The inclusion of interculturality in teacher education: a perception of Higher Education Students

La inclusión de la interculturalidad en la formación docente: una percepción de los estudiantes de educación superior

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Abstract

This paper analyses the perception of university students on the integration of interculturality in teacher training programmes at the National University of Education (UNAE) in Ecuador. A mixed methodology was used, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches through a structured questionnaire applied to 589 students. The instrument evaluated the perception of the knowledge imparted by teachers in terms of the construction of the intercultural concept and practices. The answers given by the participants were analysed through Pearson's Correlation and grounded theory. The results show a positive correlation between the understanding of cultural diversity and student practices with a value of 0.706. Furthermore, when correlating the specific concepts of interculturality as a space for the exchange of knowledge and the multiplicity of cultures, questions P5 and P6 showed values of 0.608 and 0.635. In conclusion, teacher training in interculturality is relevant in the training of students, allowing them to broaden their knowledge of cultural diversity and the creation of spaces for inclusion through respect and tolerance.

Keywords: higher education, multicultural education, intercultural knowledge, cultural diversity, intercultural practices.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la percepción de los estudiantes universitarios sobre la integración de la interculturalidad en los programas de formación docente de la Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE) del Ecuador. Se utilizó una metodología mixta, combinando enfoques cualitativos y cuantitativos a través de un cuestionario estructurado aplicado a 589 estudiantes. El instrumento evaluó la percepción de los conocimientos impartidos por los docentes en términos de la construcción del concepto y las prácticas interculturales. Las respuestas dadas por los participantes fueron analizadas mediante la Correlación de Pearson y la teoría fundamentada. Los resultados muestran una correlación positiva entre la comprensión de la diversidad cultural y las prácticas estudiantiles con un valor de 0,706. Además, al correlacionar los conceptos específicos de interculturalidad como espacio de intercambio de conocimientos y multiplicidad de culturas, las preguntas P5 y P6 arrojaron valores de 0,608 y 0,635. En conclusión, la formación docente en interculturalidad es relevante en la formación de los estudiantes, permitiéndoles ampliar sus conocimientos sobre la diversidad cultural y la creación de espacios de inclusión a través del respeto y la tolerancia.

Palabras clave: Conocimientos interculturales, diversidad cultural, educación multicultural, educación superior, prácticas interculturales.

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1. Introduction

Due to the phenomenon of globalisation that the world is currently experiencing, the interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds has been envisaged, as mentioned by Manente et al. (2024) it is necessary for the globalised population to foster intercultural competences based on respect and dialogue for others, which would largely prevent discriminatory phenomena. Íñiguez et al. (2021) and Arismendi (2021) express that educational spaces would be treated as intercultural models that would help to manage the diversity of ethnicities and races that exist worldwide, thus promoting critical thinking and social integration in a context of cultural plurality.

Ecuador is characterised as a multicultural country with a variety of ethnic groups distributed in all the provinces, including indigenous people, mestizos, blacks, whites, among others; for this reason, it is considered relevant to preserve each one of them, prioritising the legitimisation of non-discrimination on the basis of race, skin colour or culture, as mentioned by the Asamblea Constituyente de Ecuador (2008) in article 1 "Ecuador is a constitutional State founded on rights and justice, characterized as social, democratic, sovereign, independent, unitary, intercultural, plurinational, and secular".

Interculturality is understood by Dávila and Pinos (2019), and González et al. (2021), it refers to the construction of equitable relationships among individuals, ethnic groups, and cultures; this entails incorporating these principles throughout the entire educational system. This leads to an education system that is not only able to recognise differences, but also that they are valued and form part of the pedagogical processes, fostering an inclusive environment of respect and equality (Leiva & Bracons, 2019; Dávila & Pinos, 2019). Analysing the perspective of intercultural teacher training, it is emphasised that this is an increasingly emerging need and it is therefore essential that their academic training focuses on addressing, recognising and legitimising the

diverse backgrounds of their students in order to enhance the quality of teaching through the creation of inclusive training centres (Alonso, 2019). Accordingly, Podestá et al. (2022) argue that an intercultural education model constitutes an appropriate framework for addressing the cultural diversity present within nations, as it is not only a governmental objective but also one of the key priorities established in the Global Policy Agenda.

