SILENCING INDIGENOUS CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ECUADOR: A VIEW FROM SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

PAOLA MEJIA OSPINA[A] AND KRISTHEL PEÑAFIEL ARIAS

[a] Social Work Career, Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil, Guayaquil, Ecuador- University of Granada, España;

paola.mejia@cu.ucsg.edu.ec; Campus located at Km 1.5 Avenida Carlos Julio Arosemena Tola, Guayaquil, Ecuador.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0662-0820

[b] Social Work Career, Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil, Guayaquil, Ecuador;

ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0425-3382

Abstract

This article arises from ongoing mixed methods research called "Intercultural Processes in Social Work Training: A Reflection on the Silencing of Indigenous Culture in Higher Education". It is part of a line of research of the doctoral program of the University of Granada. The article presents an epistemological, theoretical and conceptual reflection on intercultural training in Social Work and the silencing of indigenous culture in higher education. For this purpose, a categorical scheme was built, and a documentary review carried out, the findings of which were processed through analytical matrices. The findings present an approach to the subject with specific references that will allow us to understand the reality of indigenous students. As well as the challenges faced by the educational system and Social Work, to reach a truly intercultural higher education in Ecuador.

Keywords: Higher Education, Training, Multicultural Education, Social Work and Ethnic Diversity.

This article arises from doctoral dissertation Atlas Ecuatoriano de la Formación en Trabajo Social[1], based on our concern for indigenous students studying Social Work. It is from there that research[2] Intercultural Processes in Social Work Training: a reflection on the silencing of indigenous culture in higher education emerged, in a career that offers distance training in Guayaquil (Ecuador). Students come from different areas of the country, bringing great ethnic diversity and differences in learning that are not always identified in the classroom; on the contrary: indigenous students are invisible in an education model that limits the opportunities for personalized training. Hence, the interest to know their intercultural processes and their perceptions about the training received appeared.

This article reflects on intercultural higher education, considering that universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are where the cultural diversity of the country converges. Likewise, this reflection from Social Work seeks for one to rethink training and question its contexts of intervention, even more so when traces of the "colonial wound" are found[3].

For this purpose, we began by conducting a meta-reflection of knowledge from the theoretical-conceptual understanding of the phenomenon. At the epistemological level, interculturality and the recognition of indigenous knowledge are discussed.

At the theoretical level, Bourdieu and Passeron were approached, explaining how Pedagogical Action (PA) reproduces the dominant culture in society. Also, Zemelman's critical theory, which seeks to understand knowledge from its beginning, considering context and reality.

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[1] Doctoral dissertation in Social Sciences at the University of Granada (Spain).

[2] The reference research has field work in progress.

[3] This metaphor alludes to the epistemic, geo-sociopolitical transformation that Latin American society has undergone as a result of colonization.

Gómez Hernández, with his view of identity, and Cohen-Emerique, with his proposal of intercultural processes, contribute significantly to the latter.

The analytical context includes a society that qualifies as "different" those who do not meet the parameters deemed "normal"; a pattern that has been perpetuated in different generations, excluding different social groups considered minorities. The exclusion, discrimination and invisibility that has become naturalized towards the indigenous population is the result of the socio-historical context and the cultural logic that considers white/mestizo culture and Western knowledge unique, valid and legitimate.

The article begins by recognizing the increased number of indigenous people in higher education and the broad pedagogical demands that this generates. Indigenous people face conditions of vulnerability, discrimination and social exclusion at all educational levels, particularly at the university level, where hegemonic Eurocentric knowledge and Western knowledge logics are privileged.

In Latin America, universities consider inclusion and access to be the same; however, they are different processes that sometimes contain exclusionary mechanisms (Hanne, 2018). Indigenous university students face obstacles and limitations to access, remain and complete their studies, in addition to their weak or non-existent recognition in the curricula; reason for which it is proposed that HEIs require interculturalization processes to recognize cultural diversity.

With the clear purpose, context and subjects defined, the conceptual reference, the methodology used and the results of the epistemological and theoretical approach of the categories are presented: interculturality, indigenous, living conditions and indigenous human well-being, intercultural higher education, decoloniality and training in Social Work.

