

Article

# Advancing Professional Development for Teachers in Intercultural Education

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**Abstract:** In Latin America, intercultural education aims to acknowledge the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of its citizens, and to advance the efforts to dismantle the oppression of such diversity, particularly that of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. While discussions of intercultural education often reference such peoples as their target beneficiaries, too few studies addressing the professional development of teachers recognize the importance of Indigenous scholarship, pedagogies and methodologies themselves as resources for the advancement of the theory and practice of intercultural education. This article engages in theoretical reflection in order to highlight well-documented Indigenous methodologies for teaching and learning, and their implications for professional development for enriched intercultural education. The authors emphasize the need for greater attention to the work and scholarship of intercultural and Indigenous university graduates to lead the way in the development of intercultural education professionals.

**Keywords:** southern theories; decolonial theory; indigenous knowledge; pedagogy

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## 1. Introduction

Despite the stubborn persistence of deficit perspectives in educational theory and practice, experience and research extending back many years has shown that curricula and pedagogies that sustain students' home languages, and that recognize and are relevant to their communities' ways of life are essential elements of quality education, particularly for marginalized students [1–3]. The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal number four on "quality education", in target 4.7, also acknowledges cultural diversity's contribution to sustainable development, and the necessity for all learners to acquire an appreciation for such diversity. Thanks in large part to the Indigenous rights movement and advocacy by Indigenous leaders, in Latin America intercultural bilingual education (hereafter EIB, for its acronym in Spanish) is increasingly an arena in which the struggle to recognize the pluricultural nature of our societies, and to protect the rights of children and youth to culturally and linguistically relevant and sustaining education is being played out [4]. As the discourse of interculturalism and government and institutional policies supporting EIB expand in scope and reach across the region, and more hope is placed in intercultural programs to promote and foster human rights and Indigenous self-determination, the opportunity increases to evaluate and learn from the ways in which EIB is being translated from policy into practice. In order to strengthen the implementation and outcomes of EIB and intercultural programs, it is imperative both to highlight and build on EIB's recent successes, and to discuss the gaps that still exist. Therefore, this article discusses the need to improve the implementation of EIB policy through teachers' professional development and higher education programs that center the knowledge of Indigenous teachers and their communities.

One of the obstacles regarding the effective implementation of EIB that has been pointed out in many local contexts is the lack of adequate numbers of and preparation of local Indigenous language speakers who are prepared to serve as teachers in intercultural and/or bilingual programs [4–6].

However, it is also true that, in the last two decades, the number of higher education programs that focus on the development of Indigenous teachers and professionals from an intercultural perspective has grown in many countries of Latin America [7], as well as in other regions of the world where Indigenous peoples are fighting for educational autonomy and self-determination, such as New Zealand. Literature about the dynamics, aspirations, and effects of such programs on Indigenous students abounds see for example [8–11], and many others. However, the graduates of such programs themselves are producing research and scholarship that incorporate social sciences, educational theory, and essential knowledge of local contexts, methodologies and proposals. As yet, their contributions have mostly been overlooked and under-cited in the broader scholarly conversation around the improvement of intercultural pedagogy, particularly in English-language publications.

In this article, we critique the lack of attention to local and Indigenous teachers' voices and expertise in educational practice and knowledge production using Santos' concept of "abyssal thinking" [12] and concepts from Enrique Dussel's 'Latin American philosophy of education' [13]. We mention Linda Tuhiwai Smith's schema [14]—originally published in 1999—of an Indigenous research agenda and the types of Indigenous research projects often carried out by communities, also reflected upon by Nancy Hornberger [15], in order to understand the ways in which higher education programs can support the development and practice of Indigenous teachers and scholars in order to advance intercultural education. Through the application of these scholars' concepts to three educational projects—one in New Zealand and two in Latin America—we aim to show how their participants are building on Indigenous knowledge bases for intercultural education, using the university and its resources to validate and promote Indigenous pedagogies through formal education. The examples we highlight demonstrate the need for greater attention to the work and scholarship of intercultural and Indigenous university graduates in order to foster dialogic community engagement as teachers, and to lead the way in professional development and pedagogy. We also highlight the research of these university graduates as important scholarship that contributes to re-imagining and re-claiming Indigenous languages and cultures through schooling.