Intercultural education promotes quality education based on a sense of cultural and linguistic belonging according to the needs of peoples and nationalities (Flores, 2023; Escobar & Carcausto, 2022). Its institutionalisation occurred in the late 1980s, thanks to the struggle of indigenous peoples who advocated for their inclusion as part of the education systems and schooling for their communities, considering that many of their people were being educated clandestinely without government support. By analysing this particular case through the intercultural bilingual jurisdiction, important results would be obtained with respect to the structure and form of management at the time (Villagómez, 2019).

One of these results was the policies and practices that teachers had to have in order to be part of the intercultural bilingual education (IBE) system, since not only was the need for professionals native to their communities recognised, but they also had to back up their teaching training by considering the educational contexts as subjects and their needs in terms of the cultures and ethnicities they came from: subjects and their needs according to the cultures and ethnicities they came from, i.e., teacher applicants had to consider that their educational objective would not only focus on conventional spanish-speaking students (Villagómez, 2019).

In order to include members of communities whose socio-cultural characteristics were different from those of the rest of the Ecuadorian population,

the indigenous schools of Cayambe, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Andean Mission, and the Popular Radiophonic Schools of Ecuador, among others, were created (Flores, 2023). An analysis of the current legislation reveals significant changes with regard to intercultural development, as described in Article 347.9 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador: "The State is responsible for guaranteeing a system of Intercultural Bilingual Education, in which the language of the respective nationality shall be used as the main language of education" (Asamblea Constituyente de Ecuador, 2008).

In 2011, Ecuador adopted an intercultural education system, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, in accordance with the Organic Law of Intercultural Education. Its objective is to position education as a means to promote harmonious coexistence among the plurinational and democratic peoples of the territory. It is also a government strategy to strengthen national identity, recognising and valuing cultural diversity and its multiverse approach (Sánchez & Manresa, 2022).

As he points out, teacher training in intercultural issues should be oriented towards the development of competences such as: a) strengthening proactive attitudes respecting cultural diversity, b) fostering dialogue, c) avoiding and controlling adverse situations that generate conflicts between individuals of different ethnic groups, races or nationalities, d) understanding the meaning of culture and how it influences the vision and interpretation of reality (Peñalva & Leiva, 2019). However, the situation in educational institutions is often contrary to the above, as mentioned by Pavez et al., (2023) in the census of 1754 teachers who taught knowledge to students of migrant and indigenous origin in the Municipality of Santiago de Chile by the institutions Edu Global and Fundación Interhumanos.

The results of the study showed that it is necessary to strengthen the education system to a more inclusive one; furthermore, based on the census it was determined that teachers should have intercultural training as only "85.1% implemented generic soft skills such as good classroom management while 58.4% had only

soft skills" (Pavez et al., 2023, p. 9). Regarding their training, 53.8% stated that they have the knowledge and skills to guide students with the same customs and cultures and only 23.9% have professional training that could help them understand the needs of migrant students. Finally, they expressed several problems that affect intercultural education, such as 79.2% reported requiring training on issues related to migration, discrimination, and human rights; 78.8% indicated the need for pedagogical guidance to adapt the curriculum; and 74.6% stated that they require strategies for implementing anti-racist education" (Edu Global & Fundación Interhumanos, 2018).

In the study by Aguavil and Andino (2018) the shortcomings of intercultural and bilingual teachers in several educational institutions located in the province of Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas were analysed through surveys and statistical analysis. The results indicated that 34.48% of the teachers hold a second-level degree, 58.62% possess a third-level degree, and only 6.90% have attained a fourth-level degree. The representation of teachers with a bachelor's degree is due to the remote location of the educational institutions and the communities' mastery of mother tongues such as Tsá'fiki, which is why teachers of Mestizo origin do not have the capacity to master this language, making the teaching process more difficult; when we looked at their training in intercultural issues, we saw a more encouraging picture, with 86. 21% of those surveyed saying they had a bachelor's degree. 21% of those surveyed say they have studies related to the subject and it was emphasised that 93.10% of them receive continuous training, but 37.93% know about the Intercultural Bilingual Education System Model (Aguavil & Andino, 2018).

