



Knowledge production from the decolonization of knowledge

Producción de conocimientos desde la descolonización del saber

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The decolonization of knowledge represents a challenge for education systems that seek to recognize historically relegated knowledge and strengthen the relationship between school, culture, and community. **Objective:** To describe the production of knowledge from the decolonization of knowledge based on the perceptions of educational actors in the Colquencha-Collana Educational District, Aroma province, department of La Paz, Bolivia. **Methodology:** A qualitative research was developed with phenomenological orientation and support of documentary analysis. 30 educational actors participated: 10 authorities or educational managers and 20 representatives of parents. The information was obtained through in-depth interviews applied with a semi-structured guide. The data were examined through interpretative thematic analysis and triangulation with theoretical foundations and the Bolivian regulatory framework. **Results:** A progressive incorporation of local knowledge, ancestral knowledge, native languages and cultural practices in educational processes was evidenced. However, limitations related to teacher training, the permanence of predominantly Western curricular approaches, the availability of contextualized resources, and some resistance among educational actors persisted. The communities were recognized as producers and transmitters of knowledge related to culture, territory, orality and collective memory. **Conclusions:** In Colquencha-Collana, the decolonization of knowledge is a process still under construction. Its strengthening requires contextualized teacher training, greater participation of communities and educational spaces where school and community knowledge dialogue without establishing hierarchies between them.

Keywords: decolonization of knowledge; knowledge production; ancestral knowledge; interculturality; education.

RESUMEN

Introducción: La descolonización del saber representa un desafío para los sistemas educativos que buscan reconocer conocimientos históricamente relegados y fortalecer la relación entre escuela, cultura y comunidad. **Objetivo:** Describir la producción de conocimientos desde la descolonización del saber a partir de las percepciones de actores educativos del Distrito Educativo Colquencha-Collana, provincia Aroma, departamento de La Paz, Bolivia. **Metodología:** Se desarrolló una investigación cualitativa con orientación fenomenológica y apoyo del análisis documental. Participaron 30 actores educativos: 10 autoridades o gestores educativos y 20 representantes de padres de familia. La información se obtuvo mediante entrevistas en profundidad aplicadas con una guía semiestructurada. Los datos fueron examinados mediante análisis temático interpretativo y triangulación con fundamentos teóricos y el marco normativo boliviano. **Resultados:** Se evidenció una incorporación progresiva de saberes locales, conocimientos ancestrales, lenguas originarias y prácticas culturales en los procesos educativos. No obstante, persistieron limitaciones relacionadas con la formación docente, la permanencia de enfoques curriculares predominantemente occidentales, la disponibilidad de recursos contextualizados y ciertas resistencias entre los actores educativos. Las comunidades fueron reconocidas como productoras y transmisoras de conocimientos vinculados con la cultura, el territorio, la oralidad y la memoria colectiva. **Conclusiones:** En Colquencha-Collana, la descolonización del saber constituye un proceso todavía en construcción. Su fortalecimiento requiere una formación docente contextualizada, mayor participación de las comunidades y espacios educativos donde los conocimientos escolares y comunitarios dialoguen sin establecer jerarquías entre ellos.

Palabras clave: descolonización del saber; producción de conocimientos; saberes ancestrales; interculturalidad; educación.

INTRODUCTION

The production of knowledge is not a neutral process; what we today call knowledge has been intrinsically linked to power relations that determine which knowledge is recognized as valid, who can produce it, and the criteria that establish its legitimacy in academic contexts. In Latin America, for example, the educational systems developed by Amerindian cultures were dominated by epistemological matrices of Western origin that sought to universalize ways of understanding reality, while knowledge constructed from the perspective of indigenous peoples, peasant communities, and other historically subordinated groups occupied marginal positions, as did their ways of life [1,2]. This phenomenon has stimulated debate on how to drive the processes of production, transmission, and validation of knowledge.

From this perspective, the decolonization of knowledge implies a critical review of established epistemological hierarchies and proposes the recognition of the coexistence of different ways of knowing and interpreting the world. It implies not only incorporating indigenous or ancestral content into educational programs but also questioning the criteria by which certain knowledge has been considered universal, as opposed to other knowledge considered local, traditional, or unscientific [3]. Contemporary discussions on decolonial education also emphasize that this process requires modifying existing relationships among curriculum, pedagogy, educational institutions, and knowledge-producing communities [1,4].

