



Incorporation of Aymara knowledge and knowledge in pedagogical practices

Incorporación de saberes y conocimientos aimaras en las prácticas pedagógicas

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. The inclusion of Aymara knowledge in pedagogical practices favors intercultural education and the strengthening of cultural identity. **Objective.** To determine the factors that generate their low inclusion in primary education and to understand the changes that have taken place as a result of the educational intervention. **Methodology.** A qualitative, descriptive and interpretative study was carried out, with a participatory action research design and with a decolonial approach, at the Bethsabe Salmón Vda. de Beltrán Educational Unit, Achocalla, La Paz, Bolivia. 133 educational actors participated: 123 students, six teachers and four representatives of the Community Social Educational Council. Participant observation and in-depth interviews were used. **Results.** The limitations identified were: the scarce intercultural teacher training, the weakening of family transmission, the predominance of knowledge from Western culture, and scarce use of the Aymara language. The intervention through cultural corners, singing, poetry and teaching workshops favored the incorporation of Aymara knowledge, the appreciation of cultural identity and the use of the language of origin. **Conclusions.** The revaluation of Aymara knowledge requires articulation between the entire school, the family and the community, the training of teachers and the establishment of contextualized pedagogical strategies.

Keywords: Aymara knowledge; intercultural education; cultural identity; pedagogical practices; Aymara language.

RESUMEN

Introducción. La inclusión de los saberes y conocimientos aimaras en las prácticas pedagógicas favorece la educación intercultural y el fortalecimiento de la identidad cultural. **Objetivo.** Determinar los factores que generan su escasa inclusión en educación primaria y entender los cambios operados a partir de la intervención educativa. **Metodología.** Se realizó un estudio cualitativo, descriptivo e interpretativo, con diseño de investigación-acción participativa y con un enfoque decolonial, en la Unidad Educativa Bethsabe Salmón Vda. de Beltrán, Achocalla, La Paz, Bolivia. Participaron 133 actores educativos: 123 estudiantes, seis docentes y cuatro representantes del Consejo Educativo Social Comunitario. Se utilizaron observación-participante y entrevistas en profundidad. **Resultados.** Las limitaciones identificadas fueron: la escasa formación docente intercultural, el debilitamiento de la transmisión familiar, el predominio de los saberes provenientes de la cultura de Occidente y escaso uso de la lengua aimara. La intervención mediante rincones culturales, canto, poesía y talleres docentes favoreció la incorporación de saberes aimaras, la valorización de la identidad cultural y el uso de la lengua de origen. **Conclusiones.** La revalorización de los saberes aimaras requiere del articulado entre toda la escuela, la familia y la comunidad, la formación de los docentes y el establecimiento de las estrategias pedagógicas contextualizadas.

Palabras clave: saberes aimaras; educación intercultural; identidad cultural; prácticas pedagógicas; lengua aimara.

INTRODUCTION

The wisdom and knowledge of indigenous peoples are systems of understanding that have been historically shaped through cultural relationships (community, territory, language, spirituality, and collective practices). However, their incorporation into formal educational systems remains marked by epistemological structures that privilege Western forms of knowledge production and legitimation. From the epistemologies of the South, Santos [1] proposes the need to recognize that reality can be understood through different forms of knowledge, and Walsh [2] posits critical interculturality as a process whose purpose is to transform historical relations of inequality and cultural subordination.

In Latin America, decolonial education has gained special relevance in response to the need to overcome educational models that formally recognize diversity but maintain curricular structures that are largely impermeable to the knowledge of Indigenous peoples. Garcia-Arias et al. [3] affirm that educational experiences built from the communities make it possible to question epistemological hierarchization and develop intercultural alternatives linked to sociocultural contexts. This problem is also evident in primary education. Da Silva and colleagues [4] found, through a systematic review, that the integration of Indigenous knowledge in schools faces curricular, institutional, and cultural barriers that hinder its effective incorporation into teaching and learning processes. Another challenge is the gap between intercultural policies and their implementation. According to Porter and Morrison [5], bilingual intercultural education in Latin America has difficulty moving from concrete experiences to sustained educational policies, particularly due to the institutional, teacher, and linguistic conditions required for its implementation. Similarly, Román et al. [6] found in an Andean Indigenous community that intercultural models need to be contextualized and developed with the participation of the communities themselves, since general educational proposals do not always respond to the linguistic, territorial, and cultural transformations experienced by Indigenous peoples.