In this context, teacher training from an intercultural perspective constitutes a fundamental pillar for ensuring inclusive and equitable education in societies characterized by cultural diversity (Peñalva & Leiva, 2019; Aguavil & Andino, 2018). For this reason, it goes beyond the mere coexistence of different cultures within the educational sphere, promoting instead dialogue, interaction, and mutual recognition as essential

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pedagogical principles. Thus, incorporating interculturality into teacher preparation involves developing competencies that enable educators to understand cultural differences, adapt instructional strategies, and create respectful and participatory learning environments. In this way, teaching practice becomes a space for social construction where local knowledge is valued and critical citizenship is fostered, contributing to the transformation of educational models that have historically rendered diverse identities and worldviews invisible.

Once the panorama of the importance of interculturality in teacher training is known, it is highlighted that intercultural education is the basis that promotes the improvement of learning techniques focused on the rescue of ancestral values and the identity of the peoples, ethnic and national groups of the Ecuadorian territory (Sarmiento & García 2021). According to Article 57, paragraph 14 of the Constitution of Ecuador it calls for "to develop, strengthen, and enhance the intercultural bilingual education system with quality standards, from early stimulation through higher education, in accordance with cultural diversity, in order to safeguard and preserve identities in alignment with their teaching and learning methodologies" (Asamblea Constituyente de Ecuador, 2008).

The study on the inclusion of interculturality in teacher training is justified by the need for current and future educators to have the necessary preparation to teach in diverse contexts considering the interculturality of peoples that although it has been recognised in educational policies, its practical implementation and the perception of university students on its inclusion in teacher training programmes are little explored areas. Understanding how students perceive the integration of interculturality in their training will contribute to improving the quality of teaching by promoting inclusive education.

In order to analyse the study, 1 hypothesis has been put forward based on the students'

responses regarding the knowledge imparted by their teachers reflecting their professionalism in intercultural issues. H1 "Students' perception of the inclusion of interculturality in teacher education is related to their level of knowledge about cultural diversity and inclusive pedagogical practices" is justified in that those students who have more knowledge about cultural diversity and inclusive pedagogical practices have a better perception of interculturality in teacher education.

This study adopts a critical interculturality stance, understood as a political, epistemic, and ethical project that goes beyond mere cultural coexistence to question the power structures that sustain coloniality and eurocentrism. According to Walsh (2010), this perspective involves conceiving education as a pedagogical–political act aimed at social transformation and at refounding the structures that reproduce inequalities. Fornet-Betancourt (2004) argues that intercultural dialogue must be symmetrical, which requires acknowledging the historical conditions of domination and opening oneself to the epistemic diversity of the Global South. Along the same lines, Tubino (2015) warns that interculturality cannot be reduced to policies that are functional to the system, but must instead promote processes of decolonization and social justice. Dietz (2012) complements this view by emphasizing the need to incorporate local knowledge and community practices in the construction of plural societies. Taken together, these proposals shape a critical interculturality that not only recognizes difference but also turns it into the foundation for structural transformation and the creation of new social orders.

The present study focuses on analyzing university students' perceptions regarding the inclusion of interculturality in teacher education programs. This approach allows for an understanding of how future education professionals value the incorporation of intercultural content and perspectives into their academic preparation.

2. Materials and methods

The methodological strategy employed in this research was a quantitative approach aimed at analyzing university students' views on the inclusion of interculturality in teacher education programs. Through documentary analysis, official documents such as public policies (Constitution of Ecuador, Organic Law of Higher Education, Model of the Intercultural Bilingual Education System) and laws were reviewed to provide an overview of the progress made in the implementation of interculturality according to the regulatory framework; in addition, previous research and studies were considered to understand the experiences of teachers and students with regard to the handling of the subject. The National University of Education (UNAE) is a public Ecuadorian institution established in 2013 with the purpose of transforming teacher education through an inclusive, critical, and intercultural pedagogical model. Located in Azogues, in the province of Cañar, UNAE is dedicated to preparing professionals committed to equity, cultural diversity, and educational innovation, integrating both local and global knowledge into its undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programs.

According to Guevara (2019), documentary analysis is a process of systematisation of knowledge from various sources of information whose purpose is to serve as a conceptual basis of support for research, allowing the interpretation, classification and organisation of data. In order to determine how the inclusion of interculturality in teacher training is perceived by higher education students, a quantitative approach was employed through a statistical analysis using SPSS that allowed us to examine students' perceptions in relation to what is said and practices of interculturality.