In the Latin American educational context, this transformation is closely related to interculturality. It is not enough to simply formalize and recognize cultural or linguistic diversity; rather, it is necessary to create genuine spaces for interaction among diverse epistemological fields. Experiences in various countries of the region have advanced bilingual intercultural education, incorporation of community knowledge, and participation of indigenous actors, but they have also revealed difficulties in implementing curricular proposals, training teachers, and ensuring continuity in the maintenance of school districts and educational institutions built from a predominantly Western perspective [4,5]. These tensions demonstrate that normative recognition of diversity is not sufficient to change educational practices.

These contradictions become most evident in the curriculum. Curricular decolonization implies revising both the content taught and the ways in which teaching is organized, knowledge is produced, and learning is assessed. Studies on curricular transformation indicate that recognizing historically excluded epistemologies requires moving beyond complementary approaches that present Indigenous knowledge as isolated content and toward more horizontal relationships among different knowledge traditions [1,6]. In this sense, educational institutions must face the challenge of articulating scientific knowledge, community experiences, languages, cultural practices, and territorial knowledge without establishing hierarchical relationships among them [7].

Teacher training is another important component of the apparatus. Incorporating decolonizing proposals requires teachers who are capable of understanding the sociocultural contexts in which they practice and of generating pedagogical relationships with the wisdom and knowledge existing in communities. Research in intercultural contexts warns that a lack of specific preparation can restrict the development of policies aimed at recognizing indigenous knowledge and perpetuate traditional pedagogical practices, even when curricula promote it [5,8]. Therefore, transforming teacher training favors the development of capacities for intercultural dialogue, critical analysis of the curriculum, and participatory construction of knowledge.

For this reason, community participation is particularly important. Peoples and communities should not be seen as mere recipients of educational policies but as actors who possess knowledge historically constructed through their social, cultural, and territorial relations. Recognizing them as subjects of knowledge production opens possibilities for dialogue among knowledges and questions educational models in which the school institution concentrates epistemological authority [6,9]. The integration of local and scientific knowledge can give rise to more contextualized educational processes, provided that such articulation respects the communities' autonomy, experiences, and own forms of knowledge production and transmission [9,10].

In Bolivia, this debate has particular characteristics because the country is culturally and linguistically diverse and because, in recent decades, a process of educational transformation has developed. Law No. 070 Avelino Siñani - Elizardo Pérez proposes a decolonizing, intracultural, intercultural, and plurilingual education, emphasizing the recovery and development of the knowledge and wisdom of the indigenous originary peasant nations and peoples. However, research on teacher training and intercultural education in the Bolivian context has revealed a gap between the principles established normatively and their implementation in educational practices [5,11]. These processes continue to be conditioned by persistent traditional conceptions

of knowledge, limitations in teacher preparation, and resistance from some educational actors.

Likewise, the decolonization of knowledge cannot be considered merely another epistemological system, but rather its potential lies in creating spaces in which diverse forms of knowledge can establish links of dialogue, complementarity, and mutual questioning [2,12]. Latin American experiences linked to intercultural universities or to educational proposals inspired by indigenous epistemologies illustrate that it is possible to build institutional alternatives oriented toward greater epistemological plurality, although this process gives rise to tensions regarding their recognition and the possibility of sustaining them within conventional educational structures [6,13].

In this context, it is pertinent to analyze how educational actors themselves perceive knowledge production from the decolonization of knowledge in specific educational spaces. Understanding the perspectives of educational authorities and parent representatives makes it possible to identify the progress achieved, as well as the resistances, training needs, and obstacles that arise in the application of these principles. Therefore, the present study aims to describe the production of knowledge from the decolonization of knowledge based on the perceptions of educational actors in the Colquencha-Collana Educational District, Aroma province, La Paz department, Bolivia, considering the incorporation of local knowledge in educational programs, teacher training needs, the presence of ancestral knowledge in the curriculum, the main obstacles to its implementation, and the role of communities in the production and transmission of knowledge.