In Bolivia, this recognition is supported by Law No. 070 “Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez,” which establishes intracultural, intercultural, and plurilingual education and recognizes the wisdom, knowledge, values, and languages of the indigenous originary peasant nations and peoples as components of the educational process [7]. This framework represents the result of historical processes in which indigenous peoples demanded an education linked to their own ways of understanding and organizing life. Gómez et al. [8] highlight that these educational demands also emerged as forms of resistance against models that had relegated indigenous cultural knowledge and practices.

However, the existence of regulatory provisions does not guarantee their implementation in the classroom. School practices develop within institutional structures where certain forms of knowledge may acquire greater legitimacy than others. Batallán [9] warns that the relations of authority and power present in the school intervene in the construction of educational practices. In indigenous contexts, this situation may be expressed in the predominance of decontextualized content and in a limited presence of knowledge linked to community memory, cultural practices, and native languages.

Pedagogical contextualization therefore requires a closer relationship between school, family, and community. Quilaqueo and Torres [10] point out that indigenous sociocultural knowledge can be incorporated into the curriculum through participatory processes that bring together teachers, families, community members, and students. This incorporation does not imply replacing school knowledge, but rather creating spaces where different knowledge systems can participate in learning. Rivera Zea [11] also highlights that indigenous knowledge linked to everyday and community practices can contribute to developing inclusive and culturally relevant pedagogies.

Teacher education constitutes a fundamental component of this process. Teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts requires the ability to recognize local knowledge, contextualize content, and prevent interculturality from being reduced to isolated activities. Cortina and Earl [12] argue that incorporating Indigenous knowledge and languages implies questioning the epistemological hierarchies present in educational institutions and moving toward curricula with greater epistemological justice. This approach is especially relevant when teachers must articulate school content with knowledge whose transmission occurs primarily through orality, community experience, and the native language.

From this perspective, investigating indigenous education also requires recognizing communities as producers of knowledge.

Chilisa [13] proposes indigenous and decolonial methodologies capable of questioning traditional relationships between researcher and participants, giving value to the experiences, knowledge, and forms of interpretation of the peoples themselves. In the educational field, Kato et al. [14] highlight that decolonial pedagogies allow establishing dialogical relationships between different forms of knowledge and questioning the coloniality present in certain school contents and practices. Likewise, Wooltorton et al. [15] highlight the importance of situating indigenous knowledge, values, and ways of knowing and acting within educational processes, avoiding approaches centered solely on deficits or cultural shortcomings.

This problem is particularly relevant at the Unidad Educativa Bethsabe Salmón Vda. de Beltrán, located in the municipality of Achocalla, La Paz, where many families maintain cultural ties with the Aymara people, but limited incorporation of their wisdom and knowledge into primary-level pedagogical practices is observed. This situation can affect the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, the use of the native language, and the appreciation of cultural identity. Consequently, the objective of the research was to determine the factors that cause the limited incorporation of Aymara wisdom and knowledge into primary education pedagogical practices and to analyze the changes produced through an intervention aimed at its revaluation in the educational community.

METHODS

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach, with a descriptive and interpretive scope, and a participatory action-research design grounded in a decolonial perspective. This design enabled the diagnosis of the factors associated with the limited incorporation of Aymara knowledge and wisdom into pedagogical practices and, subsequently, the implementation of an intervention aimed at their revaluation.

The study was conducted at the Bethsabe Salmón Vda. de Beltrán Educational Unit, located in the municipality of Achocalla, department of La Paz, Bolivia. The institution had 258 students and 20 teachers. The population of interest corresponded to the community vocational primary level, comprising 123 students from first to sixth year, 58 females and 65 males, and six teachers, five women and a man. Four members of the Social Community Educational Council also participated, representing the families. Consequently, the study involved 133 participants directly linked to the primary level.