As argued by to Sánchez (2019), quantitative research allows us to analyse measurable phenomena through statistics in order to describe,

explain and control the causes by which they occur. The statistical method made it possible to analyse the information gathered through the questionnaire technique. Similarly, the research approach was cross-sectional in nature as data were collected from students at a single point in time from 09 July 2024 to 31 July 2024.

2.1 Participants

In the present study, a population of 4561 students was considered, belonging to the fields of Basic Education, Initial Education, Special Education, National and Foreign Languages Pedagogy, Arts and Humanities Pedagogy, Experimental Sciences Education and Intercultural Bilingual Education of the National University of Education, UNAE, located in the province of Cañar-Ecuador.

For the sample estimation, a stratified design was employed, in which the population was subdivided into homogeneous strata sharing similar characteristics such as gender, age, and academic program (Puente et al., 2017). All students enrolled in the Intercultural Bilingual Education program during the SI2024 period were included, following the acquisition of informed consent. In the case of the remaining programs, a representative sample of participants was selected through proportional sampling, reaching a total of 589 students. This procedure ensured the representativeness of the different groups and the statistical validity of the study.

2.2 Instrument

The questionnaire was developed based on a systematic review of 120 articles published over the past five years, selected according to relevance and scientific quality criteria in indexed databases such as Scopus. From this set, ten studies were identified as the main references, from which various methodological and conceptual elements were extracted and adapted to align them with

the specific objectives of the study, thereby ensuring rigor and relevance in the design of the instrument.

The response scale was structured considering criteria such as ease of response, favourable or unfavourable direction of the statements, and a logical hierarchy with 5 options. The questionnaire consists of three sections: a) general data (11 questions), b) intercultural discourses (8 questions) and c) intercultural practices (8 questions). For the collection of responses, a Likert scale from 1 to 5 was used, where 1 is "Strongly disagree" and 5 is "Strongly agree".

2.3 Reability of the Unstrument

To ensure the validity of the instrument, a panel of five experts in intercultural education and research methodology reviewed the questionnaire, assessing the relevance, clarity, and coherence of the items using Lawshe's method to calculate the Content Validity Ratio (CVR). Items with low scores were reformulated or eliminated based on their recommendations, and linguistic adjustments were made to guarantee semantic precision. Subsequently, a pilot test was administered to 30 students to verify comprehension and internal consistency.

Tabla 1. Participantes
Fuente: Autoras (2025)

Case processing summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	589	100
	Excluded[a]	0	0
	Total	589	100

[a] Elimination by list is based on all the variables in the procedure.

In order to validate the construct and ensure that all its items are reliable, trustworthy and have good internal consistency, the SPSS software was used to run the statistical analysis Cronbach's Alpha, considering that values closer to 1 refer to good internal consistency according to the findings of (George & Mallery, 2003). Table 1 shows the summary of the data processing corresponding to the answers given by the students.

The value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.934, which according to (George & Mallery, 2003) is considered excellent, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha value
Source: Own elaboration

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's alpha	N° of Elements
0,934	16

2.4 Procedure

Data collection was carried out directly by the research team, following the previously defined strata and adhering to the established class schedules. Students accessed the Google Forms questionnaire easily through a QR code, thereby ensuring accessibility and voluntary participation. Once the surveys were completed, the data were cleaned using Microsoft Excel, eliminating responses from participants who did not provide consent in order to ensure the validity and integrity of the information collected. The terms "Castilian" and "Spanish" were unified, and the age variable was standardised in words instead of numbers. For the tabulation of the Likert scale data, SPSS software was used to analyse the responses on the teachers' perception of interculturality.

3. Results

On carrying out the statistical analysis of the questions on gender, age, career and semester, it was possible to identify that 34.8% were men and 65.2% were women. Their age distribution corresponds to 84.9% of respondents whose age is between 18 and 24 years, 12.7% are in the range of 25 to 30 years, 11.9% are between 31 to 40 years and 5% belong to the group of 41 to 50 years.

In order to analyse the responses of the respondents to the instrument, descriptive analyses of each of the survey items were carried out to determine the general trends and patterns in the students' perceptions of the inclusion of interculturality in teacher education.