## 2. Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

### 2.1. Defining Interculturalism

As opposed to U.S. multiculturalism's tendency to emphasize "plural monoculturalism" [16], the concept of "interculturalism"—as developed in Europe—refers to communication and dialogue, the dismantling of cultural and linguistic hierarchies, and the fostering of pluralism as an approach to the management of social diversity [17]. Drawing on the long history of bilingual education by and for Indigenous communities, "*interculturalidad*"—as it has been taken up in Latin America—represents not just a set of policies for education, but also a theoretical perspective about the nature and purpose of education to create a pluricultural and ethnically-diverse society. From the perspective of *interculturalidad* as a pedagogical model, the school plays a distinctive role in disrupting the suppression of diversity and assimilation to the dominant culture enacted by the elites that helped support the hierarchies of race and gender in the colonial era, and that continue to operate through the "coloniality of power" [18]. For those supporting intercultural education in Latin America, the school, in theory, is seen from a different perspective: one that is critical and focused on learning about the cultural and ethnic diversity of communities in order to enlarge everyone's understanding of society, including that of the dominant cultural group.

As a result of the homogenizing models of modern public education established in the state-building era, the middle and upper classes in most countries uphold a culture that is insensitive, and at times discriminatory, to Indigenous cultures and ways of life. For Indigenous peoples, *interculturalidad* can serve to contest discourses of *mestizaje* (racial mixture) and acculturation in an effort to assert their distinct Indigenous rights and exercise their (pluri)cultural citizenship [19,20]. For example, teachers in urban schools often have misguided expectations about the cultural and

language backgrounds of the students in their classroom, such as that they all speak the dominant language. Migration brings students from many different ethnic and cultural contexts into the same classroom. Even outside of urban areas, teachers assigned to a rural municipality might not come from the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds as the communities they are meant to serve; furthermore, their teaching preparation might not have sensitized them to the importance or feasibility of teaching in local languages or in culturally pertinent ways. Rather than assuming that the students will become assimilated into the dominant culture, or that there is only one culture, the focus on *interculturalidad* emphasizes learning about cultural diversity in order to respect and appreciate all cultures on a level playing field. For the teacher, it is important to learn about the knowledges and varied forms of artistic and scientific expression that the students bring from their families and communities to the classroom. For the students, it is important to learn, to appreciate, and to respect the myriad forms of diversity present in the classroom among teachers, professors, and their peers.

As such, teaching in intercultural education is often understood to be grounded in the respect for and valuation of many cultures, and the right for all members of society to participate in and contribute to the diversity of knowledges that exists in our worlds. However, just as there has been a suppression of epistemic, linguistic, and cultural diversity by powerful elites who link economic poverty with a lack of culture and knowledge, there also continues to exist a hierarchy of knowledges in academic research and scholarship, with community leaders and Indigenous scholars and teachers themselves frequently left out of the debate and un-cited, particularly the debate conducted in English. This is a major obstacle to the discussion, enrichment, and improvement of teaching and learning globally. Here, we use the concept of “abyssal thinking” developed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos [12] and concepts from Enrique Dussel’s ‘Latin American philosophy of education’ [13] to illuminate this gap.

## 2.2. Recognizing Diversity of Knowledges and Cultures

Santos [12] traces the ways in which Western law and science is characterized by an “abyssal thinking” which demarcates an uncrossable chasm between “metropolitan societies and colonial territories” (p. 46). Beyond this invisible line, in the colonial territories, have historically resided peoples condemned to a “modern subhumanity” with “incomprehensible beliefs and behaviors which in no way can be considered knowledge, whether true or false. The other side of the line harbors only incomprehensible magical or idolatrous practices” (p. 51). So, too, we argue, have the knowledges and behaviors of Indigenous communities regarding their own pedagogical needs and strategies been too long deemed irrelevant, incomprehensible, folkloric, or unscientific.

