

Teachers' professional standards and Indigenous Education in Australia and Chile

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This paper explores the strengths and limitations of mandatory professional standards for teachers in Australia and Chile, two countries containing colonized societies. First, the paper compares the reality of the countries with a focus on the structure and principles of mandatory professional standards for the professional development of teachers. In Australia, professional standards for teachers includes strategies to teach in Indigenous contexts, highlighting the importance of understanding and respecting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their traditional culture. However, in Chile, the Indigenous education debate is limited. Second, the paper discusses the strengths of approaches used to frame standards within the professional development of teachers. Strengths consider how teacher's expectations are impacted by an improvement in their knowledge of Indigenous. Finally, the paper explores the limitations of the mandatory standards in both. These reveal how diversity encountered among Indigenous cultures in Chile and Australia proves challenging when preparing teachers to perform in a particular Indigenous context. In Chile, teachers need specialized training to develop the necessary skills to work in Indigenous contexts. However, the Chilean standards of teacher professional development present limited guidelines for teaching in these contexts, which impact local language retention and culture. Recognizing the importance of Indigenous Education and inclusion in national policies is crucial. The new challenge for Chilean universities is to improve their teacher education programs for success in Indigenous Education.

Keywords: Indigenous education; professional standards for teachers; teacher education; Chile

INTRODUCTION

In Chile, Indigenous people are defined as “the descendants of the human groups that exist in the national territory since pre-Columbian times, which preserve their own ethnic and cultural manifestations, being for them the earth the main foundation of their existence and culture” (Ministry of Planning and Cooperation of Chile, 2017, p. 1). The term “Indigenous education” refers to the educational service provided to Indigenous peoples. In Australia, the concept of Indigenous education has encouraged the incorporation of special programs to address the special needs of Indigenous people within the mandatory Teacher Professional Standards (Australian Institute for Teaching

and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011) in the National Curriculum. These standards consider strategies to teach Indigenous students and also highlight the importance of understanding and respecting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their heritage.

By contrast, Chile's educational policies continue to be heavily impacted by colonization, and the current teacher education programs do not include training for teaching in Indigenous contexts (Quintriqueo, Torres, Sanhueza, & Friz, 2017). There is an urgent need for improvement in Indigenous education.

The Chilean Standards of Teacher Professional Development (Ministry of Education of Chile [MINEDUC], 2011) do not include specific guidelines for teachers in Indigenous context. Furthermore, specialized training for teachers to work specifically within the Indigenous population is not contemplated. This situation impacts the quality of Indigenous education and is already resulting in the loss of local languages, dialects, and culture. The Chilean Government needs to acknowledge the importance of Indigenous education and make adjustments within national policies to reflect this. Additionally, universities must incorporate necessary improvements in teacher education programs to allow teachers to perform successfully in Indigenous contexts.

In this article, I will discuss the main strengths and limitations of Australian mandatory professional standards for teachers, and how the introduction of similar standards could make a positive impact on the Chilean reality. In the first part of this paper, the Australian situation is compared with the Chilean context. In the second part, the paper discusses the fundamental strengths of approaches that have been used to mandate standards to be followed by teachers; that includes the impact on teacher knowledge and teachers' expectations. Third, the main limitations of mandatory standards will be analysed in relation to the diversity encountered among Indigenous cultures in Chile and Australia, and the gap between theory and practice in teacher education, as well as the results of the current standards regarding the marginalization of Indigenous students.

AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2011) proposes two primary standards strands for teacher professional development: Professional Knowledge with a focus on the knowledge of the students and how they learn; and Knowledge of the Content and how to teach it.

The first area refers to the domain of students' characteristics (culture, language, physical, social, intellectual) and understanding of how they learn, which includes special needs or disabilities. With regard to Indigenous perspectives, the relevant standard is 1.4 "Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students" (AITSL, 2011, p. 2) which considers the need for understanding the Aboriginal culture, implementation of effective teaching strategies taking into account the local background, support from community representatives and engagement in collaborative work with the community members, including representatives, families, and carers.

The second standard, 2.4, "Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians" (AITSL, 2011, p. 3), refers to content knowledge and how to teach it. This standard focuses on teaching strategies, curriculum organization, and strategies for literacy,

numeracy, and technology. This standard considers the development of knowledge from understanding and respecting Aboriginal cultures and language through to the provision, support and leadership of students and colleagues.