In Table 3, the descriptive analyses of the 16 questions addressing the students' appreciation of the interculturality concepts taught by the teachers were presented. In the first section on interculturality discourses it was established that question P6 and P7 scored high on the mean value with [4.04] and [4.03] respectively. This value shows that the students not only understood the concept of interculturality understood as the multiplicity of cultures existing in a given space, without having a relationship between them, since most of them responded that they agree with its definition, but also that they consider its integration in the teachers' curricula, showing their interest in a pedagogical approach that values cultural diversity.

On the other hand, if we analyse the next highest mean value corresponding to question Q7 Interculturality values the importance of the socio-cultural and knowledge contextualisation

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of the survey
Source: Own elaboration

	Descriptive statistics					
	Ítems	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Deviation
	Discourses on interculturality (cognitive / WHAT IS SAID)					
P1	Interculturality recognises diversities (ethnic, social, gender, intergenerational, among others).	589	1	5	3.15	1.579
P2	Interculturality is only the representation of the indigenous nationalities and peoples of Ecuador.	589	1	5	3.98	1.487
P3	Interculturality articulates the non-academic knowledge of the country's socio-cultural groups.	589	1	5	3.98	1.455
P4	Interculturality is a political project for a new type of society in Ecuador (including indigenous nationalities and peoples, mestizos, montubios, afro-peoples and other diversities).	589	1	5	3.56	1.509
P5	Interculturality promotes relations and exchange 'between cultures' on equitable terms, based on recognition, tolerance, understanding and respect.	589	1	5	3.97	1.455
P6	Interculturality refers to the multiplicity of cultures existing in a given space, without them being related to each other.	589	1	5	4.04	1.445
P7	Interculturality values the importance of the socio-cultural and knowledge contextualisation of the curriculum.	589	1	5	4.03	1.450
P8	The 2008 Constitution states that Ecuador is an Intercultural and Plurinational State.	589	1	5	4.01	1.460
	Intercultural practices (procedural and attitudinal skills / ACTIONS)					
P9	Intercultural practices occur only in the educational sphere.	589	1	5	2.74	1.487
P10	Knowledge considered 'non-academic', such as the ancestral cosmovisions of socio-cultural groups (indigenous nationalities and peoples, mestizos, montubios, afro-peoples and other diversities) are included in their training.	589	1	5	3.52	1.363
P11	The UNAE trains teacher-researchers with an intercultural approach.	589	1	5	3.95	1.412
P12	The academic training at UNAE includes subjects that are part of an intercultural approach.	589	1	5	4.01	1.363
P13	During the teaching and learning process, teachers generate spaces for reflection with an intercultural approach.	589	1	5	4.02	1.407
P14	The academic training includes socio-cultural activities that are part of an intercultural approach.	589	1	5	4.01	1.368
P15	Higher education in Ecuador is intercultural	589	1	5	3.46	1.369
P16	Interculturality is worked on in other fields such as health, architecture, communication, among others.	589	1	5	3.52	1.411

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of the curriculum, it is evident that the majority of students obtained a value of [4.03] on the Likert scale, reflecting a favourable position of adapting educational contents and approaches to the cultural and contextual realities of the students, being a key principle in the implementation of interculturality in higher education. This question reflects that interculturality is about respect for the diversity of cultures, recognising that teaching and learning are not hegemonic and must be adapted to socio-cultural realities.

On the other hand, it can be seen that question P5 has the lowest mean value with [3. 15] corresponding to Interculturality recognises diversities (ethnic, social, gender, intergenerational, among others), where students maintained a position of Neither Agree Nor Disagree when surveyed about the recognition of diversities in the intercultural training of their teachers, since they partially identify the different forms of diversity, reflecting the lack of practical tools so that teachers not only have theoretical knowledge but are individuals capable of developing skills that address cultural, ethnic and social diversity in the classroom.

In the second section on intercultural practices (procedural and attitudinal skills) questions P12, P13 and P14 have the highest mean values of [4.01], [4.02] and [4.01] respectively. When interpreting question P12 which emphasises that Academic training at UNAE includes subjects that are part of an intercultural approach, it can be mentioned that students perceive that their teachers in charge of their university preparation integrate intercultural aspects in their teaching process, however, the value of [4. 01] allows us to reflect on possible training and practical workshops aimed at teachers so that they can benefit from further training in cultural diversity management skills in the classroom, the use of intercultural methodologies and the creation of educational environments that promote respect for plurality.