CONCEPTUAL REFERENCE

Higher education and Social Work, from the perspective of interculturality, are part of a context characterized by the richness of its cultural diversity, but also by the tensions that threaten it. Social reality is shaped by colonialism, which configures the structural racism rooted in society and triggers what is known as coloniality. However, decades ago a position emerged questioning the different expressions that arise from it: decoloniality, which assumes interculturality as the most appropriate way to question the hegemonic and western construction of knowledge. The following relationship was proposed for such study:
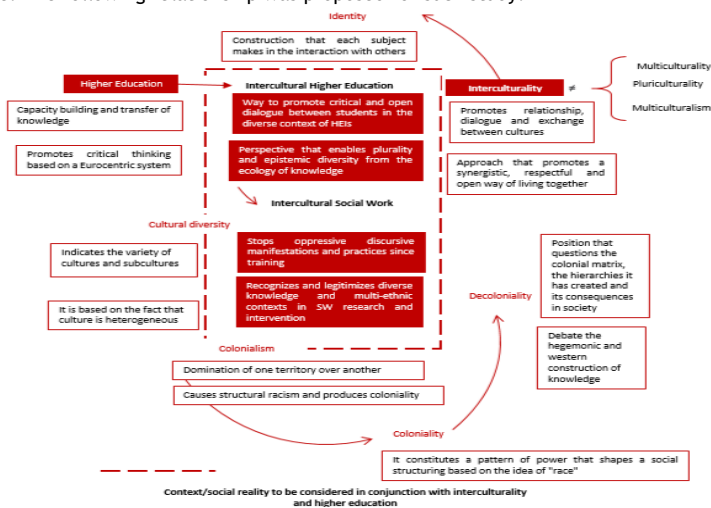

Figure 1. Conceptual scheme created
– Source: Own elaboration, 2022

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- *MULTICULTURALITY, PLURICULTURALITY, MULTICULTURALISM AND INTERCULTURALITY*

Interculturality is a polysemic concept that is often confused or used as a synonym for multiculturalism, multiculturality and multiculturalism, which come from different contexts and have, consequently, acquired different meanings.

Multiculturality was originated in the postwar period, in the second half of the 20th century, but gained strength during the 1970s, when migration was more prevalent. The multicultural atmosphere of countries such as the United States made visible the need for an expression with which to refer to such clear diversity: Asian, European and American communities in the same territory over a long period of time (Quilaqueo & Torres, 2013).

At that time, they spoke of ethnic diversity as if they were speaking of cultural diversity, since ethnicity corresponded to a—natural—form of grouping of individuals who shared the same characteristics and, therefore, the same culture. Despite this, it has been clarified that cultural diversity refers to the variety of cultures belonging to ethnic groups, peoples and nationalities of a country or region that make up ethnic diversity, but also to the subcultures formed on the basis of interests, rituals and codes, since culture is filled with heterogeneity. Hence, multiculturality refers to the coexistence of several cultures in the same territory and is reflected in the presence of usually isolated cultural communities (Comboni Salinas & Juárez Núñez, 2013).

Later on, pluriculturality was originated, characterized by the encounter of the diverse cultures that constitute the ethnic and cultural state of the national totality. Thus, the cultural diversity of the territories is more formally recognized. Nevertheless, the concept implies a relationship and interaction between cultures (Bernabé Villodre, 2012).

Subsequently, and as a progress of the previous perspectives, multiculturalism emerged, also known as recognition policy, the right to difference or identity (Tirzo Gómez & Hernández, 2010), which has a legal connotation and recognizes the different cultures on an egalitarian, horizontal and symmetrical plane. Multiculturalism promotes respect and tolerance between different cultures and maintains the distinctive character of cultural groups that remain separate, building no ties (Dietz, 2017).

Overcoming the discourse of multiculturalism in terms of the limited idea of tolerance, interculturality ("between cultures") emerges, which accounts for a dynamic process of societies in which individuals are aware of their social nature and the interdependence they have between one another. The perspective and notion of interculturality in Latin America arises from the struggle for recognition and vindication of the rights of indigenous peoples and nationalities (Castillo Guzmán & Guido Guevara, 2015). From this first approach, the concept has been deepened based on various disciplines:

- Communication is defined as a process in which different cultures interact and exchange information and learning.
- Sociology states that it constitutes the horizontal and synergistic interaction of cultural groups.
- Anthropology conceives it as the coexistence of cultures under the principles of equality and equity, and proposes it as a tool for th un e emancipation of people (Alavez Ruiz, 2014).

Interculturality promotes a synergistic, respectful and open way of coexistence; also, the quality of relationships and the exchange between people of different cultures, processes for which it is necessary to recognize the other and recognize oneself.

