-Mapuche teachers vaguely mentioned that they might be working in the same preschool, or in another institution with an IBE approach.

Commitment to mapuche children

In contrast, the Mapuche teachers had clear goals regarding their next steps in improving the education of the Mapuche children. Rosa asserted that her work in the preschool was the work 'she always wanted' to do (interview, Rosa, September 15, 2014). Gema also had precise ideas regarding her future plans. She said that she wanted to stay in Santiago for five years, and then wanted to go back to the south of Chile, to her community, to do the job she imagined doing when she made the decision to become a preschool teacher. Gema constantly repeated her commitment to her community in the south of Chile. Indeed, her decision to become a preschool teacher was based on a need she identified in her community.

Despite the differences in the motivations of Mapuche and non-Mapuche teachers, both groups saw themselves as having something special to offer. Corina saw herself as a highly motivated teacher with innovative ideas. She highlighted the fact that she had applied for several grants to implement new projects in the preschool. Romina perceived herself as an enthusiastic and a life-long learner. She viewed herself as someone playful that 'acted childish' (interview, Romina, November 13, 2014) in order to engage her students and foster their learning. Miranda indicated that she saw herself as a significant contribution to the IBE preschool because she had the knowledge to connect teaching with nature and the earth, which related to the ways Mapuche knowledge was also rooted in their land. These teachers saw that the work in an IBE preschool was difficult and they had seen other teachers leave or be fired, thus they were proud of their own work. However, these skills were not explicitly linked to larger issues of justice in the education of children or the Mapuche people.

What did teachers learn in IBE preschools?

Examining what teachers learn in these particular institutions is helpful in understanding how these contexts shape specific learning dynamics. We found that learning Mapuche knowledge, learning to teach it and changes in their perceptions were the most prominent findings.

Learning mapuche knowledge

In all interviews, teachers highly valued learning Mapudungun. On multiple occasions, they commented and described the words, phrases and songs they learned in the preschools. Along with Indigenous language learning, teachers also appreciated learning Mapuche knowledge and culture. They said they wanted to learn both about the Mapuche culture, such as music, dances and traditions, and also about the daily life of the Mapuche.

Rosa referred to learning Mapuche culture in her interview. However, in her case, what she learned related to Mapuche daily life experiences. She mentioned that she had learned 'how they [Mapuche

people] went to buy things, if they used horses, bulls, and cows. How the milk was prepared, because it was prepared with a chemical liquid, but previously chamomile was used, or other things from cows' (interview, Rosa, September 9, 2014).

Learning to teach mapudungun

Learning specific strategies regarding how to teach the Mapuche language and culture was another frequent reference among Mapuche and non-Mapuche teachers. The non-Mapuche teachers described this process of learning as 'testing the classroom' (interview, Romina, November 13, 2014). In the following quote, Romina explained in detail the way she and another teacher prepared a class:

Well, the circle is always in the daily routine, the circle is done the same every day; so, when we started the year I told Corina that with my experience, because I have more experience, more years, I told her that it was a better idea to use Mapudungun ... One day I told her, "Corina, we can organize a contest," and she asked me, "How?" I told her "Look, I am going to try and you tell me how it works," without planning, and we proved it [that we could do it]. She told me, "super," because they [the children] were interested in the story and they loved it, and they sang. [That is how] we began using Mapudungun. (interview, Romina, November 13, 2014)

After this experience, Romina learned and concluded that children 'understood and responded better' (interview, Romina, November 13, 2014) to games and contests when Mapudungun was used. For these two teachers in the Alicura Preschool, making mistakes and trying different teaching strategies to teach a language that they were simultaneously learning was a recurring experience. Corina described the first time she and Romina taught a poem to the children. She said that they played a CD several times without explaining the meaning, because they (Corina and Romina) were not sure what it meant; therefore, they 'made the children repeat, repeat and repeat'. Then, the day arrived when the children had to repeat the poem, and both teachers realized that 'the children did not learn the poem, they did not like it, and they did not want to say anything' (interview, Corina, September 16, 2014).