Question P13 Teachers generate spaces for reflection with an intercultural approach during the teaching and learning process represents the highest value of the mean with [4.02], that is, the majority of students agree that their teachers often promote spaces for intercultural reflection and

inequalities, encourage coexistence in a plural environment and promote an attitude of respect and appreciation of diversity in the classroom.

With regard to question P14 Academic training includes socio-cultural activities that are part of an intercultural approach with a value of [4.01], it reflects that although students value positively the inclusion of activities such as: cultural awareness workshops, academic exchanges or community projects, it is important to address teacher training because through it teachers would be able to adapt the dynamics to the cultural contexts of the students, that is to say, to encourage the creation of an inclusive learning environment.

On the other hand, question P9 had the lowest mean value with [2.74], i.e. the students disagree with the following statement Intercultural practices occur only in the educational setting. In spite of being a value far below the rest of the mean values, the situation is not adverse, since the influence of teacher training on the students is recognised, since through their teaching processes it has been conceptualised that respect for other cultures, ethnic groups and races should not be exclusive to the classroom, but also that this position should be maintained in any area of their daily lives.

In order to analyse the hypothesis, a correlational analysis was carried out on the basis of the independent variable (concepts of interculturality) and the dependent variable (interculturality practices). This analysis allowed us to understand how the intercultural training received by teachers at the National University of Education (UNAE) is transmitted to their students, through the perception of concepts and their practical application in the attitudes and behaviour of the students. In the same way, emphasis was placed on the relationships between the theoretical knowledge acquired during teacher training and the manifestation of intercultural attitudes of their students.

By correlating the independent variable (knowledge) and the dependent variable (intercultural practices), the results presented in Table 3 were obtained. To achieve this purpose, dimensions such as: CONCEPT_INTER were

		INTERCULTURAL_CONCEPT	INTERCULTURAL_PRACTICES
INTERCULTURAL_CONCEPT	Pearson correlation	1	0.706

created, which refers to the knowledge variable that contained the questions P1 to P8, while from P9 to P16 the dimension INTER_CULTURAL_ PRACTICES was created.

As can be seen in Table 4, there is a moderately strong positive correlation between the variables, which means that as the concepts of interculturality are clarified by teachers in greater depth, students' positive perception of interculturality also tends to increase. In other words, it can be said that the professional training of teachers at the National University of Education (UNAE) does influence how students understand and value interculturality inside and outside the classroom.

These results show that the theory and concepts learned by teachers about interculturality are not just words but have a positive impact on the students' raison d'être, as they apply each of these theories in their daily lives and when interacting with people from different cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, among others. The transmission of knowledge as well as intercultural attitudes should be reflected through pedagogical strategies and the way of interacting with students, creating spaces that promote respect for cultural diversity. On the other hand, if we analyse the level of

correlation of the concepts of interculturality with respect to the perception of the students, we can see that in question 1 related to the recognition of cultural diversity from the ethnic, social and gender aspects, a correlation value of [0.429] was obtained in the inclusive pedagogical practices, which means that the recognition and integration of diverse cultures in the educational processes by the teachers has a positive influence on the students, since they promote an inclusive and respectful attitude, the diversification of pedagogical approaches to recognise and address the needs of their peers from different cultural backgrounds and outside the classroom by promoting inclusive practices with the community through their participation in cultural activities, professional settings and the promotion and empowerment of people's rights (see Table 5).

On the other hand, according to the results in Table 5. The correlation value between question P2: Interculturality is only the representation of the nationalities and indigenous peoples of Ecuador with respect to the intercultural practices of the students in terms of the knowledge imparted by the teachers that reflect training in interculturality was [0.562], this value indicates a moderately strong relationship between the study variables,

Correlations										
		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	IP
P1	Pearson correlation	1								
P2	Pearson's correlation	0,378	1							
P3	Pearson's correlation	0,392	0,735	1						
P4	Pearson's correlation	0,427	0,567	0,587	1					
P5	Pearson's correlation	0,343	0,673	0,728	0,583	1				
P6	Pearson's correlation	0,331	0,731	0,749	0,572	0,767	1			
P7	Pearson's correlation	0,342	0,741	0.756	0,562	0,796	0,825	1		
P8	Pearson's correlation	0,324	0,689	0,718	0,528	0,755	0,794	0,788	1	
IP	Pearson's correlation	0,429	0,562	0,581	0,510	0,608	0,635	0,627	0,644	1

however, it tends to be contradictory because those students who limit themselves to thinking that only the indigenous peoples represent the set of nationalities and peoples would be wrong.