A non-probabilistic purposive sampling was used, considering the direct participation of the actors in educational processes and in the transmission of cultural knowledge as the main criterion. Primary-level students and teachers participated in the diagnostic and intervention activities, while family representatives provided information on the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, cultural practices, and the Aymara language.

For data collection, participant observation and in-depth interviews were used. Observation was conducted using a guide aimed at identifying the presence of Aymara knowledge in classroom activities, the use of the native language, the articulation between cultural knowledge and curricular content, teaching strategies, and student participation. The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions directed at students, teachers, and family representatives, addressing the valuation of Aymara knowledge, cultural identity, family transmission, use of the native language, and difficulties in incorporating it into pedagogical practices.

The procedure was organized into 3 phases. The first phase corresponded to the diagnosis of the educational reality through observation, interviews, and community analysis. This stage allowed the identification of the main categories: intercultural teacher training, family participation, the predominance of Western knowledge, cultural identity, and the recognition of the Aymara language.

The second phase consisted of the design and implementation of the proposal called "Revaluing Aymara knowledge and wisdom in pedagogical practices at the primary level," carried out between May and August 2025. The intervention included Aymara cultural corners articulated with the areas of Language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Visual Arts; singing and poetry gatherings in the Aymara language; and workshops aimed at teachers on strategies for incorporating ancestral knowledge and linguistic elements into school activities.

In the third phase, the changes observed after the intervention were evaluated through new observation records and interviews with educational stakeholders. The evaluation considered four dimensions: pedagogical incorporation of Aymara knowledge, appreciation of cultural identity, use of the Aymara language, and strengthening of teaching capacities to develop intercultural educational practices.

The data were transcribed, organized, and subjected to thematic content analysis. Meaning units were identified, subsequently grouped into categories and subcategories according to the similarities and differences found in the testimonies and observation records. Finally, triangulation was performed among the information coming from students, teachers, families, and classroom observations, comparing the findings of the initial diagnosis with those obtained after the intervention.

During the process, the principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and academic use of the information were respected. Due to the participation of minors, authorization from their representatives and the assent of the students were considered, preserving the identity of the participants at all times.

RESULTS

The initial diagnosis identified a limited incorporation of Aymara knowledge and wisdom into primary-level pedagogical practices. The analysis of observations and interviews showed that this situation was not due to a single factor, but rather to the interaction among teaching difficulties, weakening of family transmission, predominance of Western content, and limited use of the Aymara language in school activities.

Table 1. Categories identified during the initial diagnosis

Category	Main finding	Educational involvement
Intercultural teacher training	Limitations were identified in the understanding and pedagogical application of Aymara knowledge and language.	Difficulty in systematically integrating cultural content into the subjects.
Family transmission	The participants noted a decrease in the everyday transmission of knowledge, customs, and the Aymara language.	Weakening of the intergenerational continuity of cultural knowledge.
Predominance of Western knowledge	Pedagogical practices were oriented mainly toward conventional content.	Local knowledge occupied a secondary role in the educational process.
Cultural identity	Among some students, difficulties were observed in the recognition and appreciation of Aymara cultural belonging.	Weaker connection between school experiences and sociocultural identity.
Aymara language	Its use in the classroom was limited and not consistently integrated into curricular activities.	Reduced opportunities to strengthen vocabulary, communication, and linguistic identity.

Note. Authors' own elaboration based on interviews and observation records.

These findings established that the limited incorporation of Aymara knowledge was mainly linked to teacher preparation for working from an intercultural perspective and to the limited articulation between school, family, and community. Likewise, the native language appeared as a particularly weakened component, despite constituting a central means for cultural transmission.