After this experience, Corina and Romina decided to use a different approach: they decided to listen to Mapuche songs frequently in the classroom, so that the children could hear them. When they noticed that the children liked one of the songs, they selected that song and played it several days in a row. They did not ask the students to do anything except to 'listen' while 'they did some other homework.' With this strategy, the children learned the 'rhythm and some words naturally' (interview, Romina, November 13, 2014). She concluded that 'it is a very slow process' (interview, Romina, November 13, 2014), but eventually the children learn.

It is worth noting that in several accounts, the non-Mapuche teachers talked about how they learned to teach the Mapuche language intertwined with their own strategies (methods of the pre-school curriculum). They did not see the need to use Mapuche ways of learning in their teaching strategies.

The Mapuche teachers spoke less frequently about their struggles and learning processes in teaching the Mapuche language and culture. For them, family members played an important role in this process. For Gema, when she did not know how to teach something or when she 'had an incomplete idea' (interview, Gema, October 10, 2014) about something she wanted to teach, she called her father. Similarly, Rosa indicated that she always talked to her mother to get help. Moreover, these Mapuche teachers also described how they had learned about other Indigenous cultures and how they managed to include them all in their classrooms. These accounts do not recall successful experiences, but rather attempts. As with the non-Mapuche teachers, Mapuche teachers describe these processes as 'trial and error' and 'chaotic' (interview, Rosa, September 15, 2014).

In these experiences of learning how to teach the Mapuche language and culture, all the teachers mentioned that they did not know how to teach, nor did they know whether the children in their class would learn or not. They all recalled surprise and the feeling of satisfaction after seeing that the children learned songs, words, or poems.

Learning changes

Besides learning some skills for teaching the Mapuche language and culture, both Mapuche and non-Mapuche teachers described changes in their perceptions of Indigenous communities. Romina mentioned that before working in the IBE preschool, they had 'no idea about the Mapuche people' (interview, Romina, November 13, 2014). Likewise, Corina pointed out that before this experience, she had thought that to be Mapuche, it was necessary to have a Mapuche last name. Nevertheless, although she was not a 'Mapuche descendant,' she felt that she was 'part of it [the Mapuche culture]' because, in some way, 'we all have Mapuche blood' (interview, Corina, September 15, 2014).

For the Mapuche teachers, their perceptions changed in terms of including other Indigenous cultures in classroom activities. Rosa indicated that 'interculturality is not about only one Indigenous group, but [rather] it is about all the Indigenous groups' (interview, Rosa, September 15, 2014). Similarly, Gema explained that she now sees the importance of learning about other cultures, stating 'sometimes we get stuck in what we know,' which in her case was the Mapudungun language (interview, Gema, October 10, 2014).

Both Mapuche teachers also profusely talked about changes in the perceptions of their own work as a result of these interactions. They described how they had learned to make more decisions, to put forward their ideas and to feel more empowered in the preschools. Gema described feeling 'more confident' (interview, Gema, October 10, 2014) to discuss and share her ideas in the preschool. She sensed that the principal trusted her work and her knowledge, boosting her confidence to express and implement what she believed was better instruction for the children. For her, Gema said, 'it has been a professional change' (interview, Gema, October 10, 2014). Gema mentioned that when talking with other educators and, in the simple fact of greeting the ILCE in Mapudungun, she felt that she was 'getting stronger,' that is, felt empowered (interview, Gema, October 10, 2014). Rosa expressed a similar change in her sense of empowerment.

How did teachers learn?

Since these teachers were not previously prepared to teach in IBE, it is important to identify how they learn in these particular institutions. When talking about how teachers learned what they learned in IBE preschools, they mentioned learning with others, from experiences, and by using their own previous knowledge. These themes are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Learning from others

Mapuche and non-Mapuche teachers in both preschools described learning from their peers. Non-Mapuche teachers more frequently mentioned peers as a resource in their learning. Corina explained that her colleagues in the preschool had played an important role in her learning, in particular another non-Mapuche teacher. As she put it, 'I learned by listening, observing, from my colleagues mostly, because they, since I came after them, they already had a base' (interview, Corina, September 16, 2014).

She added that when she arrived at the preschool, she 'did not know anything' (interview, Corina, September 16, 2014), and that her peers had not only been supportive in teaching her phrases, words and songs in Mapudungun, but they had also served as role models for learning Mapudungun – she saw that other 'teachers can communicate in Mapudungun' (interview, Corina, September 16, 2014). In Romina's view, peers were also supportive in her learning about the best teaching strategies to use. She learned, for instance, to use a doll when reciting an *epew*,⁵ and even recommended that the preschool should encourage exchange between teachers. She said that it was not necessary for all teachers to do or learn the same things: if only one teacher 'finds something that works very well in the classrooms,' 'she should share it' with the rest of the preschool (interview, Romina, November 13, 2014).

