

Teaching History and Social Sciences in Multicultural Classrooms in Chile

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Abstract

This work is part of the recently defended doctoral thesis. Its objective was to analyse the educational practices of History, Geography and Social Sciences teachers in multicultural classrooms in Chile, to contribute to the improvement of student inclusion. This research was carried out in public schools in Santiago de Chile, characterized by having a great cultural diversity among their students, and its participants were the teachers of History, Geography and Social Sciences of said centres. The methodology was a qualitative approach, through a case study, using in-depth interviews and non-participant observations. The results show that even though teachers generate educational strategies that are close to some principles of the intercultural approach to teaching, many of their practices fail to reach it, and even their practices are carried out in the opposite way to what it should be from an intercultural approach, detecting training needs for multicultural contexts. This coincides with what different authors have reconsidered in recent years in their studies, that teacher training must be carried out from an intercultural approach to generate best teaching practices, and they also recommend strengthening the curricular development skills of schools, to allow contextualizing and adjusting study programs, so that they accommodate the requirements of each of the educational communities. In this way, future accompaniment and continuous training programs should be generated to help improve teaching practices.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity, Inclusion, Intercultural Education, Didactics of Social Sciences, History Teaching

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Introduction

In recent years, Chile has begun to receive many immigrants, due to different elements among them, social stability and mainly the opportunities that are presented in the labour market. The number of immigrants currently represents around 6.6% of the national population (National Institute of Statistics [INE] and Department of Immigration and Migration [DEM], 2019), in turn, the enrolment of immigrant students increased by 99.5% (Silva & Ballesteros, 2017), reaching 3.2% of the national enrolment (Fernández, 2018).

For this reason, the new challenge for Chilean education is how to attend to the cultural particularities of the immigrant student group and to be able to make their existence visible in the classrooms of our educational centres, especially when the “school” and teaching have a relevant function, because in it social relations are generated that cause existing prejudices to increase or decrease in the process of interaction with immigrants who arrive in our country.

In this sense, the new challenge for Chilean education is how to attend to the cultural particularities of the immigrant student group and to be able to make their existence visible in the classrooms of our educational centres, especially when the school and teaching have a relevant function, because in it social relations are generated that cause existing prejudices to increase or decrease in the process of interaction with immigrants who arrive in our country. For this, it is necessary to approach education from an intercultural approach, strengthening educational policies for the benefit of all, especially this migrant group, despite the fact that it is already declared in educational policies and enshrined in Chilean educational legislation (República de Chile, 2009 and 2015), there are still realities that hinder this approach, including racism and discrimination within educational centres (Riedemann & Stefoni, 2015; Tijoux, 2013), absence of pedagogical, theoretical and conceptual orientations, meaning that educational centres do not have the support to know and learn the meaning of education with an intercultural approach.

That is why one of the key elements in the construction of an intercultural school are the teachers, who must face different challenges, among which we can mention; the demand and pressure of having to cover an extensive curriculum in a short time and that offers us a plurality of contents and teaching strategies necessary to attend to cultural diversity in a good way (Poblete & Galaz, 2016), generating that the immigrant student do not make sense of what is taught in school hindering their learning (Joiko & Vásquez, 2016). Even more sensitive in the subject of History and Social Sciences, due to the fact that much of the curriculum content is related to armed conflicts between Chile and neighbouring countries, from which a large number of migrant students come. Therefore, it is necessary adjust the curricular contents, which consider the cultural references of the entire student body, in other words, *to contextualize* the school curriculum, adapting and implementing didactic teaching-learning strategies that incorporate the different particularities of the student body for a good achievement of their process (Poblete & Galaz, 2016).

Even though teachers and educational centres do not receive conceptual or didactic orientations to implement teaching with an intercultural approach, it has been able to put into practice actions that we could associate with some principles and logic of said approach. Developing unconscious responses to these challenges, adapting the curriculum quite a bit, from the selection of historical and cultural elements of the culture of origin of their immigrant students and teaching them together with the mandatory contents of the Chilean curriculum (Joiko & Vásquez, 2016).

This has caused many of their practices to be diffuse, little systematic and incomplete from the point of view of what the expert literature understands and has defined as a teaching process with an intercultural approach.