Interculturality is closely linked to identity, which corresponds to:

(...) a particular construction that each one makes in the interaction with other people and in the situations in which they develop, since it is deployed in order to achieve a sense of belonging to groups of diverse nature, with which certain characteristics, interests or motivations are shared; aspects that must be recognized under the paradigm of interculturality. (Ortiz Granja, 2015, p. 96)

To clarify, the relationship between interculturality and identity lies in the fact that the latter tends to change in the encounter with people from other cultures in a permanent process of exchange, a characteristic of interculturality. In addition to the encounter, it also favors the differentiation between one and the other, which enables understanding and, therefore, negotiation, resulting in dialogical relationships.

It can be said that the purpose of interculturality is to break with the hegemonic perspective of relationships by recognizing and reinforcing the cultural identities that make up national diversity, fostering respectful coexistence and legitimizing the contribution of all cultural groups. Thus, it is assumed that the idea of interculturality is thought and shown as a revolutionary practice.

– *CONTEXT IN WHICH INTERCULTURALITY IS FOUND*

There are cultural conflicts arising from the tension generated by the difference, and that lead us to think that the implementation of interculturality is complex and utopian due to the social structures shaped by structural racism.

Racism, from a colonial approach, has structural origin, in the sense that hegemony divides the world into the logic of the center, where "white" people cohabit, and that of the south or periphery, where "racialized" people live in a disadvantaged situation for being considered "different" (Pelletier Quiñones, 2014). There are two ways of understanding racism: that of being, which are the individuals coming from the north in a situation of sociocultural, economic, epistemic advantage, etc.; and that of not being, referring to racialized people who are victims of situations of precariousness and objects of exploitation, invisibilization, discrimination, subordination and exclusion (Grosfoguel, 2012). Therefore, racism lies in the categorization and hierarchization of people depending on the area they live in and their physical characteristics.

In this context, structural racism produces scenarios of exclusion of social groups that, due to their situation, are more vulnerable to systematic oppression by other groups. In this reality, women are the most affected, facing triple inequality: ethnic-racial, gender and class. Ethnic-racial status and gender cause inequalities related to women's rights; and the same occurs with indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and nationalities with respect to white or mestizo populations (Ocoró Loango, 2020).

The foregoing can be explained from the perspective of colonialism, defined as the domination of one territory over another, in which "(...) the control of the political authority, production and labor resources of a population is held by another with a different identity, whose headquarters are also in another territorial jurisdiction and does not necessarily imply racist power relations" (Vargas Soler, 2011, p. 51). This, in turn, produces coloniality, a pattern of power that marked a social structuring based on the idea of "race" in direct link with capitalism. Following this line, decoloniality is a position that questions the colonial matrix, the hierarchies it has created and the consequences it has generated, emphasizing that it is essential for this matrix to be undone with and towards those who are still colonized by the capitalist, Western and patriarchal system (Quijano, 2009).

From a decolonial perspective, it is believed that interculturality is the way to question the hegemonic and Western construction of knowledge (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). Placed in the educational sphere, it is understood that no knowledge is superior to another, and that there are diverse ways of knowing and producing knowledge. Hence, intercultural education makes it possible to question what to learn and what not to learn, and to give students the opportunity to be critical and reflective individuals (Walsh, 2005).

– *INTERCULTURAL HIGHER EDUCATION*

The mainstreaming of interculturality in higher education means the formation of capacities for a successful inclusion in society and for transforming multiple social realities. It also constitutes a

means to acquire knowledge and other essential tools to solve problems (Guerrero Barrios & Faro Resendiz, 2012).

From the development and education perspective, in addition to promoting critical thinking, a sense of active citizenship should be fostered in students through bonds with society. Thus, it is recognized that higher education should favor interculturality, since it is in educational institutions that people of multiple and diverse origins and histories converge. Furthermore, it is in academic contexts where the plurality of visions, opinions and criteria is mostly evident (Santana Colin, 2015).

Intercultural higher education should be a way to foster critical and open dialogue among students from diverse cultures, promoting the acceptance of cultural diversity and dialogic interaction (Alonso-García et al., 2019). In this sense, this education, from an innovative approach should:

(...) develop in students the necessary knowledge and skills that allow them to conceptualize their own culture and their relationships with others, as well as assume commitments and raise awareness of the presence of other cultures and assertive and bidirectional communication with them, within the framework of respect for their identity (Ortiz Granja, 2015, p. 105).

The intercultural approach enables the understanding of people belonging to different cultures and drives the construction of horizontal relationships, the focus of which is overcoming discrimination (Carrillo-Velarde, 2020). It is a tool for higher education that promotes training based on respect for diversity and allows the building of more comprehensive teaching-learning systems, where people become capable of recognizing and valuing the advantages and disadvantages inherent to differences (Rojas Lozano et al., 2018).