Other non-Mapuche teachers in the preschool also shared Romina's idea. In the focus group conversation, the most productive theme of the conversation was how to support new teachers in the

preschool as well as how to share their positive experiences. Given the enormous amount of requirements imposed from different institutions, teachers at this preschool felt they needed to have more concrete instances of peer learning and sharing. All the teachers engaged actively in this topic and proposed some specific strategies they could use in implementing this idea. For example, Romina said they could write a preschool dictionary with all the words and phrases an IBE preschool teacher should know. In addition, Rosa suggested the idea of 'borrowing teachers [from other classrooms at the preschool]' (group conversation, December 18, 2014) a couple of days a week for one hour. With this system, a teacher would go to another classroom for a short period of time to teach the children a song, game, poem, or host an activity that this teacher knows would motivate the children.

In the Palqui Preschool, Gema also described the importance of peer learning and sharing, as well as holding 'teachers meetings' so that teachers could 'learn how we are all working' and 'share experiences;' this was important to her because she sometimes felt she was 'the only one doing Mapuche things,' because she was Mapuche, 'so it is obvious that I want to share what (knowledge) I have' (interview, Gema, October 9, 2014).

Teachers talked about situations in which a peer taught them, and also when they taught a colleague. Romina mentioned that she helped new teachers feel more confident in learning and teaching Mapudungun, because she knew 'the feeling' of not knowing what everyone else knows. Her account resonates with what other teachers said about Romina. Corina explicitly referred to her as a supportive peer multiple times. In the same vein, Rosa described moments in which she shared her knowledge with her peers, and 'told stories based on her experiences' (interview, Rosa, September 15, 2014). However, when talking in the group conversation about peer learning, Rosa mentioned the same instance, to which Corina replied 'that was not true,' because she 'had never felt supported by her [Rosa]' (group conversation, December 18, 2014).

It is interesting that although both ILCEs mentioned instances in which they taught something to teachers, none of the teachers spontaneously included the ILCEs as supportive in their learning. When explicitly asked about the potential role of the ILCEs in what teachers had learned, Gema paused and added that the ILCE had been significant in her professional identity. She never imagined she would 'arrive at a preschool and be able to have a conversation in Mapudungun' (interview, Gema, September 16, 2014). For her, the ILCE was not somebody that taught her, but a peer to share the same experiences and a common identity. Romina responded that for her, the interactions with the ILCE are too formal. For her, the cook, a Mapuche person and community member, was more relevant in her learning because their interactions were more 'spontaneous', and that was enriching because 'we connect' (interview, Gema, September 16, 2014).

Experiences

All the teachers agreed that spending time and interacting with Mapuche community members had a positive impact on their learning. All the non-Mapuche teachers mentioned that going to the ceremonies and meetings of the Mapuche communities, outside of the preschool, were 'an enriching experience' (interview, Corina, September 16, 2014). Actually, they expressed a strong interest in visiting Mapuche communities. Corina said that 'We should leave the preschool more often, to look for those experiences' (interview, Corina, September 16, 2014). Romina commented that in the Mapuche ceremonies, she had the opportunity to ask questions and learn by talking directly to Mapuche members. Along the same lines, Corina commented that 'it was illuminating to go to the *Regional Palín Event*,' since it was the first time she could see what other preschools do, where for the first time she saw people talking in Mapudungun, and she even saw an ILCE talking to a child in Mapudungun 'using complete sentences.'

Gema, in the Palqui Preschool, was the most critical and distant from the Mapuche organizations around the preschool in Santiago. She stated that she had 'never asked them anything' (interview, Gema, September 16, 2014). When she needed help she talked to her father or relative, but not to the community members. She emphasized twice that she had not required their assistance.

She indicated that community members in the south of Chile had guided her. However, she did see the contribution of community members for teachers in general.