METHODS

A qualitative research study was conducted using a phenomenological approach and documentary analysis. This approach made it possible to capture the perceptions and experiences of educational actors in relation to the production of knowledge from the decolonization of knowledge, considering how this process is being constructed in educational practices, in the incorporation of ancestral knowledge, in the training of trainers, and in the participation of communities. The phenomenological component was oriented toward recovering the experiences and evaluations that participants construct within their educational context, while the documentary analysis allowed contrasting the data collected in the fieldwork with the theoretical references regarding the decolonization of knowledge and with the specific regulations of education in Bolivia, specifically Law No. 070 Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez.

The study was conducted in the Colquencha-Collana Educational District, Aroma province, La Paz department, Bolivia. 30 educational actors participated, divided into two groups: 10 managers or educational authorities and 20 parent representatives linked to the study context. The participation of both groups allowed for the recovery of perspectives from both educational management and the community, actors who participate from different positions in processes related to interculturality, the incorporation of local knowledge, and knowledge production in the educational field.

The main data collection technique was the in-depth interview, conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. This instrument made it possible to establish common lines of inquiry while providing the flexibility to explore the experiences, opinions, and assessments expressed by the participants. The questions were organized around five aspects: incorporation of the decolonization of knowledge in educational programs; changes required in teacher training; initiatives aimed at integrating ancestral and indigenous knowledge into curricula; obstacles to the decolonization of knowledge in educational units; and the role of local communities in the production and transmission of knowledge within the educational system.

The research process comprised a documentary phase and a fieldwork phase. Initially, theoretical contributions related to the decolonization of knowledge, knowledge production, interculturality, and the recognition of indigenous and original epistemologies were reviewed. Bolivian educational regulations linked to these principles were also examined. Subsequently, interviews were conducted with educational actors from the Colquencha-Collana Educational District to identify their perceptions regarding the incorporation of the decolonization of knowledge and the main difficulties associated with its application in the educational context.

The collected information was examined through interpretive thematic analysis. In the first stage, the responses were reviewed to identify recurring ideas and units of meaning related to the objective of the study. Subsequently, these units were organized into five analytical categories: incorporation of decolonization in educational programs, teacher training, inclusion of ancestral and indigenous knowledge, obstacles to the decolonization of knowledge, and community participation in the production of knowledge. The similarities and differences between the perceptions of educational authorities and those of parent representatives were contrasted.

An interpretive triangulation was conducted among the participants' accounts, the theoretical foundations analyzed, and the Bolivian norm. This approach was useful for establishing relationships among the experiences of the educational actors, the theoretical foundations, and proposals related to the production of knowledge from the decolonization of knowledge. Given that this research was conducted from a qualitative and contextual perspective, the results obtained aimed to understand the experiences and meanings constructed by the participants from the Colquencha-Collana Educational District, rather than to achieve statistical generalization to the Bolivian educational system as a whole.

RESULTS

From the analysis of the interviews conducted with the 30 participants, trends were identified regarding the incorporation of the decolonization of knowledge in educational programs, teacher training, the presence of ancestral knowledge in the curriculum, the obstacles to its implementation, and the participation of communities in the production of knowledge. The sample consisted of 10 educational authorities or managers and 20 parent representatives from the Colquencha-Collana Educational District.

Table 1. Composition of the study participants

Participant group	Number of participants	Percentage
Educational authorities and managers	10	33,3 %
Parent representatives	20	66,7 %
Total	30	100 %

Note: Own elaboration.

Among the 10 educational authorities interviewed, nine were men and the other was a woman. In the original manuscript, the sex distribution of the 20 parent representatives is not specified, so this variable was not used to make comparisons between both groups.

Participants indicated that the incorporation of the decolonization of knowledge is in the process of development within educational programs. The authorities recognized advances related to the presence of local knowledge, native languages, own historical perspectives, and cultural practices. An interviewee stated that this process is manifested through "the inclusion of local knowledge, the valorization of ancestral knowledge, and the diversification of curricular contents".

However, the responses also revealed differences among the educational actors. While the authorities tended to positively value the incorporation of these contents, some representatives of parents expressed reservations. A response maintained that the incorporation of certain local knowledge could constitute "a setback for our child," which evidences the persistence of different valuations about the knowledge that should be privileged within formal education.