Erring in this concept leads to limited attitudes where students only recognise and consider indigenous communities, so that this type of practice tends to be less inclusive when faced with intercultural situations that are not aligned with their thoughts. On the other hand, when analysing question P3: Interculturality articulates non-academic knowledge of the country's socio-cultural groups, a value of [0.581] was obtained, which suggests that as teachers incorporate new knowledge about interculturality, their students will be able to understand, value and perceive the influence of knowledge in their education. This question emphasises the importance of having professionals who are rooted in interculturality, since educators must have the capacity not only to provide academic knowledge but also to consider the inclusion of knowledge such as: indigenous knowledge, community knowledge (learning languages and dialects), knowledge of coexistence, among others.

The findings show that students' perceptions of interculturality are directly linked to the quality and depth of the knowledge provided by their instructors. The significant correlation between the variables analyzed indicates that when educators integrate both academic and non-academic knowledge—including community-based knowledge and cultural practices—students develop a broader and more critical understanding of diversity. This has important implications for teacher education: programs must be strengthened to incorporate intercultural competencies and decolonial approaches, ensuring that future professionals are able to promote inclusive and respectful practices. At the level of university policy, it is recommended to review curricula to ensure the cross-cutting integration of interculturality, as well as to implement institutional strategies that foster ongoing faculty training in this area. In this way, higher education contributes to building an academic environment that responds to the country's cultural plurality and to the principles of equity and social justice.

For question P4: Interculturality is a political project for a new type of society in Ecuador (including indigenous nationalities and peoples, mestizos, montubios[1], afro people and other diversities) a positive moderate correlation value of [0.510] was obtained, affirming that students who receive intercultural training from university teachers value and understand the importance of this concept as part of state projects that transform the perception of people, thus achieving an inclusive territory that recognises the diversity of cultures and traditions that cohabit.

The correlation results for question Q5: Interculturality promotes relations and exchange "between cultures" in equitable terms, based on recognition, tolerance, understanding and respect was [0.608] representing a moderately strong positive correlation. This value suggests that, as students perceive interculturality as a process of exchange of knowledge between cultures not only from a theoretical perspective, but as part of the principles of tolerance and recognition, they will adopt a more inclusive stance focusing on respect for cultural differences.

Similarly, the correlation value for question P6: Interculturality refers to the multiplicity of cultures existing in a given space, without having a relationship between them was [0.635], which is positive and moderate. When interpreting this value, it is evident that teachers, even when they integrate knowledge about interculturality, do not necessarily tend to express a relationship between them; therefore, students develop in them a sense of perception of cultural diversity but do not necessarily focus on building bridges and fostering relationships between cultures.

The results obtained for questions P4, P5, and P6 show positive and statistically significant correlations ranging from moderate to moderately strong (r = 0.510; r = 0.608; r = 0.635; p < 0.05). This indicates that the intercultural training provided by university instructors influences the way students conceptualize interculturality as a political project, as a process of equitable

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1 Ecuadorian coastal peasants.

exchange between cultures, and as the recognition of diversity within shared spaces. However, the value associated with P6 suggests a limitation: although cultural multiplicity is acknowledged, the construction of relationships between cultures is not always promoted, which poses a challenge for teaching practice

Finally, when analysing questions P7: Interculturality values the importance of the socio-cultural contextualisation and knowledge of the curriculum and P8: The 2008 Constitution states that Ecuador is an Intercultural and Plurinational State, whose values were [0.627] and [0.644] respectively, the importance of educational institutions and regulatory bodies through regulations for recognising the peoples and nationalities of Ecuadorian territory is highlighted. These correlation values, of a positive and moderate nature, indicate that both the contextualisation of knowledge in the curriculum and the regulatory framework of the Constitution of Ecuador play a key role in the education of students with respect to interculturality.