Intercultural higher education, according to Morales-Saavedra et al. (2018), aims to "(...) improve the quality of teaching and learning in relation to indigenous-western knowledge and vice versa, as mutual learning, to generate a universality of knowledge and wisdom, the result of intercultural dialogue" (p. 58). The authors state that intercultural dialogue is fundamental in intercultural education, since it seeks to incorporate the contributions of the cultures that are part of a society towards social and individual development.

Thus, to achieve this type of education, one must receive adequate training in intercultural contents: knowing what other cultures are and mean, "(...) learning to be critical of the information that is transmitted about different "others", (...) learning to understand and respect other ways of perceiving reality, learning to value other cultures and cultural identities, fostering and promoting contact between them" (Peñalva Velez & Leiva Olivencia, 2019, p. 145).

Incorporating the interculturality approach in higher education allows the fostering of cultural diversity, promoting exchange between cultures and contributing to the construction of one's own identity, as well as the appreciation of the culture of others. Likewise, it is a way of calling the attention of universities to comply with the principle of universality and eradicate any form of discrimination (Avila Romero, 2011). This is why one considers that this approach will enable plurality and epistemic diversity, giving the same validity and value to Western knowledge as to that of the nationalities and peoples of the south. In addition, it proposes a vision from the ecology of knowledge that ensures that, through dialogue, all existing knowledge in society can be enriched, inciting universities to an epistemic revolution (Niño-Arteaga, 2020).

- *INTERCULTURAL AND DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE IN SOCIAL WORK TRAINING*

Social Work corresponds to a profession based on academic discipline and practice that seeks to promote a social change in the reality affected by colonial history; in addition to enabling development, social cohesion and the liberation of people (International Federation of Social Workers [FITS], 2021).

Taking this into account, and bearing in mind the intercultural and decolonial perspective, it can be said that this discipline has the obligation to think and recognize the stories of the

"others" who tend to be oppressed and made invisible by the hegemonic system. Similarly, the ecology of knowledge represents a door for the profession insofar as it proposes a dialogue between diverse knowledges (Tablada Martínez, 2019).

In this sense, the intercultural and decolonial perspective (plus the ecology of knowledge) should be seen as an ethical requirement for Social Work—and Social Sciences in general—in Latin America. Thus, the profession would begin by questioning the Western logic in which the world is conceived, and which points towards the monoculture of knowledge and scientific rigor that invalidates the diversity of knowledge and stories (Mazo Osorio & Uribe Cardona, 2020).

For the intercultural and decolonial perspective in Social Work to function, and to separate itself from the Eurocentric and hegemonic perspective that dominates all structures of life, it must adopt a transformative process in its epistemological structures (Uribe Cardona, 2018). This change can only be achieved if thought from an academic perspective, that is, from the training of future social workers (Gómez-Hernández, 2015).

After embarking on the career, it is possible to begin the rupture with cultural hegemony by incorporating sociocultural, epistemic, and political processes that include the "others". It is necessary to rethink the way in which otherness is constructed within the discursive practices of those who are part of the educational system, transcending exclusionary and asymmetrical logics of thought towards everything considered different (Uribe Cardona, 2018).

It is also convenient to think about the different manifestations of violence, exclusion and oppression that teachers and university authority figures, consciously or not, reproduce in their educational practices (Rain Rain & Muñoz Arce, 2019).

Therefore, it is essential to undertake various actions that enable the application of an intercultural higher education, but questioning what is currently being done as a profession, bearing in mind that, from there, it will be possible to identify the factors that silence the diversity of worldviews, knowledge and ways of living and learning, and think of options to change it (Aguilar Idáñez, 2004).

One of the main actions must be to carefully analyze the course curriculum and the graduate profile in order to include new capacities, skills and knowledge (Mastretta, 2013). Also, to redesign training strategies, methods and the language used so that they are inclusive, meet the needs of all students and are in accordance with their expectations and social contexts (Arroyo Ortega, 2016). In addition, it would be worthwhile to foster students' interest in carrying out research and intervention projects that revolve around interculturality (Torres Gómez & Vélez Villafañe, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The methodological process[4] began by defining a conceptual entry and search criteria, and constructing a categorical scheme from which epistemological and theoretical references were explored. Documentary review was used as a technique and analytical matrices by categories were used as an instrument (Figure 2). Review included[5] scientific articles in Spanish and doctoral dissertations written in Spain and Latin American countries (Figure 3).

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[4]The research work from which this article arises is descriptive and has a combined approach, so the techniques used include survey, scale and interview. Information from the quantitative instruments was analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative information was analyzed through open and axial coding. Subsequently, the data collected were triangulated between the theory, the same techniques and the interpretation of the researchers.