Teacher training emerged among the main factors associated with the effective implementation of decolonization. Participants pointed out that it is not enough to incorporate new content into curricular documents if teachers do not have the tools to relate it to the sociocultural experiences of communities. An authority expressed the need to introduce "structural and methodological changes that foster more inclusive and critical teaching".

The educational councils also insisted on the permanent updating of teachers in their respective areas and on the commitment to educational work. These responses show that the necessary training is not restricted to conceptual knowledge of decolonization, but rather involves pedagogical capacities to articulate different forms of knowledge within teaching.

Regarding ancestral and indigenous knowledge, the interviewees identified various actions aimed at incorporating them into the curriculum. These include intercultural bilingual education, the incorporation of local perspectives into different areas of knowledge, the development of contextualized educational materials, and the recovery of native languages and cultural practices.

The testimonies, however, point to the fact that the existence of these initiatives does not necessarily imply a consolidated transformation. An authority said that there are actions to incorporate ancestral knowledge, but "the changes are not visible yet." But other actors believe that there are already actions on the part of teachers and educational authorities regarding ancestral knowledge and decolonization.

Table 2. Incorporation of the decolonization of knowledge and teacher training needs

Analyzed dimension	Educational authorities	Parent representatives	Interpretive finding
Incorporation of local knowledge	They identify progressive incorporation into educational programs.	Favorable positions and some resistances are observed.	Incorporation exists, but it is not uniformly accepted.
Ancestral knowledge	Its presence is recognized through content, languages, and cultural practices.	Its importance is recognized, although there are different educational expectations.	Tension persists between local knowledge and traditional conceptions of formal education.
Teacher training	Methodological updating and transformation are required.	The need for greater commitment from teachers is highlighted.	Teacher training is considered a condition for deepening the process.
Pedagogical practice	Inclusive and contextualized strategies are required.	Concrete improvements in teaching are expected.	Decolonization must move from curricular discourse to educational practices.

Note: Own elaboration based on the interviews.

Table 3. Ancestral knowledge and main obstacles identified

Theme	Evidence found in the interviews	Identified situation
Intercultural education	Incorporation of their own cultural knowledge and practices	Advances are recognized within educational programs.
Native languages	Presence within certain educational experiences	They constitute a means for preserving community knowledge and practices.
Educational materials	Materials with intercultural content are mentioned.	Their availability and utilization are still considered insufficient.
Curriculum	Persistence of predominantly Western content and approaches	It represents a principal obstacle to deepening decolonization.
Teacher training	Limited training in decolonizing pedagogies	It hinders the effective incorporation of indigenous epistemologies and knowledges.
Institutional and social resistance	Different levels of acceptance among the actors	It limits the uniform application of decolonizing principles.
Community participation	Unequal presence of communities and leaders in educational decisions	It is necessary to strengthen their intervention in curricular processes.

Note: Own elaboration based on the responses of the participants.

The obstacles mentioned by the educational authorities referred to curricular, institutional, pedagogical, and other factors, among which were the persistence of Eurocentric views, the limited preparation of teachers in decolonizing pedagogies, institutional resistance, the lack of contextualized teaching materials, the stigmatization of certain indigenous knowledge, the predominance of dominant languages over the native language, etc.

Another obstacle noted was the low participation of leaders and communities in some processes associated with the organization and the educational curriculum. Parent representatives likewise acknowledged the presence of numerous obstacles, although their responses emphasized almost exclusively the responsibility of educational authorities for implementing effective changes.

Community participation was among the most highly valued aspects within the statements. For respondents, communities possess knowledge that has been built, treasured, and transmitted through history, which can contribute directly to the educational process. Among these, knowledge related to traditional medicine, agriculture, art, worldviews, languages, habits, and social practices was mentioned.

A representative of the educational councils summarized this function by noting that it is up to the community to “enforce knowledge and learning, our customs, our traditions, and above all respect for elders and authorities.” The educational authorities agreed that community knowledge can enrich students’ education when incorporated through a direct relationship with the social and cultural environment.