Table 2. Intervention developed and main observed results

Implemented strategy	Application	Observed result
Aymara cultural corners	Integration of cultural elements in Language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Plastic Arts.	Greater presence of cultural knowledge in school activities and recognition of elements linked to Aymara identity.
Song and poetry in the Aymara language	Interpretation and production of artistic expressions using the native language.	Strengthening of oral language use, incorporation of new vocabulary, and greater participation in cultural activities.
Teacher training workshop	Work on history, language, alphabet, everyday expressions, and intercultural teaching strategies.	Increased teacher familiarity with linguistic and cultural resources usable in pedagogical practices.
Family and community participation	Involvement of families with the cultural activities carried out in the institution.	Greater recognition of the role of the family and community in the preservation and transmission of ancestral knowledge.

Note. Own elaboration based on the monitoring of the intervention proposal.

Based on the diagnosis, the proposal "Revaluing Aymara knowledge and wisdom in primary-level pedagogical practices" was implemented between May and August 2025.

The activities were incorporated into school experiences through cultural corners, artistic expressions in the Aymara language, and teacher training.

The cultural corners allowed incorporating Aymara content into different curricular areas and generating specific spaces for its recognition within the classroom. Singing and poetry activities expanded opportunities to use the Aymara language in an educational and artistic context. In parallel, the workshop for teachers promoted knowledge of basic elements of the language and strategies to link local knowledge with school activities.

The qualitative comparison between the diagnosis and the subsequent evaluation showed changes mainly in four dimensions: pedagogical incorporation of knowledge, appreciation of cultural identity, use of the Aymara language, and teacher preparation.

In conclusion, the results show that the action aimed at pedagogical practice was able to initiate a more visible incorporation of Aymara knowledge and wisdom. Indeed, changes in school practices were precisely those that emerged most as a consequence of the creation of spaces where cultural learning was valued, the educational use of the Aymara language, and the strengthening of teaching capacities. In the same spaces designated for family participation, the need to understand cultural revaluation as a process to be carried out jointly among school, home, and community became evident.

Although the observed changes are favorable, they do not allow us to affirm that pedagogical practices have undergone a total transformation, given the short duration of the implementation and the qualitative nature of the results. The evidence pointed fundamentally to an initial process of strengthening the presence of Aymara knowledge and its recognition as educational resources within the first level of education.

Table 3. Qualitative comparison before and after the intervention

Dimension	Initial situation	Post-intervention situation
Incorporation of Aymara knowledge	Limited and unsystematic presence in classroom activities.	Incorporation through cultural corners and activities linked to different curricular areas.
Cultural identity	Inconsistent recognition of Aymara practices, knowledge, and cultural belonging.	Greater presence and appreciation of cultural elements within school experiences.
Aymara language	Reduced use in pedagogical practices and limited opportunities for expression.	Greater use through songs, poems, vocabulary, and expressions of everyday communication.
Teacher training	Limitations in integrating knowledge and the native language into teaching.	Increased familiarity with cultural and linguistic content and strategies for pedagogical incorporation.

Note. The comparison represents a qualitative synthesis of the observations and interviews conducted during the study phases; it does not correspond to a statistical measurement.

DISCUSSION

The results showed that the limited inclusion of Aymara knowledge and wisdom in pedagogical practices is due to factors related to teacher training, family transmission, the predominance of Western content, and the reduced use of the native language. After the intervention, favorable changes were observed, such as the presence of cultural content, the appreciation of Aymara identity, the educational use of the language, and teacher preparation. These results demonstrate that the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge requires articulated actions and not isolated cultural activities.

Among the main difficulties identified was teacher training. According to Baptista and Molina-Andrade [16], teachers in traditional communities must recognize the existence of diverse knowledge systems and develop strategies to relate them to school content. In the study, the teacher workshop promoted greater familiarity with the Aymara language, history, and knowledge, thereby favoring their use as pedagogical resources. This situation is also related to Bustos González et al. [17], who warn that the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum depends, to a large extent, on teachers' ability to question educational structures that have historically been centered on Western epistemologies.

The initial prevalence of conventional knowledge demonstrated that the normative recognition of interculturality does not ensure its application in the classroom.