Next, the theoretical background and the methodology that we follow in this research will be presented. Subsequently, the analysis of the results obtained is presented, organized in the three dimensions with their categories:

In the first, the Formative Trajectory of the teachers of the study will be explained, related to pedagogy, education for diversity, initial and permanent training education. In the second, we explain the Management of Cultural Diversity in the classroom, in terms of curricular planning, objectives, strategies/activities, materials/resources, interactions in the classroom, etc. And in the third we explain the Evaluation of the teaching of History in Cultural Diversity, referring to the opportunities, possibilities, advantages, difficulties.

Subsequently, we present a theoretical discussion with the results obtained. And in the final part some conclusions derived from the analysis carried out are proposed.

Theoretical Background

Next, we will refer to the two main theoretical elements present in this research.

a) Cultural Diversity and Interculturality

We understand interculturality as a dynamic element that allows interaction between individuals in an equal manner, through dialogue and along with it, the enrichment of cultures by learning from the other. In addition to implying "a critical reflection on what is identified as their own cultural forms, which would allow us to understand their relative and historical character" (Stefoni et al., 2016, p. 160). At the same time, it is "a situation, process or project that occurs in the space "between" two different forms of cultural production" (Novaro, 2006, p. 51).

b) The Teaching of History and Social Sciences

Historically, the curricula and the teaching of History and Social Sciences have played a reproductive, homogenizing, and discriminatory role, not recognizing the "other" from an open attitude, but rather making them invisible. For this reason, we believe that we must move from assimilationist models to intercultural and inclusive ones. This means rethinking the didactics of History and Social Sciences that we use in the classroom, allowing teachers to intervene in "teaching and learning situations in a reasoned and reflective way" (Pagés, 2002, p. 261), making possible a democratic practice and the recognition of multiple world views (Sabariego, 2002).

We agree with Pagés (2002), in that it is not enough just to know to teach, a professional must be educated to decide, organize, and put into practice the historical knowledge that must be taught, welcoming the dialogue between different visions of the same topic.

Objectives of the Investigation

- Analyze the educational intervention model in multicultural classrooms where History and Social Sciences are taught in Chile, to contribute to improving student inclusion.
- To characterize the pedagogical practices of History and Social Sciences teachers in multicultural contexts in Chile.
- To understand if the pedagogical practices of History and Social Sciences teachers in Chile include immigrant students.
- Detect training needs for History and Social Sciences teachers in Chile for multicultural contexts.

Methodological Framework

The research was carried out in the commune of Santiago de Chile (Figure 1), which concentrates one of the largest amounts of foreign population, around 212.000 people (INE and DEM, 2019), and which has many immigrant students enrolled in public educational centres, serving almost 93.5% of immigrant students (Joiko & Vásquez, 2016).



Figure 1: Map of Chile, Metropolitan Region, and Commune of Santiago.

a) Selection of the Intervention

To better address the research objectives, we needed a specific profile of the teaching staff to collect more and better information. Therefore, the selection of the population was intentional or opinionated, choosing 3 teachers (2 men and 1 woman), one for each educational centre.

The teaching staff had to belong to the subject of History and Social Sciences, who taught classes at the secondary level and in courses with a high presence of immigrant students. In addition, they had to be graduates of a Public University and with less than 10 years of work.

We consider that they were from secondary school, because they have a greater specialization, which meant that they would have a greater reflective capacity of the content to be delivered and greater didactic resources, this reinforced by the fact that, being young people recently graduated from the University, they could have updates on History content, on attention to diversity, interculturality and the inclusion of immigrant students.

b) Selection and Application of Evaluation Techniques and Results

An exploratory type design was chosen, to approach a phenomenon that had not been investigated until now, using the case study as a research method (Stake, 1998).

The instruments and information collection strategies used were non-participant observation (Flores, 2009) and semi-structured interviews (Hernández et. al., 2014).

The analysis was carried out through the content analysis technique according to (Bardin, 2002) (Figure 2), developing a system of content categories to be analyzed (Figure 3), in order to understand the teaching practices of the teaching staff of the subject of History and Social Sciences.