The results as a whole show that the production of knowledge from the decolonization of knowledge is a process recognized by the educational actors of the Distrito Educativo Colquenchacollana, although its development remains heterogeneous. Advances are observed in the incorporation of ancestral knowledge, languages, cultural practices, and community participation, but limitations also persist regarding teacher training, the curriculum, educational resources, the resistance of certain actors, and the effective participation of communities.

The testimonies thus show a distance between the formal recognition of decolonization and its consolidation in everyday educational practices.

Table 4. Community contributions to the production and transmission of knowledge

Scope	Identified community contribution	Contribution to the educational process
Ancestral knowledge	Intergenerational transmission of knowledge	Conservation and recovery of the community's own knowledge
Cultural practices	Customs, traditions, and community forms of coexistence	Strengthening of cultural identity
Indigenous languages	Use and transmission of local languages	Linguistic preservation and access to knowledge associated with the languages
Agriculture and relationship with the territory	Knowledge derived from local experiences	Linking learning with the territorial context
Traditional medicine	Practices and knowledge accumulated by the communities	Recognition of local knowledge systems
Orality	Transmission through narratives, experiences, and collective memory	Complementing written and school-based forms of learning
Educational participation	Intervention by parents, councils, elders, and community authorities	Connection between school, family, and community

Note: Own elaboration based on the interviews conducted.

DISCUSSION

The results show that the process of decolonization of knowledge has begun to emerge in the educational practices and programs carried out in the observed context, especially through the consideration of local knowledge, native languages, and cultural practices. However, the process of decolonization of knowledge being implemented is ongoing and presents differences between the institutional recognition of decolonization and the appropriation by the different educational actors. The presence of similar positions along with certain resistances among some parent representatives demonstrates that the epistemological transformation of education depends not only on curricular changes, but also on social conceptions regarding which knowledge has educational value. Thus, as Harding [14] indicates, decolonial epistemologies precisely criticize the criteria by which certain knowledge systems gain a position of greater legitimacy over other ways of conceiving reality.

This tension is relevant because decolonization should not be interpreted as a simple incorporation of cultural contents within educational structures that remain unchanged. Transformation requires reviewing the existing relationships between knowledge, power, and legitimacy. Minoia and Castro-Sotomayor [15] point out that a decolonial perspective of education implies recognizing the coexistence of different knowledge and overcoming hierarchical epistemological relationships.

Among the most consistent results was the need to strengthen teacher training. Participants pointed out that teachers require updating, contextualized methodologies, and a greater capacity to relate school knowledge to the cultural characteristics of the communities. This assessment is consistent with Riley et al. [16], who emphasize that the ethical incorporation of indigenous knowledges in teacher training requires capacities that allow overcoming their superficial or decontextualized treatment. Similarly, Vandeyar [17] contends that transforming education from decolonial perspectives demands that academic actors themselves review their practices, assumptions, and ways of understanding the production of knowledge.

The results suggest, therefore, that a decolonizing educational policy may encounter limitations when teachers do not have pedagogical tools to materialize its principles. Training should not focus exclusively on transmitting concepts associated with interculturality or decolonization, but rather on fostering experiences that allow establishing relationships between academic knowledge, community practices, and territorial contexts. This need is related to the approaches of Keane et al. [18], who argue that indigenous knowledge systems can contribute to transforming educational processes when they are recognized as legitimate sources for knowledge construction and not merely as complementary cultural elements.

Regarding ancestral and indigenous knowledge, the participants identified different initiatives, including intercultural bilingual education, the use of contextualized content, the use of native languages, and the recovery of cultural practices.

However, the authorities pointed out that the changes are still not always visible. This result reveals a gap between the formal existence of initiatives and their capacity to effectively transform educational experiences. Govender and Naidoo [19] warn that decolonizing the curriculum implies modifying not only what is taught, but also the structures that determine how knowledge is selected, organized, and legitimized.

This situation also allows us to understand why the incorporation of ancestral knowledge should not be limited to isolated contents within the curriculum. Caretta and Pepa [20] show that decolonial pedagogies acquire greater meaning when learning is connected to situated experiences, territory, and concrete cultural practices. In the studied context, knowledge related to agriculture, traditional medicine, orality, languages, and worldviews precisely represents knowledge built in interaction with the community and the territory. Its incorporation could contribute to establishing more contextualized educational processes, provided that it is not reduced to folkloric expressions disconnected from their own forms of production and transmission.