[5]In the first instance, the search focused on documents published up to five years ago; however, exceptions were made considering the category and relevance of the studies, extending the research to the last ten years.

Figure 2. Integrated analytical chart of the documentary review
Source: Own elaboration, 2022

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Figure 3. Some studies of interest consulted
Source: Own elaboration, 2022

RESULTS

The epistemological and theoretical aspects of the four categories were reviewed: characteristics or identity traits of indigenous students, living conditions and indigenous human welfare, intercultural higher education and inclusive Social Work training.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology studies the historical and sociological scenarios that make scientific knowledge possible and the factors that justify or invalidate it. As of the 20th century, it has been known as the only valid formula to obtain knowledge from a positivist perspective, and has acquired several names: modern epistemology, later Western epistemology and, in recent years, northern epistemology, according to De Sousa Santos.

To date, epistemology influences all ways of conceiving and thinking about the world. This way of understanding knowledge creates several premises; the main one is that for knowledge to be considered as such, it must be measured, observed and verified (Infante, 2013). Thus, what marginalizes and destroys other ways of constructing and transmitting knowledge and ancestral knowledge is what De Sousa Santos (2010a) calls "epistemicide"[6].

Thus, an epistemology of the south that is critical of Western rationality arises, claiming that there are different processes for producing knowledge and a relationship between scientific and non-scientific knowledge with and based on those who have been victims of the social injustices generated by colonialism, patriarchy and Western capitalism. In order to develop it, one starts from the sociologies of absences and emergences, which seek to explore, recognize and validate the existing forms of knowledge. The first one seeks the recognition of epistemic plurality and, the second one, the recognition of diversity in an emergent sense (De Sousa Santos, 2010b).

De Sousa Santos (2010a) develops this epistemological proposal by means of two premises: the world cannot be understood from a single theory, and diversity is infinite with respect to ways of relating, thinking, feeling, knowing, understanding the reproduction of goods and many other reproductions. Knowledge for-of-in-from the south implies the ecology of knowledge, which entails

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[6]Starting from the fact that there are different epistemologies and systems of thought expressed through the daily lives, experience and reality of the various peoples and nationalities.

questioning the validity of what is learned based on the idea that there are multiple knowledges that can feed back and enrich one another, in addition to including a:

(...) wide range of "valuing actions", not only of scientific knowledge but also of other "practical knowledge considered useful", shared by researchers, students and groups of citizens, which creates "broader epistemic communities that turn the university into a public space of inter-knowledge where citizens and social groups can intervene without the exclusive position of apprentices" (Santos, 2007, as cited in Camino-Esturo, 2018, p. 198)

The ecology of knowledge allows understanding that there is neither a single knowledge nor general ignorance. Hence, it is committed to different ways of perceiving and intervening in the world, which can be enriched by the contributions of the epistemologies of indigenous peoples and nationalities, called "epistemologies of fire" by Sánchez Riaño and Mora (2019). In these, knowledge is transmitted orally from generation to generation, and not by measurable procedures—as proposed by Western knowledge—without reducing its validity or scientific value.

It is a challenge for today's society to achieve the coexistence of Western epistemology, which believes to control nature, and the southern epistemology, which lives in harmony with it. However, it is inadmissible to believe that it is not possible, since it would be feasible if thought from the educational context. When Western knowledge and the oppression it has caused to diverse subjects and epistemic knowledge is questioned, when proper value is given to the knowledge of the south—especially that of indigenous students[7]—they will be able to initiate a process to reconstruct their identities turned invisible in the research system and in formal education.