According to Robles-Piñeros et al. [18], intercultural education should create spaces for dialogue between academic knowledge and traditional knowledge, without establishing hierarchical relationships between them. The results obtained corroborate this view, since the cultural corners allowed the integration of Aymara knowledge with areas such as Language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Visual Arts, without replacing the established curricular contents. Along the same lines, Coates et al. [19] highlight the need to recognize institutional frameworks built from Indigenous perspectives themselves to prevent their knowledge from being incorporated only as a complementary or symbolic element. Another important component was family participation. The interviews showed that the daily transmission of knowledge, customs, and the Aymara language has been reduced, which could hinder cultural continuity between generations. According to Pereira and de Medeiros [20], the transmission of Indigenous knowledge is closely linked to community and family practices, where culture is learned through participation and experimentation with others. In this way, the inclusion of families in the activities developed during the intervention made it possible to reinforce the relationship between school learning and community memory.

Also important are the changes observed in the appreciation of cultural identity. Burgess et al. [21] state that a curriculum constructed from Indigenous knowledge must relate learning, territory, community, and identity, and avoid presenting culture as decontextualized content. In the study, cultural corners, as well as singing and poetry activities, allowed a greater presence of Aymara symbols, expressions, and knowledge in school experiences. Similarly, Sánchez-García and Ramírez-Mera [22] show that the inclusion of community knowledge in basic education can foster more contextualized curricula related to students' cultural experiences.

Among the most important conclusions of the diagnosis was the limited use of the Aymara language. After the intervention, songs, poems, dialogues, and vocabulary activities provided greater opportunities for the use of the native language in the school context. This result is especially important because language not only serves as a means of communication, but also as a vehicle for transmitting knowledge, meanings, and ways of understanding the environment. Spillman et al. [23] point out that educational processes related to Indigenous knowledge acquire greater meaning when learning is built through contextualized experiences and direct engagement with cultural ways of knowing.

These results also allow us to understand that achieving the transformation of pedagogical practices requires sustained institutional changes. Shay et al. [24] point out that indigenous education policies can lose effectiveness when there is a gap between their principles, educational practice, and the real conditions of institutions. In this study, the intervention advanced in the incorporation of Aymara knowledge, but it should be understood as an initial process. Continuity will depend on ongoing teacher training, family participation, and the systematic integration of Aymara knowledge and language into curricular planning. Taken as a whole, the results indicate that the revaluation of Aymara knowledge can be stronger when school, family, and community participate in an articulated manner. The intervention made it possible to move from a scarce presence of cultural knowledge to more contextualized practices; however, the qualitative nature of the study, its implementation in a single institution, and the intervention period from May to August 2025 limit the generalizability of the results. Future studies could increase the number of participating institutions and conduct longitudinal follow-ups to determine whether the observed changes persist over time.

CONCLUSIONS

The scarce incorporation of Aymara knowledge and wisdom in pedagogical practices in primary level classrooms was linked, to a large extent, to the limited teacher training in intercultural education or interculturality, the limited family transmission of ancestral knowledge and native language, and the prevalence of school-type knowledge removed from the cultural context of the subjects.

The intervention carried out enabled the improvement of the incorporation of Aymara knowledge related to the cultural context of the students in school activities through cultural corners, singing, poetry, vocabulary, and expressions in the Aymara language, favoring a more situated teaching connected to the sociocultural reality of the educational community.

The strengthening of cultural identity was present in the general appreciation of the Aymara cultural elements that were a constitutive part of school experiences.

The incorporation of the native language was qualitatively more significant because, in addition to being a means of communication, it also represented a means of transmitting knowledge, practices, and cultural meanings.

The training promoted among the teaching staff fostered a closer approach to linguistic and cultural content, which can be incorporated into the various areas of the curriculum. However, the results show that this process requires continuity, institutional support, and permanent strategies, since, after the training has concluded, interculturality can be reduced to isolated actions or activities.

The articulation between school, family, and community constituted a very important aspect for the revalorization of Aymara knowledge, although it was favorable to them and represented the beginning of a process that, in turn, had to be interpreted according to the qualitative characteristics of the present study, since it had been carried out in a single institution during a delimited period. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the systematic incorporation of Aymara knowledge and language in pedagogical planning, as well as to expand future research toward other educational contexts.

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