Family knowledge

For Mapuche teachers, family knowledge acquired during and prior to their preschool work was relevant in their learning and practices. Like Gema, Rosa asserted that her mother and her family in the south of Chile played a major role in her learning. She said that she 'brought her mother in soul and spirit' to the preschool the first day, since any given day when she had a question she asked her mother, or she 'called to the south, and asked her aunts' (interview, Rosa, September 15, 2014). Interestingly, for Rosa, what she learned and what she knew was not only individual knowledge. The knowledge that her family taught her was group knowledge, 'it is not my experience, but rather the experience of others, of my family, uncles' (interview, Rosa, September 15, 2014). She also used the word *network* to explain how her family had taught her and supported her. Gema shared the same sentiment regarding the role of her family, and specially her father. In her account, her father was her main guide as he was a 'great wise man' (interview, Gema, September 9, 2014) and was a leader in his community.

Learning by themselves

Throughout the interviews, teachers expressed their own motivation for learning Mapuche language and culture, and how to teach them in the IBE preschool. Rosa described this experience as a period in which nobody knew what to do. In her words, 'nobody had any information, so I took pictures and wrote down the names: 'how do I say this in Mapudungun', 'how do I call this', 'what do people eat,' 'and how it is prepared' (interview, Rosa, September 15, 2014). With the same emphasis, Corina commented that they 'have learned everything by listening or reading books,' because without 'the intentionality it would have been impossible to do all of this: learn how to write, to speak.' She insisted that their learning was a matter of 'proactivity,' it was their 'own initiative,' because 'no one will tell us: 'we knew that we could do this, this and this' (interview, Corina, September 16, 2014). Romina shared the same sentiment and strongly asserted that 'at the beginning it was very difficult because nobody trained us' (interview, Romina, September 16, 2014), but she could overcome that feeling by deciding that she had to research, find out and search on internet by herself.

Discussion

The learning challenge: what is knowledge?

Teachers in both preschools were aware that they faced a learning challenge in their workplace, so they were motivated to be proactive in looking for their own opportunities to learn because they knew that no one in the preschool had the knowledge they needed to teach or train them. In other words, they realized that there were no wise teachers or colleagues who had all the answers. Unfortunately, although this perception was fruitful to make them engage in constant learning process, this view neglected the expertise of elders such as the ILCEs. In addition, their attempts and trial and error experiences in their classrooms show that these teachers conceived their learning processes – and also acted in accordance with this point of view – as knowledge that was being created in the same experiences.

However, these teachers struggled to comprehend this process as, perhaps, a natural circumstance in contact situations aiming for change. That is, these teachers were proud of their own work and of how much they learned, despite the fact that nobody had trained them. Nonetheless, at the same time, teachers were upset because, in their view, somebody – somewhere outside the preschool – had the knowledge that had not been shared with them. They acknowledged that it was not in the preschool, but rather in the Mapuche communities and the state organizations.

To make analytical sense of this perception, we need to look at the fact that Chilean teachers' training programs rarely use schools as places for learning. These teachers were most likely trained in teachers' training programs, where theory was taught in universities, and schools were merely places for practicing and testing what they had learned in university classrooms. Schools were not understood as places in which knowledge could legitimately be constructed.

Learning in communities: who is learning and where?

These teachers acknowledged that all individuals in the preschool are learning, and each one has a role; hence, there is no need for all the teachers to have the same knowledge. This view made the teachers in the Alicura Preschool propose that teachers should create a system – called 'borrow a teacher' – that would allow them to share their areas of expertise with other classrooms. In other words, the IBE preschool learning challenge inspired the teachers to think of their knowledge as distributed horizontally among different preschool actors. Similarly, these teachers observed the need to work in *knot working* (Engeström 2001), as they realized that they had to create a new pattern which included working collaboratively with several preschool actors to respond to the different demands of teaching in IBE preschools – such as national preschool demands, IBE demands, the demands of families and the Mapuche.

However, this concept of distributed knowledge and the intention to work in *knot working* was not extended to Mapuche communities, or beyond the preschool limits. None of the teachers, principals, or ILCEs discussed the possibility of constructing Mapuche knowledge and culture for IBE preschool and teachers in concert with the Mapuche communities. This could be explained in the historical roots of the issues faced by the Mapuche people. The Mapuche people have been historically stereotyped as uncivilized and uneducated people. Furthermore, the Metropolitan Region is an environment that has especially promoted Western knowledge.