Santos’ main point here is not that we should ignore Western science, but that the “Western understanding of the world is as important as it is partial” [21] (p. 164). If society is to acknowledge and leverage its cultural and ethnic diversity, and the experiences these inform, then we as educators need to go beyond “abyssal thinking” in order to recognize that not all knowledge is based on Western epistemologies, and that there exists a diversity of knowledges, many of which are absent in schools and academia, i.e., the places where knowledge is validated to inform education policy and practice. Santos proposes a “sociology of absences” to understand the ways in which the abyssal line is drawn. Such a sociology can function as a strategy in order to explain the ways in which marginalized knowledges and experiences on the other side of the line have been rendered invisible or absent; in other words, it functions as a strategy to make visible the realities that cannot “be analyzed with the methodological and analytical instruments of the conventional social sciences” [21] (p. 172). Santos recommends that the “universal and the global constructed by the sociology of absence, far from denying or eliminating the particular and the local, rather encourages them to envision what is beyond them” [22] (p. 191). In order to empower intercultural education, it is crucial to build the knowledge base, through professional development, that will allow teachers to contribute experiences based on alternative ways of knowing, beyond the abyssal line.

Indeed, Santos [23] presses for the recognition of the diversity and plurality of knowledge. He writes of the ways in which the coloniality of knowledge has resulted in the destruction of

“knowledges and practices, worldviews, symbolic worlds, and the modes of living” (p. xlix) that support other cultures and people around the world. Santos uses the concept the “ecology of knowledge” to refer to a “non-colonialist” inter-cultural dialogue on another possible world [24]. In order to build a picture of the ways in which to start to construct this other possible world, we move to consider the role of teachers, communities, and decolonizing methodologies in university scholarship.

### 2.3. *The Role of Community Engagement in Intercultural Education*

Through his writing and publications over many years, Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel has developed what he calls “a Latin American philosophy of education” [13]. This philosophy is central to our conception of intercultural education, as the essential aspect of learning for Dussel is the “cross generational encounter”, or the ways in which children, youth, and teachers interact to create a collective life. Dussel introduces the word “pedagogics”, a term that emerges from his philosophy of liberation, distinctive from European philosophy and also a negation of that tradition [25] (p. 26). The concept of ‘pedagogics’ concerns the ways in which education aims to foster and nurture communities to support the new generation. Moreover, a pedagogics of liberation adds a critical component: the teacher must listen to the perspectives of the youth—the Other of the new generations—and demonstrate to them the ways in which to be critical of dominant knowledges. The purpose of education in Dussel’s view is, then, to generate community participation and to strengthen community cultures in order to build “teaching communities” in which the “teachers learn continuously” from the students and the community. “Our grand task now is intercultural dialogue”, Dussel proclaims, in order to ensure that new generations are aware of and consider all of the knowledges of the world, and not just those produced on the modern/Western side of what Santos calls the abyssal line [26] (p. 101).

### 2.4. *Decolonizing Methodologies*

Of course, the history of colonialism and the subsequent efforts to disrupt its ethnocidal and destructive epistemological effects is not unique to Latin America. The school system established in New Zealand during the late 18th century also upheld an ideology of the cultural superiority of the colonizer; this system was fundamental to the maintenance of the hierarchies that supported colonialism. Smith [14], of the University of Waikato in New Zealand, provides a thorough analysis of the colonial system that was rooted in Western culture but purported to be the arbiter of the only legitimate knowledge. She explains that the education system was one of the main enforcers of Western authority and its “superiority over knowledge, language and culture” (p. 67) among the Maori in New Zealand. At the end of her book, Smith [14] asserts that university research has a role to play in the decolonization of society, as long as it “offer[s] a language of possibility, a way out of colonialism” by allowing the “alternative, oppositional ways of knowing” of Indigenous researchers to reimagine and recreate, for example, through rethinking and redesigning the foundations of education programs (p. 204). We agree with Smith’s optimism regarding the decolonizing potential of university research conducted by Indigenous students, given that they are well-positioned to deploy a sociology of absences, facilitate intercultural dialogue, and foment ecologies of knowledge that involve knowledges from beyond the abyssal line.