The aforementioned standards respond to the need for competent professionals with the ability to teach in schools when assisting Aboriginal students. This idea agrees with Ma Rhea (2015), who claims that Indigenous Education must be recognized as a method. Thus, pre-service and in-service educators must have specialized teacher preparation in Indigenous lifeways and culture. However, Ma Rhea, Anderson, and Atkinson (2012) claim there is a lack of evidence of the effectiveness of the Australian Professional Development Program for teachers. They also suggest that there is no clear evidence that the program has been assessed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHILEAN REALITY

Thirteen percent of the Chilean population claim to belong to an Indigenous group (National Institute of Statistics, 2017). Indigenous people in Chile have long suffered social discrimination. This social discrimination is the result of social inequality and the pedagogical practices within classrooms and in school organizations (Williamson, 2004). In addition, Indigenous peoples live in the most socially disadvantaged areas and with lower levels of education (Lagos, 2015). After the enactment of the *Chilean Indigenous Law (19,253)*, the Intercultural and Bilingual Program was proposed (Leyton, 2013). The objective of this program was to provide Indigenous students from Mapuche, Aymara, Rapa Nui, and Quechua communities with the appropriate knowledge to develop a sustainable education system (Becerra-Lubies & Fones, 2016). The program allowed schools to adjust the curriculum according to students' requirements while maintaining the mandatory contents of the National Curriculum (Catriquir & Duran, 1997). In 2006 this program was improved through the incorporation of Indigenous languages as a key language area in schools with a high percentage of Indigenous students. More Indigenous groups were also recognized and included: Atacamenos, Collas, Diaguitas, Alacalufes and Yagan (Ministry of Planning and Cooperation of Chile, 2017). The objective of this improvement was the development of Indigenous languages and culture, and an increase in community participation in educative programs (Infante, 2010). The Intercultural Program is being implemented in some small communities but does not include special teacher training for implementation and is not effective in places with a larger Indigenous population (Ortiz, 2009).

Becerra-Lubies and Fones (2016) and Ortiz (2009) have criticized the implementation of this program, noting that the main problem is with the teachers' limited knowledge about Indigenous languages and culture; thus, there are not enough professionals capable of implementing it effectively. Chile requires teacher leaders in the creation and implementation of inclusive strategies. Infante (2010) suggests that a greater focus by educators on inclusiveness would help to eliminate the discrimination and social oppression that exists in the Chilean educational system. There is evidence that Indigenous students in Chile receive low-quality education as well as losing their ancestral culture. In the words of Ortiz (2009), "numerous inequalities persist in the allocation of human and material resources for Indigenous schooling" (p. 98).

Similar to the Australian case, the Chile Ministry of Education (2011) proposes standards for graduates of pedagogy in Primary Education. Also analogous to Australia, these are

divided into two domains: pedagogical and disciplinary. The first has a focus on the students' knowledge, National Curriculum, and learning strategies. The pedagogical domain includes ten focus areas. Focus area number eight could be interpreted as similar to Standard 1.4 of Australian AITSL standards, and states as the main aim: "Attention to the diversity and promotion of the integration in the classroom". The focus contains point 8.2: "Respects and values diversity of students in relation to gender, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, nationality, disability, socioeconomic status, and talents, avoiding discrimination, preventing it and promoting inclusion" (MINEDUC, 2011, p. 37). However, none of these areas explicitly refers to Indigenous education (Baeza, 2019), and point to the need to make significant changes to Chilean teachers' professional development. The need is a crucial challenge for Universities; for example, teacher education needs to produce professionals who can think critically and can break down barriers faced by their students such as their socioeconomic situation, cultural background, and learning styles, and thus better encourage students' participation and access to education.

STRENGTHS IN APPROACHES THAT HAVE BEEN USED TO MANDATE TEACHER STANDARDS

There are many advantages to the existence of teachers' professional standards. This article focuses on two of the strengths: the impact that standards have on the teachers' knowledge about Indigenous culture and the implications that the knowledge and clear guidelines for professional development would have on teachers' expectation.

Teacher knowledge about Indigenous culture

As noted, Australian Standards acknowledge the need to understand the culture and identity of students from Indigenous backgrounds, but Chilean standards do not. The limited knowledge of Chilean teachers is causing resistance to learning from local communities because they see teachers as foreigners to their ethos and they believe that teachers are not prepared to appropriately consider the needs of Indigenous education (Toledo, 2015). In other words, teachers are not being trained to teach Indigenous students and use the same teaching strategies as in urban school settings or intuit how to teach in Indigenous classrooms (Lagos, 2015). The outcome is a cultural clash and reduced respect for teachers by the locals (Bauch, 2001). With the right standards and teacher training, these issues could disappear or at least decrease.