In other words, Mapuche knowledge was not seen to be relational and fluidly reconstructed and recreated within the preschool and in the interactions with the teachers; indeed, non-Mapuche teachers mostly expect to learn superficial aspects of the culture. It seems that preschool actors want to learn, but also expect the presence of 'a mythical collective subject' (Engeström 2001) that they could approach to teach them. Based on the sense of isolation that the preschool actors face, their decisions and autonomy were most likely accompanied by a strong desire for more top-down policies, instructions, and guidelines regarding their work. Given that Mapuche knowledge was not understood to be dynamic and relational, it was not deemed to be constructed in their daily preschool experiences, or in their relationships.

The notion of contradictions contained in the concept of expansive learning could help teachers to reconceptualize their differences, since they have led participants to attempt to diminish possible conflicts and the discrepancies with the well-intentioned discourse of 'we all have Mapuche blood'.

Conclusions and implications

Although we do believe that educators should be offered quality teachers education for IBE preschools, we argue that the learning challenge proposed by IBE preschools cannot be fully met by merely training individuals – such as teachers, ILCEs, or other Mapuche community members – in universities to adopt new knowledge and skills.

Learning from others and learning through experience were key factors in becoming IBE teachers. This is worth noting because experiences in and around schools – or experiential knowledge – have been widely recognized as critical for becoming an 'expert' (Johnson 2006), since 'informal social and professional networks, including their (teachers') own classrooms, can function as powerful sites for professional learning' (96). In the Latin American context, Freire's (1970) notion of praxis has also been used to acknowledge the force of experiences in learning to teach, particularly in oppressed sites.

The influence of peers and others, such as Mapuche community members, also resonates with the idea of learning as emerging through social practice and human mediation (Johnson 2006). Within this perspective, learners are seen as active producers of theory for their own instructional contexts (Johnson and Golombek 2003; Johnson 2006). Nevertheless, teachers, although proud of being active learners and learning and teaching others, experienced this learning process as a challenge and struggled to actually create spaces for collaboration and knowledge sharing. Although the measures that need to be taken for converting the schools into Professional Learning Communities (DuFour 2004) fall outside of this study, its framework reminds us that even without profound changes in IBE preschool policies, the individual preschools, their teachers, and the participating community members can address some of these challenges and work towards transformation.

First of all, IBE preschools should provide opportunities for interaction between teachers and communities that transcend school activities. In considering the ways that Indigenous communities, such as the Mapuche, share knowledge, teachers and community members should meet to share their personal life stories in a similar way, transcending their preschool roles. Archibald (2015) asserted that 'Indigenous cultural practices such as prayer, talking circles, feasts, ceremony, land-based/environmental experiences, traditional arts, and storytelling are integral' (16) to learning about Indigenous ways of life.

This interaction can also be fruitful as an opportunity for discussing other issues that communities face, such as poverty and injustice, as well as teaching-related issues. In order to promote this knowledge-sharing experience, preschools should intentionally create opportunities for teachers to examine the ways that they consciously favor some knowledge and some people in preschool classrooms over other forms of knowledge and other people.

Furthermore, by explicitly addressing issues of power and privilege, preschool members could have more opportunities for creating deeper instances of community learning. With this aim in mind, preschool members and ILCEs should co-create the preschool curriculum in a collective process. This may allow teachers and community members to express their understanding and ideas of what an IBE program means for preschool children. In this collective planning, related topics, such as what Mapuche knowledge is, could arise. Throughout these discussions, Mapuche knowledge could be shared from a dynamic and relational perspective, hence, Indigenous knowledge would be rooted in the specific urban local context.

However, addressing these issues might not be an easy or pleasant endeavor. Both teachers and community members must feel safe and trust their groups to learn collaboratively. To achieve this goal, preschools should identify an Indigenous community member that they trust to facilitate the conversation. Indeed, Hill (2008) acknowledged that Indigenous wise elders are crucial healers. For instance, in the Alicura Preschool, a previous Traditional Educator and, in the Palqui Preschool, a Mapuche parent were highly valued and respected because of his interest in teaching Mapudungun to Mapuche and non-Mapuche teachers. These people can be important actors in leading dialogues and meetings in the preschools. With the presence of a trusted and respected community member, more challenging topics could be addressed, such as the political nature of education and the struggles of Mapuche people in the larger context.