Now widely read in graduate seminars as well as reading circles across the globe, Smith’s book recognizes and systematizes the ways in which Indigenous communities have preserved their own forms of knowledge for centuries, and it postulates the foundations for viewing research as emerging from Indigenous peoples in collaboration with academia. As she writes, “By asserting the validity of Maori Knowledge, Maori people have reclaimed greater control over the research that is being carried out in the Maori field . . . Maori knowledge represents the body of knowledge that, in today’s society, can be extended, alongside that of existing western knowledge” (p. 177). Indeed, in addition to the construction of a schema for an Indigenous research agenda that includes four directions (decolonization, healing, transformation, and mobilization) and four tides (survival, recovery,

development, and self-determination), Smith [14] outlines a typology of different research projects that can contribute to the re-imagination and reclamation of Indigenous languages and cultures (p. 121). Some of these types include “intervening” projects, “revitalizing and regenerating” projects, “writing and theory making” projects, “envisioning” projects, and “discovering the beauty of our knowledge” (p. 161). We now turn to reviewing some long-standing educational projects that enhance Indigenous communities’ abilities to mobilize and transform education through their contribution to writing and theory making, and reshaping pedagogies based on the diversity of their ways of envisioning and knowing.

### 3. Indigenous Pedagogies and Scholarship to Enrich Intercultural Education

In what follows, we highlight three examples culled from the robust literature on intercultural education that suggest strategies for ways in which to incorporate Indigenous methodologies and knowledges into school systems and curricula in order to enhance and enrich teaching and learning. The purpose is to show how it is possible to build upon the Indigenous knowledge base for intercultural education. The first example comes from the Maori in New Zealand, a community that has been held up as an example because of its efforts to strengthen Indigenous education. The second example reviewed is a program at the Universidad de Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia, called *Pedagogía de la Madre Tierra*. The third is an analysis of some of the theses written in the master’s degree program in the *Universidad Mayor de San Simón* in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The successes of such alternative pedagogical systems and programs stress that, while university is not the only source of new knowledge, it can play a role in partnership with communities as a way to center knowledge in the community and at the local level.

#### 3.1. Kaupapa Maori Research and Pedagogy

In New Zealand today, there are two parallel education systems. One uses English as the medium of instruction, and is grounded on Western epistemologies. The other is an alternative instructional system that uses Maori as a language of instruction and is called *kura kaupapa Maori*, based on Maori pedagogy and worldviews, which provides teachers with professional development facilitated by universities and community partnerships. The Kaupapa Maori research and pedagogy model that arose through Maori mobilization in New Zealand is, by now, a well-documented example of an Indigenous-led approach to a critical intercultural education. Rather than a centralized educational system that is trying to implement a national curriculum, the Kaupapa Maori approach values the role of school and its educational practices “to create a pedagogy of power-sharing between the school and the community” [27] (pp. 224–225). In Smith’s words, in all cases, the research produced by this pedagogy and methodology needs to be discussed in consultation with communities and tribal gatherings [14] (p. 193).

The pedagogy asserts that “research that involves Maori people as individuals or as communities” must have a positive impact on the Maori (p. 193). The research approach of Kaupapa Maori is described as being related to being Maori, being connected to Maori philosophy and principles, and legitimizing the importance of Maori language and culture (p. 187). It is fueled by the Maori struggle for autonomy over their own territories and their cultural well-being. This struggle aims for Maori people to become “equal partners in the formation of the modern nation-state of Aotearoa/New Zealand” [27] (p. 223).