In this regard, thinking about the training provided by Social Work in Ecuador is not only a curricular issue, but also a contextual one. The presence of eighteen (18) indigenous peoples, fifteen (15) indigenous nationalities, and one (1) Afro-Ecuadorian people in the country makes it necessary to rethink the pedagogical logics and the silencing of ancestral knowledge.
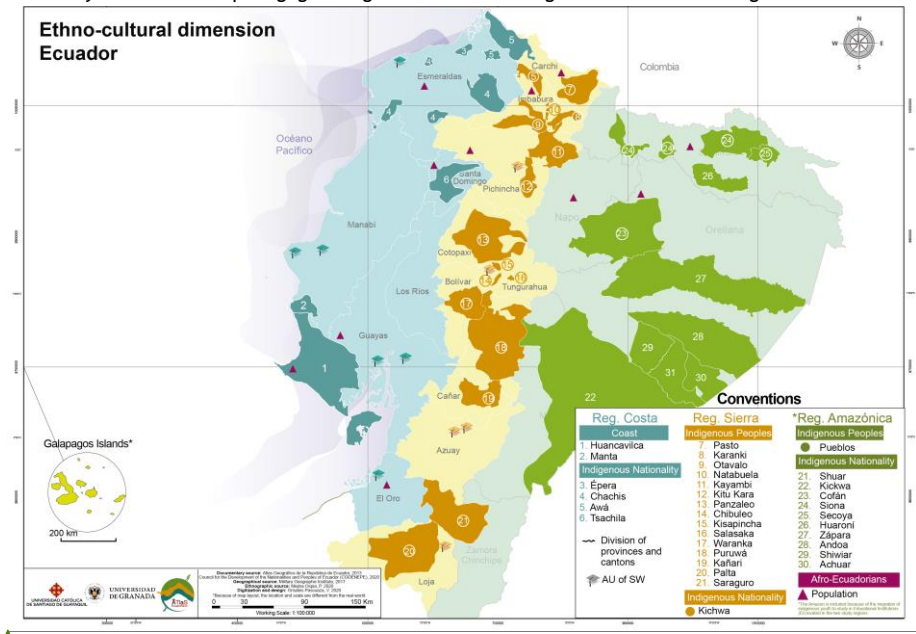
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[7]Also the Afro-descendants, montubios and all the other ethnic cultures of Ecuador.

Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that indigenous epistemologies would allow a better understanding of social reality, unveiling the present history hidden behind the curtain imposed by colonialism and reinforced by globalization, which invalidates what is proper and privileges what is white, western and modern. However, although the epistemologies referred to above recognize other epistemic subjects, they still exclude the historical struggles and experiences of women, who were not even represented in the epistemology of the north, since only one epistemic being was considered: the male. Within this framework, feminist epistemologies emerged in Anglo-Saxon countries in the 1960s, whose premise establishes that traditional theories and knowledge understand that male activities are determined by gender and make women's participation in social life invisible. They are a proposal for the deconstruction of conventional practices of scientific knowledge from a critical perspective and character. However, these arguments have been developed by white Western women, who, due to their privileged status and reality, have not considered contributions from other realities (Contreras Hernández & Trujillo Cristoffanini, 2017).

Although it is true that the struggles of women around the world against patriarchy pursue the same goal, the colonial matrix has determined the way in which their postulates are presented. Western feminist epistemologies advocate for feminism related to democracy, private property, etc.; while community feminist epistemologies support a reality based on community, Good Life (Buen Vivir), autonomy, and respect for knowledge, family, etc.[8]

Western feminism allowed women to position themselves as individuals in relation to men, but this is not the reality experienced by indigenous women. Bolivian feminists state: "we do not want to think of ourselves as superior to men, but to think of ourselves as women and men in relation to the community" (Guzmán & Triana, 2019, p. 47). In this sense, community feminism arises to establish a path for "a good life for all peoples and nationalities of the world", repositioning the link between woman-family-man-nature. Thus, this proposal goes beyond the hegemonic knowledge that does not consider reality from the own experience of women and other individuals.

THEORIES

Bourdieu and Passeron's theory of reproduction considers social reality a set of power relations between dominated and dominant classes, where the latter must be legitimized by the former to maintain order through acceptance.

Bourdieu states that the education system undertakes pedagogical action, linked to the action of the dominant class and culture; therefore, it is understood that it can only be apprehended and executed by people who share the same condition. Hence, according to the author, power, in addition to being constitutive of societies, is exercised through symbolic violence in educational systems, which entails "(...) the imposition of systems of symbolisms and meanings on groups or classes in such a way that such imposition is seen as legitimate" (García Marín, 2006, p. 72).

By accepting culture as legitimate, it contributes to the systematic reproduction of power relations. In this framework, Bourdieu and Passeron (1996) indicate that "all academic culture is arbitrary, since its validity stems solely from the fact that it is the culture of the dominant classes, imposed on the whole of society as evident objective knowledge" (p. 9).

Bourdieu asserts that the educational system exercises symbolic violence by imposing an arbitrary culture (the curriculum) elaborated by the dominant class. The educational context perpetuates and preserves the culture of this class and contributes to reproduce its social structure, presenting its norms and values as global. For the pedagogical action to be executed, an actor (pedagogical authority — educator —) is needed, in charge of reproducing the power structures and the arbitrariness that has been naturalized and made invisible. For this reason, it is stated that another form of symbolic violence is also exercised in the classroom: by means of the language used by teachers, who by making use of it "will name reality, classify it, express it and

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[8]Emerged in Bolivia, with Julieta Paredes as one of its greatest exponents.

develop discourses of homogenization that aim to maintain social order" (Amaya García, 2015, p. 87).