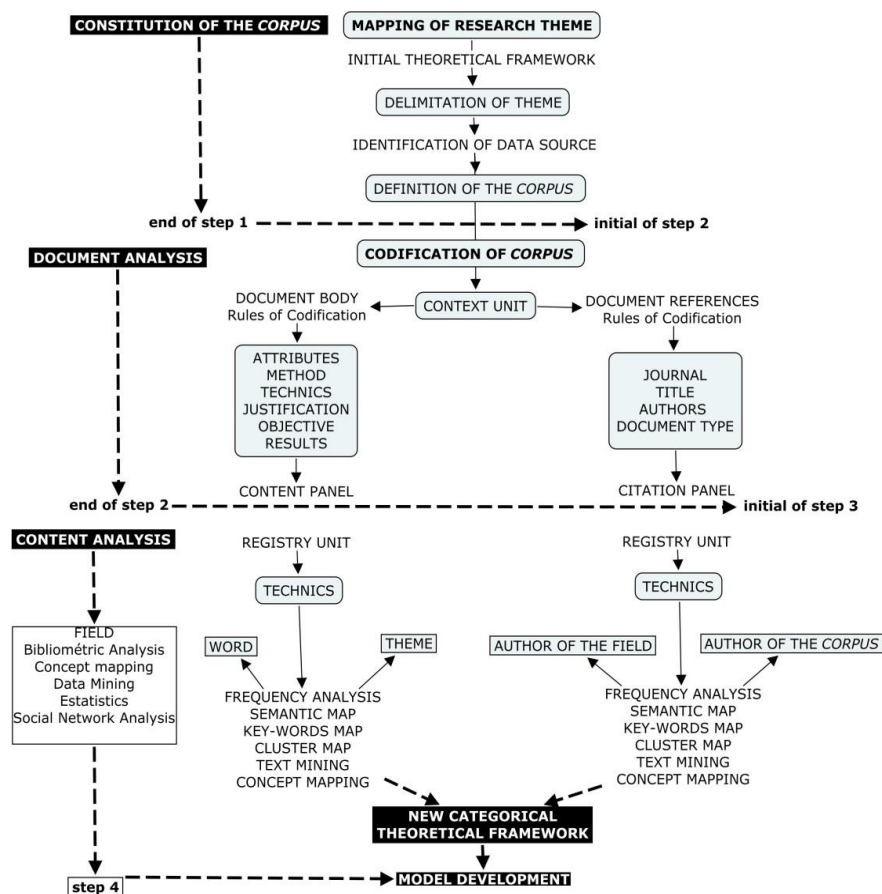


Figure 2: Method for Review and Content Analysis.

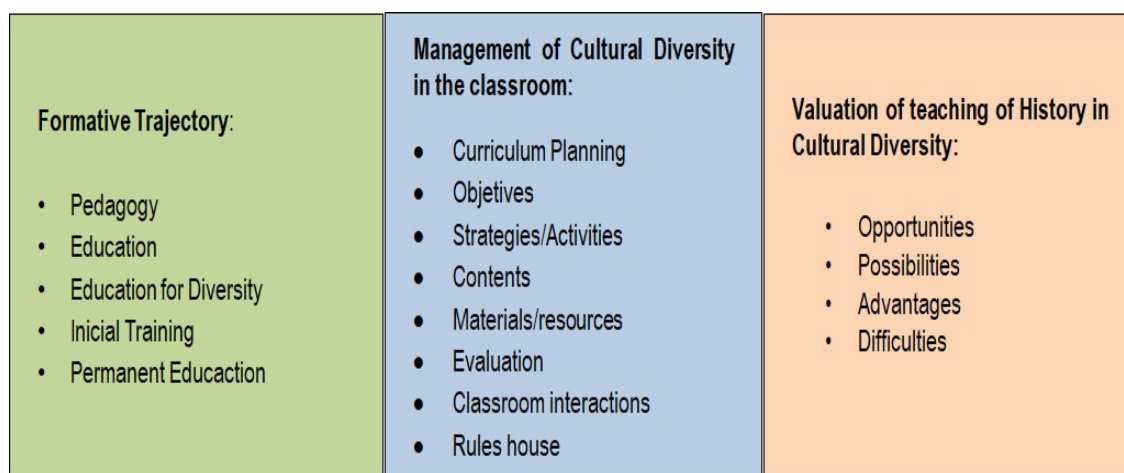


Figure 3: Category System.

c) Application of the Intervention

The interviews carried out were 3 (one per participant) within a calm, trustworthy and confidential environment. The duration was approximately 1 hour, recorded with the authorization of the participants.