The effort to build an intercultural dialogue through the Kaupapa Maori approach in New Zealand extends from two levels: an intercultural education system for the lower grades and a simultaneous effort to enable Maori scholars in all disciplines to complete advanced doctoral degrees. Rather than consisting of an alternative, parallel system for Indigenous students and their communities, this approach involves a kind of Indigenous occupation of the academic space, where Maori scholars can leverage the power of the university to teach and produce the type of knowledge they see fit; Smith [14] identifies the development of a Maori research center within the university as “a highly

political process” (p. 133). She recounts that, in 2002, *Nga Pae o Te Maramatanga*, or the Maori Center for Research Excellence, at the University Auckland (where she was co-director) identified the need to provide education to 500 Maori students at the Ph.D. level. The rationale was that “we needed to produce a generation of our own indigenous intellectuals to lead the transformation of our own communities” (p. 134). The goal was achieved, with many Maori receiving their doctorates as the first generation in many disciplines. Equipped with such qualifications from the university, these graduates can appropriate the resources of the university and educational institutions to serve their own communities without leaving behind their Indigenous identities and knowledges (p. 135). Overall, the professionalization of Maori researchers in the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland, for instance, has become dedicated to creating a Maori research culture through a “coordinated approach to course work, family and student support” (p. 136), all in an effort to ensure “the survival of people, cultures and languages” (p. 143). In turn, such a professionalization of education researchers and teachers bolsters the advancements that Kaupapa Maori pedagogy has achieved at the primary level in New Zealand.

### 3.2. *The Pedagogy of the Mother Earth*

Just as opening up spaces for Maori researchers in higher education has contributed to the advancement of Indigenous pedagogies for New Zealand’s younger children, in Latin America the diversification of university programs is advancing the recognition and application of more diverse pedagogical perspectives to formal schooling. In 2006, *La Universidad de Antioquia* in Medellín, Colombia gave academic recognition within its Education School to the *Licenciatura en Pedagogía de la Madre Tierra*, the bachelor’s degree in the Pedagogy of the Mother Earth. This program is a pioneering initiative in Latin American higher education built upon *interculturalidad* in support of cultural diversity. The 1991 Colombian Constitution acknowledged the right of Indigenous citizens to their language and culture, and opened the possibilities of state funding to support Indigenous education. In collaboration with the Indigenous organization of the State of Antioquia, the University created, in 2004, *El Programa de Educación Indígena*, which led to the creation of the bachelor’s degree in order to fulfill the goal of providing university education to teachers who work in Indigenous communities to instruct the next generation of Indigenous children.

Abadio Green, of the Tule community, who is the Director of the Academic Program, in describing the program, “paints a portrait of an alternative, decolonizing educational model that also strives to achieve intercultural dialogue and understanding” [28] (p. 2). For Green and his colleagues working in the Pedagogy of the Mother Earth, the University is not the only space. “For us, the epicenter, knowledge and wisdom reside in the community” (p. 12), he states. Green argues that, in thinking from a perspective alternative to the one that dominates Western thought, the program can develop a new pedagogical paradigm.

In a recent article describing in detail the structure, curriculum design, and actors involved in the program, Rivera-Mateos et al. [29] recognize that the contribution of the Program of the Mother Earth is “the creation of a new pedagogical model focused on finding alternatives for Indigenous university education . . . distinct from admission [of Indigenous students] as special students to regular programs” (p. 179). The article points out that the pedagogical model is the result of “their own collective construction that is collaborative and participative” [29] (p. 179). In reference to its emphasis on language and *interculturalidad*, the authors write that “the program seeks to educate teachers with deep knowledge of the role of language in the preservation of ancestral cultures in order to generate pedagogical models in the community and in the schools that are critical and creative” (p. 178). The bachelor’s program has opened the way “for more than 100 indigenous students to higher education including Indigenous women” (p. 179).

The Pedagogy of the Mother Earth can be considered to be an intercultural education project not only because it is a program for Indigenous students but also because its curricula emerge from Indigenous epistemologies that reflect knowledge handed down from the pre-colonial world and

Indigenous communities' own understanding of learning. Green [28] explained that the Indigenous community reached an agreement with the University, and he said that "it is important to listen to each other with no culture superior to the others" (p. 9); "The weaving of the university knowledge and the peoples' knowledge . . . [This] is what is called *el buen vivir* or the 'the good living'" (p. 12). This example concerns the professional development of Indigenous students through a tertiary degree; next, we turn to an example of a graduate program that was designed to strengthen teachers for intercultural education.