Even though it is undeniable that issues of power and hierarchy affect the partnership between teachers and community members, the strong appreciation and value of peer learning, and learning from Mapuche communities, also appears to suggest that individuals in IBE preschools struggle due to their lack of relational expertise (Edwards 2012), i.e. not knowing how to connect the expertise of different agents. It has been shown that even in situations where professionals share the same status, problems arise when building a common understanding and knowledge (Guile 2011; Ramsten and Säljö 2012). The fact that teachers value Mapuche knowledge creates a potential space for fostering collaboration through relational expertise.

One of the more important findings is that the commitment and eagerness to learn of non-Mapuche teachers was not directly connected to the Mapuche revitalization project or a social justice cause. This lack of commitment is crucial if we consider that Mapuche children not only

receive an education that is linguistically and culturally irrelevant, but also an education of lower quality than in the school system in general. In effect, according to the 2009 CASEN survey, there is a gap between the levels of literacy and education among the indigenous population of the country and the non-indigenous population. The historical and political issues faced by the Mapuche people in their struggle to recover the lands that were wrested from them – and their portrayal in the media as violent people – could explain this lack of commitment to the demands and the struggle of the Mapuche people. In this regard, the notion of *historicity* present in the concept of expansive learning could help to define the learning of teachers in IBE preschools, and how historical processes affect and influence their learning.

These findings seem to suggest an absence of the principles of critical indigenous pedagogies that have been regarded as relevant for the education of indigenous children, such as conceiving education as: (a) collective; (b) critical, by locating class and economic oppression within the social, political, and economic infrastructure of capitalism; (c) participatory, by building coalitions among community members, and (d) a creative process (McLaren 2005). Such principles are relevant to IBE in Chile and their educators, since the lingering historical abuses and the present sociopolitical and economic capitalist system in Chile require teachers that work critically and collectively with participatory and creative process for a human, transformative and solidarity education. These principles could be practically addressed by implementing the proposals presented above.

Implications for broader context

The findings of this study seem to be aligned with research that highlight the importance of a social justice focus on teacher education, and in teacher professional development. As the findings here show, a lack of emphasis in a social justice perspective made teachers to be committed to their school – or preschool – but disconnect their work from a larger societal project and equity issues. Studies in this field underline that ‘all teachers, regardless of geographic location or area of expertise, must be prepared to teach students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds’ (Hawkins 2011, 1).

This social justice emphasis is even more important in the context of Indigenous education, where teachers should be aware that they are not only teaching a language, but also giving students access to their most basic right – to learn in and about their language –, which is protected by policies based on equal language rights. With a social justice approach, teachers could become aware of and contest strategies that seek to ‘normalize’ Indigenous students through assimilation and integration with mainstream society. They could also learn about what social justice means for their Indigenous communities.

The experiences, opinions and perceptions of these teachers regarding how they learned in IBE preschool connect with several studies done in the U.S. on the importance of community teaching (Zeichner and Melnick 1996; Murrell 2001; McDonald, Bowman, and Brayko 2013) and also in the Latin American context (Delany-Barmann 2010; Trapnell 2011; EIBAMAZ, UNICEF and Finland 2012). For the Chilean context, this may mean that teacher education programs could benefit from a community teaching model, and this model could also be applied in schools where teachers can continue learning.

Notes

1. This study is part of a broader doctoral research that examined the purpose and quality of relations in IBE preschools and Mapuche communities in the aforementioned Region.
2. Santiago is the capital of the country, and is the main city of the Metropolitan Region.
3. The National Board of Preschools (in Spanish: *Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles JUNJI*) is a Chilean government agency created in 1970 by Law No. 17.301, as an autonomous establishment linked to the Ministry of Education, for addressing preschool education in the country.

4. The National Indigenous Development Corporation (in Spanish *Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena CONADI*) is a Chilean government agency, created in 1993 by Indigenous Law 19253.
5. The epew comes from the Mapuche oral art and means *story* in Mapudungun.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by CONICYT under Grant FONDECYT/11160746 and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. We are grateful for the knowledge and experiences that our participants shared with us during this study, and for the work of the reviewers; all errors are our own.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by Grant CONICYT/FONDECYT/11160746

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