The obstacles identified by the interviewees include the persistence of Eurocentric perspectives, insufficient teacher training, scarcity of contextualized materials, institutional resistance, stigmatization of Indigenous knowledge, and displacement of Indigenous languages. These findings show that the decolonization of knowledge constitutes a complex process involving curricular, institutional, pedagogical, and sociocultural factors. Masenya [21] highlights that recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems requires policies and institutional mechanisms capable of protecting them and granting them legitimacy, since their mere discursive incorporation does not guarantee changes in the relationships that structure the production of knowledge.

At this point, it is also necessary to maintain a critical perspective on the concept of decolonization. Moosavi [22] warns that its use can become a superficial category when employed without questioning the very structures and practices that reproduce epistemological inequalities. This observation is pertinent for interpreting the results of the present study, since participants recognize that decolonization appears in educational programs and discourses, while obstacles persist that hinder its realization. Therefore, the formal presence of the term should not be considered sufficient evidence of an epistemological transformation.

Another relevant finding was the role attributed to communities in the production and transmission of knowledge. Both educational authorities and community representatives recognized that communities preserve knowledge related to cultural practices, orality, agriculture, traditional medicine, languages, and territorial experiences. Yanou et al. [23] argue that the articulation between local and scientific knowledge requires dialogic relationships in which neither is automatically considered superior. This approach coincides with the results obtained, since the interviewees conceive of the community as an active source of knowledge capable of enriching educational processes.

Consequently, community participation should not be limited to complementary school activities, but should extend to spaces where communities can intervene in the definition and contextualization of educational content. These results acquire special importance in a context such as Bolivia, where the production and transmission of community knowledge maintain a close relationship with cultural identity, language, and territory. Recent Latin American experiences show that educational institutions inspired by Indigenous knowledge can contribute to generating alternatives to homogeneous educational models and strengthen epistemological plurality [24].

Overall, the findings show that the production of knowledge resulting from the decolonization of knowledge is still under construction, characterized by both advances and tensions. The contribution of ancestral knowledge, the participation of native languages, and community participation indicate progress in knowledge organizations, but this progress must be supported by more solid teacher training, by the revision of curricular structures, by an expansion of community participation, and by overcoming the current resistances that still grant greater legitimacy to certain forms of knowledge. In addition, the decolonization of knowledge is not simply replacing scientific knowledge with ancestral knowledge, but rather generating educational conditions in which different forms of knowledge dialogue, complement each other, and participate more equitably in the construction of knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

In the case of the Colquencha-Collana Educational District, the decolonization of knowledge is not only part of educational practice, but it is not fully rooted either. The interviews are very explicit in revealing that educational authorities and parents recognize the existence of territorial

knowledge, native languages, and ancestral knowledge in education. That said, the ways of valuing, conceptualizing, and applying it vary to a greater or lesser extent. The challenge is not only to 'include' this type of knowledge in the programs, but also for it to be understood as important knowledge and not as minor content compared to conventional school knowledge.

Teacher education is a fundamental pillar for achieving this goal. Participants demand not only a type of teacher who relates classroom teaching to the experiences, culture, language, and practices of Colquencha-Collana, but also a 'decolonization' that allows teacher professional development processes to fit the educational context and to work with community knowledge, without reducing it solely to occasional activities.

The results show that the community plays a much more important role than that of a simple companion to the school. Thus, the work of parents, educational councils, community authorities, elders, etc., is a fundamental link in supporting the conservation of practices, customs, languages, and ways of understanding space. Strengthening community participation in educational processes can ensure that the school is not the only place where what knowledge to teach is defined. In Colquencha-Collana, the process of producing knowledge is enhanced through the intersection of community experience and school content.

Research allows us to understand how the decolonization of knowledge in this educational district is under construction, with visible achievements and evident resistances. The idea is not to replace scientific knowledge with ancestral knowledge, but rather that neither is superior to the other. Progress in educational units entails strengthening teacher training, expanding community spaces, and creating spaces for dialogue between school knowledge and community knowledge in student education.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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