### 3.3. Scholarship by Master's Students in Intercultural Bilingual Education

Since the passage of constitutional reforms and government policies to support EIB in Latin America, much research and practice has shown the "gaps" between policy and implementation [4,5]. One such gap has been the shortage of academic materials and professional development to prepare Indigenous teachers so that they are equipped and supported to carry out a bilingual curriculum in local languages. As a result, several higher education programs and models have been developed in order to strengthen teachers' professional development and language revitalization. As Luis Enrique López—one of the foremost scholars and founding professors of the program—explains, a well-known and well-regarded example is the master's degree program in EIB through the *Programa de Formación en Educación Intercultural y Bilingüe para los Países Andinos* (abbreviated hereafter as PROEIB-Andes), which started in 1996 at the *Universidad Mayor de San Simón* in Cochabamba, Bolivia [4]. This master's program, the first of its kind in Latin America, emerged from the collaboration between the Ministries of Education and Indigenous movements in six South American countries [30].

Over the years, the program has become a source of knowledge creation and strengthening of identity for professional development in intercultural education. During an interview, one of the graduates who became a teacher in the program stated:

... the contribution of PROEIB-Andes is the strengthening of our Indigenous identities; our ability to reflect on oneself has an impact on our teaching. Before we were taught that knowledge came from Europe and the North, but this is not our knowledge. Now we know that the PROIB-Andes also can develop knowledge, and it is everywhere and emerges from the revitalization of our language. (as cited in [30] p. 65)

The program has now graduated nine cohorts, or approximately 200 students in total. Coming from different countries in Latin America, these students go back to their communities empowered from their master's program, and affirmed in their identities and the importance of their linguistic and cultural heritages. Nancy Hornberger, an ethnographer and specialist on Quechua revitalization, who has conducted extensive interviews among graduates of the PROEIB-Andes, wrote in an article titled "'Until I became a professional, I was not, consciously, Indigenous'" the ways in which the program's students'

... recognizing, valorizing and studying the multiple and mobile linguistic, cultural and intercultural resources at play in their own and each others' professional practices around bilingual intercultural education enabled them to co-construct an Indigenous identity that challenges deep-seated social inequalities in their Andean world. [8] (p. 285)

While previous research on the effects of this program on its master's graduates' personal identity and linguistic findings are important, equally important to highlight are the outcomes of the program in terms of the student scholarship it has produced, most notably because these graduates are conducting fieldwork in and among the communities where intercultural education is being implemented.

The master's theses of PROEIB-Andes graduates are replete with findings and suggestions regarding the improvement of the implementation of EIB. Reading graduates' proposals sheds light on Indigenous philosophies of pedagogy in the local contexts where the students conducted their fieldwork, and—through their voices and perspectives—the master's students offer suggestions on the

ways in which to improve EIB in their home countries and local communities from and alongside the communities themselves.

To date there are nine generations of master's theses, completed by students of the PROEIB-Andes Master's in EIB, accessible online through their library ([http://biblioteca.proeibandes.org/?page\\_id=6#](http://biblioteca.proeibandes.org/?page_id=6#)), named after Dr. Luis Enrique López. The theses roughly span 20 years, from 2000 to 2019. Out of these, we searched through those from the last 6 years, 2014 to 2019, during which time period 27 theses were published. Out of these 27, we additionally filtered for those theses whose titles implied a focus on educational models, pedagogy (teaching and/or learning), or curriculum and ended up with 17 theses that fit that criteria and we reviewed more closely. Of these 17, 7 dealt with education in Bolivia, 5 with education in Mexico, 2 with education in Peru, 1 with education in Ecuador, and one dealt comparatively with education in Bolivia and Chile.