The first step in the process of improving teacher' knowledge is to consider the value of Indigenous culture in the Chilean Standards for teachers' professional development—in the same way as it is recognized in Australia. After all, the aim of education should be to preserve these communities' ways of life (Ma Rhea, 2004) and allow all student to develop, including students with Indigenous backgrounds. According to Ortiz (2009), the simple fact of recognizing that Indigenous knowledge exists is an important advance in epistemological resistance. To teach in a respectful manner in Indigenous contexts, teachers need to at least know about the protocol of engagement, culture, language, identity, history, rights, socioeconomic justice, citizenship, and celebration (Ma Rhea, 2015; White & Kline, 2012). If these skills are absent, the schools could become disconnected from the local indigenous culture, and pedagogical practice might have a negative impact on Indigenous students' identity (Ortiz, 2009).

Teachers could improve learning through the use of the local knowledge as a tool for student engagement (Kroma, 1995). Studies have found that there is a direct relationship between teacher effectiveness and student performance; so, well-prepared teachers in Indigenous Education would positively impact Indigenous students' achievements. For example, Ma Rhea (2015) argues "inside the classroom, the teacher makes the greatest difference to student outcomes" (p. 117). Documentation of local knowledge is also necessary; for example, about agricultural and pastoral lifestyles, medicine and social information. This documentation might contribute to local knowledge preservation (Ma Rhea, 2004) and it could be a tool that teachers can use to learn more about local cultures and in their planning. An example of how to apply this knowledge is exemplified by the case of Northern Chilean Indigenous students: they come from an agricultural background, their families are specialists in crops and plants, thus, teachers can use information in relation to this context and apply it in different subjects, such as Science or Math. Lagos (2015) suggests that an Indigenous lesson must take advantage of the knowledge and abilities of locals that work in the school, such as cleaners and cooks. There is no doubt that if students are familiarized with the context, they could improve their learning by giving meaning to the new knowledge and skills.

Teachers' expectations and guidelines

The limited preparation and knowledge that teachers have about Indigenous communities and their lifestyle might cause newly arrived teachers to hold misleading impressions. In Australia, Ma Rhea et al. (2012) found that "there is a consensus that non-Indigenous teachers have little knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society whether historical or contemporary" (p. 69). In addition, most teachers arrive without experience of living and teaching in Indigenous communities (Warren & Quine, 2013). Teachers' erroneous expectations may cause them to leave the Indigenous schools prematurely. White and Kline (2012) suggest that teachers' beliefs about rural communities including "geographical, social, cultural, and professional isolation; inadequate housing; and a lack of preparation for rural multi-age classrooms" (p. 3) could be the cause of teacher shortage in regional areas. From this perspective, if teachers have access to clear guidelines and training for teaching in an Indigenous context, they would arrive better prepared to face the situation and have more realistic expectations of students. The existence of standards for teacher professional development represents guidelines for not only teachers but also principals and local authorities. In the words of Ma Rhea et al. (2012) "the national collaborative efforts are providing opportunities for all State and Territory jurisdictions to work under a common umbrella" (p. 39).

Additionally, the existence of clear standards would give educators a general perspective of how communities live and how the interaction between community members is, and this could allow them to fit in. In the Chilean context, Baeza (2019) claims that teachers have limited interaction with the Indigenous local community. However, "better preparation and community involvement could also reduce the cultural shock between teachers' expectations and the reality of life inside the communities when they arrive" (Baeza, 2019, p. 14).

In Chile, rural areas have a population of 2,000 individuals or less, and at least half of the population works in primary production activities. Many Chilean schools are located in these areas, and these schools have a high percentage of students with Indigenous background (National Institute of Statistics, 2017). This fact could motivate new teachers

who arrive at these communities with high expectations and looking for new professional experiences. However, living in these areas is challenging for many reasons, such as: weather conditions; lack of basic amenities such as health services, hot water, limited electricity and Internet connection; poor housing for teachers; and isolation (Osborne, 2003; Williamson, 2004). Additionally, the reception by the members of the community is not always as expected because, for some, teachers are foreign and, consequently, they are not considered as an integral part of their community (Warren & Quine, 2013). However, if newly arrived teachers were forewarned and educated about the general background of the Indigenous culture and community lifestyle, they could be more prepared to engage with the locals and to live in these areas.