To understand the internalization of cultural arbitrariness, the concept of habitus raised by Bourdieu is rescued, which allows internalizing society depending on the social position, the experience and the reality of each person. It is understood that the habitus is acquired unconsciously from primary socialization.

To say that habitus is the internalization of exteriority implies the supposition that this internalization also includes the incorporation of domination-dependence relationships in which social agents are differentially positioned, that is, the incorporation of such power that is constitutive of society (Gutiérrez, 2004, p. 294).

Thus, this concept could explain the similar behaviors of specific social groups that share the same social position; all pedagogical work reproduces the internalized habitus of a given culture.

Another key concept in this theory is that of the field, referring to a specific social space in which the unequal power relations of capital are manifested[9].

The social capital (kinship, relationships...) and cultural capital (knowledge, know-how...) are conveyed by the family, and the results can be perceived in other spheres (school, work, etc.). Thus, Bourdieu and Passeron's theory of reproduction claims that the action of the educational system reproduces the relations of the dominant classes and makes them its own, rejecting other cultures of other social groups.

On the other hand, Hugo Zemelman's critical theory reflects an ongoing concern for social subjects. His proposal—without speaking specifically of educational action—is a critique of the logic of global reasoning that intervenes in all spheres of everyday life, including education. The author emphasizes that global logic has even influenced practical logics by provoking exclusionary behaviors that accompany and reinforce a history of domination and subordination that is very characteristic of Latin America.

In this sense, Zemelman's theory (contrary to replacing the traditional logic of understanding and research) seeks to be a more flexible and enriching entry that allows a better perception of social reality. It advocates those phenomena are understood through the reasoned appropriation that takes place thanks to the active intervention of one or more subjects. In this way, critical logic proposes the opening of knowledge, which implies "(...) breaking with the theoretical conditionings that determine reasoning" (Zemelman, 1987, p. 58).

Therefore, theoretical or empirical logic helps to understand reality, to sustain and study it, but it does not determine what happens in it; neither does it configure social phenomena, much less the subjects that are part of them. Reality must always try to explain itself from its potentialities and strengths, and the awareness of this situation "(...) forces us not to remain in what a theory denotes, but rather demands its openness to capture the real (...)" (Andrade & Bedacarratx, 2013, p. 21).

Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to "open" the concepts contained in the theories in order to understand beyond what is established and not to perceive knowledge as a framework that limits theoretical understanding. It is also important to make an effort to articulate the context and consider the novelties that arise, so theory will not always be enough; "(…) hence the demand for constant epistemological vigilance—so as not to be absorbed by the available meanings—and critical capacity—to be able to envision the limits of what is being named from the concepts in use—" (Andrade & Bedacarratx, 2017, p. 42).

As mentioned, it is necessary to articulate the context of reality to better understand what is being studied, since, from this theoretical approach, the social subject is shaped from external factors. Thus, externality is conceived as an essential aspect in the dynamics of human beings;

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[9]Bourdieu proposes three types of capital (economic, cultural and social), but sometimes symbolic capital can be included, which is only perceived when given the corresponding value.

however, it is often opposed to their subjectivity (which includes their history, experience, capabilities and expectations).

History and context make it possible to analyze the social subject in its circumstances: they place them in a reality marked by its own elements that shape their identity. Zemelman does not believe that a social group can be studied on the basis of what is said about it. For this reason, one should always ask who makes up this group, their history, their context, the main obstacles to overcoming the problematic situation, what is needed to overcome this situation and what they expect from the system and from themselves as members of the group.

Clearly, this proposal refers to social subjects within the Latin American reality, as Zemelman is for whom and about whom he writes. Likewise, it emphasizes that it is necessary to become aware of history as a mechanism to transform what is desirable into what is possible.

On the other hand, Zemelman argues that, in addition to considering the context, the reality, and the history, the totality of the phenomena is essential: segmented parts do not account for the whole, so the surrounding aspects must always be considered in order to understand it in depth.

In addition, another important category for critical theory emerges: collective identity, which, from Zemelman's perspective, refers to one's common history, that which defines one's own particularities in relation to others. From this proposal, it was inevitable not to expand the idea of identity from a similar conceptual entry raised by another Latin American author.

Gómez-Hernández (2014) states that identity "is constructed in identity with 'others' "(p. 30) and that it corresponds to a bond formed as a result of common characteristics of people who share ideas, codes and other characteristic features, which also provides them with a highly valued sense of belonging.