Yet perhaps more tellingly, collectively these documents address educational theory and practice among many original peoples of Latin America, some of whom span international borders, including the Guaraní and Aymaras, Nahuas and Otomíes, Mapuche, Tojolabales, Shipibo, Quechua, Tsotsiles, and others. Even across this small sample, the theses show a wide range of research inquiry, with some looking into the implementation of official state education policy inside the formal classroom in public primary schools, others looking at pedagogy in private schools, and still others looking at the curricula and attitudes and beliefs of professors at Indigenous and intercultural universities. One of them deals with innovative pedagogical strategies and the use of multiple languages in a multigrade classroom [31]; this is an important contribution as very few research studies focus on the pedagogical dynamics of small rural schools that are multigrade, meaning they must group different age and ability levels together in one classroom. Other theses deal with processes of intergenerational transmission of knowledge outside of the formal classroom, or what Dussel [26] would call "pedagogics." Indeed, 8 out of the 17 documents primarily focus on community, collective and/or Indigenous pedagogies and associated concepts. They show not only the ways in which such pedagogies have been marginalized and, in many cases, endangered by formal school practices, but also the ways in which they have been maintained through community resistance and could be leveraged to link schools and communities and to enrich and inform formal EIB practice.

For example, the research conducted by one master's graduate, carried out among Shipibo peoples in the community of Utucuro, Ucayali, Peru, used as its analytical framework the Shipibo concept of "*menín*", which the author defined as "*hacer bien las cosas*" or "doing things well" [32] (p. vi). After tracing its meaning through interviews with local teachers, artists, parents, leaders, and shamans, Solari, the researcher, found that "*menín*" represented a kind of skill honed through practice. Reflecting on the local deployment of *menín*, Solari [32] states that its potential has been "*dormido pero latente*" or "asleep but latent", kept alive through community resistance but "often underestimated by a multicultural logic that superficializes and instrumentalizes the practices of Indigenous art through its folklorization and exoticization" ([32], p. vi). He describes the ways in which this concept plays a strong role in this community's pedagogics, or formative processes during moments of encounter in artistic and other collective endeavors. Applying widely read Mexican scholar Maria Berteley's idea of "etnogénesis escolar", or "school ethnogenesis", the thesis's author showed the ways in which a local teacher cultivated the *menines* of students through practice of the community's ancestral dance and song, contributing to cultural revitalization through schooling in a way that engaged the agency of community members ([32], p. vi).

Another study that took place among a community of *tojol-ab'al* peoples in Chiapas, Mexico demonstrated a similar focus on the wider pedagogical domain of families, elders, and community leaders [33], rather than solely the teacher and students in a school building's classroom, as an equally if not more important sphere of educational influence that must be leveraged to improve EIB. This study investigated the learning processes that took place among a group of women dedicated to embroidering the traditional blouses of their community. The author of the thesis shows the ways in which the processes used to pass down knowledge of sewing represents a valuable pedagogical

system in its own right, one based on local values of “communal and collaborative work” and that develops “the cognitive and intellectual capacities, skills, creativity and sociocultural values” and the cosmivision of the community ([33], p. iv). The researcher found that this system demonstrated characteristics that are not always found in or valued by traditional school practices, such as a mixture of age groups, observation, play, and learning by doing ([33], p. iv). The thesis’ author hopes that, in highlighting the value of Indigenous pedagogy, its maintenance and recognition will be promoted by schoolteachers.

Notwithstanding the broad geographic and topical ranges of focus, the PROEIB-Andes theses also share some key commonalities when considering the visions they each have for the future of intercultural education. Each thesis includes an abstract in an Indigenous language, emphasizing the value and utility of these languages for the development of scientific understanding and scholarship. Each thesis also ends with a proposal for a participatory project to address the findings of their investigations, a testament to the central role afforded to participatory research in intercultural higher education programs. Above all, whether they address pedagogy inside the classroom or in extracurricular settings, all of the theses place importance on working with and for local communities from and alongside those communities, in a pedagogic encounter Dussel [26] would describe as ‘liberatory’.

Applying Sousa’s concepts of abyssal thinking (2007) and the ecology of knowledge (2009), and in line with Smith’s [14] perspective on decolonizing the university from within by supporting the scholarship of Indigenous students within the academy, we assert that the research and scholarship that the students of PROEIB-Andes have conducted over the years are particularly valuable sources of expertise on their own communities’ pedagogical situations. As intercultural education scholars at mainstream institutions, we must reach across the line to recognize, cite, and take up these sources of knowledge in broader discussions of the improvement of intercultural education theory and practice.