Another strength or utility that mandatory standards could have is providing teachers with a have deeper knowledge of students' characteristics. Some educators believe that learners with Indigenous background are less capable and more vulnerable; others have a low expectation about their students' educational outcomes (Webb & Radcliffe, 2016). Mistaken teacher perceptions of Indigenous student abilities have a negative impact on learners (Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk, & Robinson, 2012). This idea accords with that of Harrison (2008), who suggests that low teacher expectations could damage teacher relationships with students.

In Chile, it is common to hear new teachers say that Indigenous students living in rural areas have fewer skills than non-Indigenous students who live in urban zones based on lower performance results in the National Standard Test (Agency of the Quality of the Education, 2015). However, the poor results achieved by Chilean Indigenous students in the national test could be caused by the use of inadequate pedagogies for the context (Turra, Ferrada, & Villena, 2013). Sometimes, Indigenous students have different skills that are not recognized by teachers. As an example, in 1992, in the Australian context, Colquhoun-Kerr (1992) found that some teachers denigrated Indigenous students because they did not speak correct standard Australian English but, in fact, some students were able to speak two or three different languages. The problem here was not related to the learner's language skills, the real issue was that teachers did not recognize the student's capabilities because of their own limited training and understanding of the local culture. Teacher expectations could be managed through better preparation and training embodied in standards for teacher professional development. Thus, special guidelines for Indigenous education could greatly impact teacher performance and, consequently, learner achievement.

LIMITATIONS OF MANDATED TEACHER STANDARDS

Guidelines for professional development have many benefits but also limitations. The main limitations are how to incorporate adequate training that recognizes the numerous Indigenous cultures that exist; closing the gap between theory and practice in teacher professional development; and possible marginalization of students with Indigenous backgrounds caused by the existence of specific standards.

Diversity of Aboriginal cultures in Australia and Chile

As is the case in Australia, Chile has many different Indigenous groups. Each community has different cultural norms, language, religion, tradition, and lifestyles. Therefore, a single guideline for professional development for teachers working with Indigenous

students is problematic. The Australian Government explains that inappropriate teacher training is causing teachers to not understand communication and social interaction norms in Indigenous communities. Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012) note that the deficiencies in teacher's training include a lack of training in Indigenous pedagogies. It is important for Indigenous communities (Ma Rhea et al., 2012) to validate the knowledge that teachers receive in their professional development. If these elements are not present in teacher training, there is no doubt that teaching in the diversity of Indigenous educational settings could be affected. From this perspective, the Australian proposal to work with an Aboriginal Education Officer, which is a community member, would contribute to support teacher performance. Harrison (2011) claims that working with this kind of professional help in modelling a cross-cultural relationship for learners would be quite beneficial. In the Chilean case, mothers or uncles could work as Indigenous Education Officers. It also might contribute to generate stronger alliances within students' families and build mutual trust between them and teachers.

Another significant limitation of the Indigenous cultural diversity in Chile is the paucity of teachers' knowledge about local lifestyles. Teachers could receive "cultural training" because they need to know about the lifeways of the communities and, also, they could be integrated into daily school life (Ma Rhea, 2015). This training must be carried out within the communities and guided by local people. Ma Rhea et al. (2012) suggest an immersion program, which could help teachers in their professional development within required AITSL Standards 1.4 and 2.4. The idea is a program developed by the members of the community in which the teacher will teach. This kind of program might impact positively on teacher performance, especially among non-indigenous educators who have little options for training in Indigenous Education (Ma Rhea, 2015).

The gap between theory and practice in teachers' professional development

Even if the national policies propound clear guidelines for professional development and standards for educators of Indigenous students, if these are just theoretical and do not consider practical application in real settings, their impact could be void. Evidence of this is the focus of Chilean Universities in which most teaching programs are centred in theory; therefore, when early career educators begin to work in schools, they feel that they are unprepared to face students' characteristics, daily school situations, and other issues. It is worse in rural and Indigenous contexts. Williamson (2004) critiques the Universities' curriculum. He claims that in order to prepare educators to teach in rural and Indigenous contexts, universities must include learning about work and participation with local communities, Indigenous culture, knowledge, and history. Similarly, studies of the Australia context find that the effort in pre-service teacher training in universities is more focused on the transfer of knowledge than in skills development (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012). Consequently, new teachers know the theory, but they do not know how to apply it inside the classroom. In fact, their teaching style usually depends on their own student experiences and not necessarily of their university preparation. Thus, they need to learn which styles work best with concrete Aboriginal learners, and this can only be learned when they are teaching inside the school (Ma Rhea, 2015). With these arguments, the importance of within-school training is again highlighted. Kroma (1995) adds that "the interface between school and traditional knowledge can be seen daily in the classroom" (p. 4). From this perspective, the role of the school community is crucial, especially from school principals who must take on the responsibility of guiding teachers in the "right direction" (Ma Rhea et al., 2012, p. 49).