The author states that, from the sociocultural point of view, identity is imposed by others, configuring a negative identity assumed in the interaction with that who dominates. This implies that in a hegemonic, patriarchal and western system, assuming oneself as indigenous— or any other identity that falls outside the parameters established as "normal"—corresponds to a form of identification given by others: cultural, sexual or feminist identities are not only what they need for themselves, they are also what the dominant system establishes them to be.

This approach invites us to reflect on how identities are configured. One questions whether it is possible for such a strong hegemony as that of the Western educational system to end up negatively reconfiguring the identity of those non-mestizo students.

At this point in the analysis, it is important to conceive of identity for what it is: a dynamic process that has the opportunity to reconfigure itself. Identity should be seen in social systems as an opportunity to rethink the relationships within them, not to mention that interculturality represents a way to positively reinforce it.

Considering this, another theoretical perspective in agreement with Zemelman was revealed: that of Cohen-Emerique, who has attempted to "formalize" the intercultural process. This author states that the theoretical knowledge that one has about the different other is insufficient to carry out cultural exchanges: it is impregnated with stereotypes; and it refers to cultural characteristics, without taking into account that the intercultural encounter does not take place between cultures, but between people. For this reason, Cohen-Emerique (2013) claims that intercultural processes—interactions between people from different cultures—are composed of three interdependent phases:

1. Decentration, which allows one to be aware of one's own cultural characteristics, but also provides sufficient capacity to distance oneself from them in order to acquire some control over one's identity. All this in order to be able to observe oneself and distance oneself from one's own cultural system in order to understand others.
2. The understanding of the other (the discovery of their belief and values system), internalizing and approaching their culture to achieve true exchange.

3. Negotiation and mediation, which is a means of identifying solutions to issues arising from the cultural relationship.

DISCUSSION

It is necessary to change the perspective in order to give interculturality the value it has and deserves, which is emphasized by many authors. However, it is undeniable that it becomes complex to refer to it when the social reality is deeply marked by structural racism, by very strong patterns of discrimination and marginalization and by structures of social inequities that find their stability in the dominant culture.

It is also difficult to speak of interculturality when those whose identities should be reinforced in the intercultural relationship are seen as inferior, and their entire system of beliefs and knowledge is systematically invalidated from a Eurocentric and hegemonic position. Not to mention that educational institutions at all levels (which should reinforce intercultural processes from their competencies) have failed to integrate diverse epistemologies into their curricula. For this reason, it is proposed that interculturality should disrupt the epistemological bases of higher education institutions, since there are diverse epistemological approaches that would contribute to building a more just and egalitarian society.

However, this is not possible while it is not approached from a political perspective, since from there, it is feasible to think of a real change in education to the extent that regulations and norms allow actions to reinforce interculturality in HEIs and make visible the different cultures that make up the national identity, and not just the dominant culture. In this sense, it is essential to formulate policies that promote intercultural curricula and methodologies, and integration among indigenous, Afro-descendants, cholos, montubios, mestizos, etc. students, with their respective features and particularities; to generate a dialogic relationship between them and carry out exchanges of knowledge and know-how, worldviews and values.

Considering that it is not enough for interculturality to be seen as a central axis of education—something that in itself already represents progress—it is essential that other actors involved reflect and question themselves in this regard. Such is the case of HEIs authorities and the teaching staff, who are in charge of designing the curriculum and choosing the texts and articles that are assigned and, ultimately, responsible for what may or may not happen in the classroom.

It is essential for both the professions that have an increased number of indigenous students (or other ethnic groups) and the HEIs to strengthen learning that is generated in the community and family space, since that is where the indigenous thought and cosmovision is socialized. The knowledge and know-how of the different cultures are structured in the micro-social spaces and, therefore, HEIs should establish pedagogical criteria to try to articulate or link the different knowledges that circulate in society (thus allowing the development of skills and capacities of students to understand their own and other's culture) and to question social practices that could contribute to exclusion and discrimination.

HEIs should not impose a curriculum—often decontextualized—that implies the loss of language, cultural/ancestral values or thinking. The mainstreaming of interculturality in education must contribute to the reconstruction of ways of life and thinking, to redefine the role of the different actors that make up HEIs without preventing the manifestations of each social subject.

Thus, it is recognized that interculturality in higher education implies a complex path, however, one wants to believe that it is possible to think of educational spaces where diverse knowledge is not silenced or categorized as superior/inferior or valid/invalid, but rather valued and put into practice in the professional future of those who learn from the plurality of knowledge and practices. This is the only way to truly assume and reflect the plurinational and intercultural nature of the country and the Latin American region.

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