#### **4. Advancing Intercultural Education through the “Sociology of Absences” and Community-Grounded Pedagogies**

This article set out to argue that in order to enhance and advance the research and practice of intercultural education, it is imperative to recognize and cite Indigenous knowledges and methodologies, and their past and present contributions to formal scholarship and pedagogy. Such knowledges and methodologies have historically been excluded from knowledge-certifying Western institutions such as the university, constructed as unscientific or backward, and rendered invisible by colonial thinking [12,14]. However, research and university models created by and for Indigenous peoples in New Zealand and Latin America provide rich examples of the ways in which pre- and in-service teachers can be equipped to deploy what Santos names a “sociology of absences”, an interrogation of the conditions that render their local knowledges irrelevant, in order to recognize and leverage all of the knowledges of the world, not just those produced on the modern/Western side of what he calls the “abyssal line” [12,21].

The decolonization of research and teaching takes place not just by reaching across the abyssal line—the chasm between the knowledge produced by/in the academy and the knowledge produced in the community—but also by obliterating it. We must invite in and listen to Indigenous teachers and students, and their cultures and languages, to be part not only of curricular development but also knowledge generation within the university and academic publishing. This article provides three examples of academic programs, each one situated in a different national context, that both strengthen and are strengthened by the involvement and research of Indigenous peoples and their leaders, and the unique languages, cultures, and cosmivisions of the communities that they are meant to serve. The three cases reviewed present pedagogical models in which Indigenous students are propelled through their university learning and degrees to become leaders in education for their communities. Regardless of the different contexts and structures of the three examples, for all of the recent graduates, their motivation is to support the new generation of Indigenous children through the building of intercultural teaching communities [26], contributing to what Smith calls “revitalizing and regenerating” projects.

Only through the active engagement in research and scholarship of Indigenous students throughout their professional development, including the writing of pedagogical theory and curricula, can we build the knowledge base that will allow teachers to build intercultural teaching communities and the pedagogics of liberation based on alternative ways of knowing [26]. As such, the investment in and development of the national, regional, and community-supported higher education programs in Latin America that are described here and elsewhere [7] are necessary in order to help Indigenous graduates lead the way in reimagining and reinvigorating intercultural education at all levels of formal schooling.

#### *Implications for Future Research and Practice*

In Latin America, as in New Zealand, intercultural and Indigenous education programs aim to dismantle the oppression of the cultural, linguistic, and epistemic diversity that began with colonization and has been carried out in large part through formal schooling. The three projects described here serve as hopeful examples of the efforts to build the Indigenous knowledge base for intercultural education through the professionalization of teachers and researchers formed in intercultural and Indigenous pedagogies. The future models that build on their successes will help build up the human capital—teachers cognizant of local contexts and willing to work in dialogue with local communities—necessary to implement quality intercultural education, in which the cultural and linguistic rights and right to a self-determined education of children are fulfilled. However, more research is needed to address the local particularities and needs of practitioners.

As argued above, in order to create truly decolonizing and liberatory pedagogical environments, Indigenous and local teachers and students must not only be targets of intercultural education programs but also lead future research as its designers and evaluators. The recommendations made by graduates of higher education programs in Indigenous and intercultural pedagogy must be taken seriously by policymakers and the international research and publication communities alike. While this article has theorized the benefits of the diversification of the knowledge base of teachers' professional development, more data-based research in the form of quantitative studies on the participation of graduates from these programs in academic scholarship, publication, and research is needed to illuminate the gaps. Furthermore, qualitative and mixed-methods studies tailored to the specific challenges faced by intercultural education teachers is needed, in order to understand, for instance, the breadth and depth of diversity that teachers must recognize in different schooling spaces, and whether and how the efforts to include community pedagogies are working. Such future research will also help to inform the creation of and investment in new higher education programs that focus on the professionalization of intercultural and Indigenous educators.

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