Marginalization of students with Indigenous backgrounds and dominance of Western culture

In Chile, the lack of guidance for teachers of Indigenous learners is leading to the reproduction of Western culture in Indigenous schools. In Australia, something similar is happening. The schools located in Aboriginal areas are reproducing the dominant knowledge, and Indigenous traditional knowledge and language is being pushed aside and, consequently, dying. Indigenous students are losing their identity. Ortiz (2009) argues that it is a typical characteristic of the Colonial Conquest, a common aspect that Chile and Australia share. In addition, Ma Rhea (2004) claims that “western-based education has been criticised for dismissing and attempting to supplant Indigenous knowledge” (p. 10). At a macro level, also, the globalization of universities is causing the homogenization of human thinking, and this is producing knowledge that is predictable and mechanistic (Ma Rhea & Teasdale, 2001). The problem caused by these situations is not just the loss of traditional culture but also that Aboriginal students are simultaneously failing in developing Western skills (Colquhoun-Kerr, 1992).

In rural contexts, most students are afraid to move to urban areas because they consider it difficult to persevere in their studies while being away without their communities’ support (Colquhoun-Kerr, 1992). However, Aboriginal parents have expressed a desire for their children to be able to function successfully in both their own culture and the wider Australian community. They accept that some parts of their traditional education program should be complemented with those skills which will allow the Aboriginal people the opportunity to participate in the general Australian society (National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC), 1978, as cited in Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 75).

The same can be observed with Chilean Indigenous students: some of them want to continue their studies in high schools or universities located within urban cities but the lack of support and school preparation make it difficult for them to be successful in tertiary studies. In addition, as in Australia, parents of Chilean students feel that their children are receiving second class education because schools are not “providing the mainstream skills in the dominant language that their children will need outside their indigenous communities, from which they will have to migrate sooner rather than later due to the lack of economic opportunities” (Díaz-Coliñir, 2004, as cited in Ortiz, 2009).

Summarizing, the knowledge that students with Indigenous backgrounds receive at the school must be local as well as global; it requires specialized teacher training that is not considered in the current standards and is in relation to successful integration of these students into the global society.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

In this paper, the main strengths and limitations of including standards for Teachers’ Professional Development with relation to the teaching of Indigenous students were discussed. In Chile, a clear guideline for teaching in Indigenous communities does not exist. In Australian standards for teaching, the teaching of Indigenous students is made explicit and there is a guide to novice teachers with regard to the skills they must have to effectively teach within Indigenous contexts. However, some elements of the standards need improvement, particularly with regard to the integration of theory and practice in teachers training, and teachers’ knowledge of the Indigenous culture and their lifeways.

An evaluation of the impact of the present standards on Aboriginal education is also needed and would contribute to the improvement in the teacher professional development.

In the case of Chile, the first step is the acknowledgement of Aboriginal Education and its place in the official national curriculum on behalf of the Chilean Government (Ortiz, 2009). It is important to think of pedagogy in favour of diversity: teachers must be prepared to teach to all students regardless of their backgrounds or contexts. Such a philosophy would help to avoid the marginalization of Indigenous students. As Ma Rhea et al. (2012) argue, in Australia, an immersion program, created by the communities and within them could contribute to better professional development. Also, this could help teachers develop real expectations about how to live in local communities, what the characteristics of their students are, how the relationships with the community members and local leaders are, and which challenges they will face. This information would allow them to arrive prepared and, consequently, perform successfully.

Opening the debate in universities about the importance of including specialized courses to prepare teachers to teach Indigenous students and generate alliances with the local communities to make teachers' immersion programs together is crucial. These programs would create mutual trust between teachers and community members, contributing to respect for local culture and traditions. Teacher training requires a contextualized education, especially in countries where the production and use of knowledge are bounded by ethnic, geographical, historical, and cultural subject positions such as in Chile and Australia.

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