The observation sessions of effective classrooms carried out for the investigation were 12, developed in a period of 5 months, not finding any type of difficulty.

Results

Within the investigation, we have been able to analyzed the data obtained, in the different dimensions and categories analyzed.

a) Trajectory Formative

Regarding the formative trajectory of the research faculty, we find similar answers, they state that, in their initial training received, despite being complete in knowledge, they were not prepared to face this type of context and student body, and that the practice has given them some tools. In turn, they recognize that they do not have improvement courses related to multiculturalism and diversity, which is why they are considered academically outdated in these topics. What is a challenge for teaching and a challenge.

In relation to epistemological conceptions, there are similar guidelines among teachers, in terms of their conceptions of education and understanding of the historical discipline, it is stated that teaching...

Is not only the act that occurs in the classroom. (P01)¹

And other...

It is a constant act not only in the classroom. (P03)

¹ The numbering (for example P01) is the way to categorize the responses expressed by the teachers participating in the research.

b) Diversity Management in the classroom

Regarding the didactic strategies, in general, we have shown that despite the fact that multiculturalism is part of the national educational context, and that teachers recognize it, it is only part of the discourse, since it is not manifested in the classroom, nor is it translated into actions that manage to include other cultures, that is, interculturality is not considered by teachers, strategies for the inclusion of the students...

I do not make changes, not because I am a foreigner must be different. (P04)

It is important to note that despite the fact that the participating teachers are young, they carry out their classes in a traditional way: exhibition, focused on their figure, with traditional materials and tools (Power Point, student's text), and that the small modifications or changes they make, are in "extra programmatic" instances (terrain outputs, fairs, etc.), but they do not make any change of strategy in the daily life of the class...

I am super traditionalist; I always use the student's book and the blackboard. (P02)

c) Evaluation of the teaching of History and Social Sciences in multicultural contexts.

Within this section we find opinions on the advantages, possibilities, opportunities, or difficulties of having a cultural diversity in the classroom.

All the teachers explained to us that the History and Social Sciences subject is intercultural because the curriculum does include it...

If it includes foreign students, because there are subjects in that area in the curriculum. (EPC62)

As it also brings advantages...

It allows you to know other realities, learn to live together and relate to other realities, but not only for one but also for them. (EPA51)

In addition to generating opportunities to be able to treat content in a better way...

It is an opportunity, because I must be aware of how to deal with them, train myself, be up to date. (EPB42)

Theoretical Discussion

A large part of the teaching practices of the study teachers cannot be carried out from an intercultural approach to reach the diversity that characterizes their students, even many of their practices are carried out in a way that is opposite to what is expected from this intercultural approach. According to Nordgren and Johansson (2015), this further teachers' ability to decentralize and interpret other cultures, in order to connect them with their own.

On the teaching of History and Social Sciences with an intercultural approach, Stefoni et. al. (2016) suggest that it is essential to understand that the process of instances where teachers rethink their discourses and thereby improve their teaching practice to implement a deeper

concept of interculturality in school contexts, in many cases is not spontaneous, so an intercultural policy is needed that seeks to “intervene in the process, guiding it towards communication spaces that would not be generated naturally” (Stefoni et al., 2016, p. 159).

Conclusions

As a conclusion to the results, we can say that these coincide with what different authors re-propose in various studies, I say “re-propose” because this is not new, it is something that has been proposed for decades due to different results of research carried out.

On the one hand, initial teacher training must be carried out from an intercultural approach and continued in permanent training to promote good inclusive teaching practices. And, on the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen the curricular development competencies of the educational centres, thereby allowing the contextualization and adjustment of the study programs to the requirements of each one of these centres.

In this way, it will be possible to develop and/or implement accompaniment and permanent training programs that allow better teaching practices, directing them towards an intercultural and inclusive approach.

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