3.1 Interculturality and Grounded Theory

This research is theoretically based on a critical dialogue between multiple epistemological perspectives that enrich the understanding of interculturality. Boaventura de Sousa Santos' theory of decolonisation reveals an emerging epistemological rupture that transcends the traditional frameworks of colonial knowledge, configuring an "ecology of knowledge". Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory contributes the dimension of the dialogical construction of knowledge, understanding learning as a social process of interaction where cultural meanings are dynamically co-constructed.

Walsh's critical perspective complements this approach by conceptualising interculturality as a political project of transformation, a practice of resistance that reconfigures power relations. Finally, Habermas' model of communicative action introduces the notion of a horizontal dialogue that seeks mutual understanding, overcoming the barriers of traditional monocultural communication. These theories converge to underpin a complex

understanding of interculturality as a dynamic process of recognition, dialogue and permanent reconstruction of educational knowledge.

The research developed allows us to build a grounded theory that unravels the complex processes of interculturality in teacher education, revealing a multidimensional phenomenon of epistemic and cultural transformation. From the systematic analysis of the data, a central category emerges: intercultural transformation as a dynamic process of recognition, dialogue and reconstruction of educational knowledge. This category is underpinned by multiple interconnected dimensions that reveal the complexity of interculturality beyond the simple coexistence of differences.

The relationship between decolonial discourse and teaching practice requires a deeper articulation that goes beyond the mere incorporation of intercultural content. Walsh (2010) argues that education must be understood as a space of resistance and transformation in the face of the coloniality of knowledge, which entails questioning the epistemic structures that sustain Eurocentric hegemony. In this regard, Fornet-Betancourt (2004) posits that intercultural dialogue must be symmetrical and oriented toward cognitive justice, while Tubino (2015) warns that interculturality cannot be reduced to functional policies but must instead promote processes of pedagogical decolonization. Dietz (2012) complements this perspective by emphasizing the need to integrate local knowledge and community practices into teacher education, fostering a praxis that responds to plural contexts. However, the lack of epistemological coherence between these theoretical positions and their application in the classroom highlights the urgency of research that delves into how decolonial discourse is translated into concrete pedagogical strategies

The institutional context of the National University of Education (UNAE) acts as a space of mediation where traditional educational models are put under tension. Intercultural action strategies are materialised through the inclusion of specific subjects, the generation of spaces for reflection and the development of diverse socio-cultural activities, with average values above 4.0

on the Likert scale, which indicates a significant openness towards transformative pedagogical practices.

The consequences of this process are manifested at multiple levels. At the epistemological level, there is a questioning of hegemonic models of knowledge production. In the pedagogical sphere, spaces for dialogue are generated that transcend mere tolerance, promoting a critical understanding of cultural diversity. In the social context, a reconfiguration of traditionally established power relations is promoted.

The proposed grounded theory understands interculturality as a complex phenomenon that is not limited to the passive recognition of differences, but is constituted as an active practice of social transformation. It is a dialectical process where educational subjects not only recognise diversity, also construct and reconstruct it permanently. The limitations of this theory lie in its specific contextualisation. The sample, concentrated in an Ecuadorian university, presents a reduced representation of minority groups (indigenous and afro-descendant populations) and a predominantly mestizo perspective. However, it is precisely

these limitations that open up new possibilities for research and further investigation.

Grounded theory reveals interculturality as a pedagogical and political project of transformation. It is not a simple educational methodology, but a commitment to the construction of a more horizontal, critical and contextualised knowledge, which recognises the multiplicity of knowledge and experiences that make up contemporary social reality. This theoretical construction invites us to rethink traditional models of teacher training, proposing an approach that understands education as a space for dialogue, recognition and permanent transformation of cultural realities.
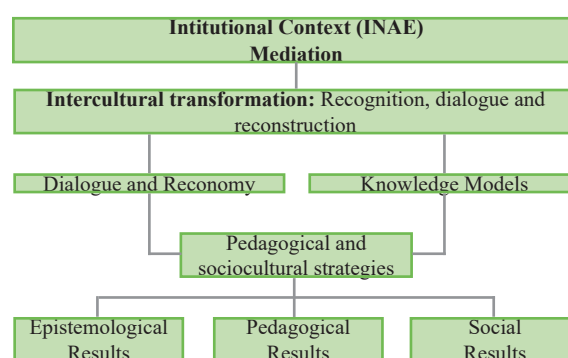

Figure 6: Paradigmatic Model - Grounded Theory / Interculturality in Teacher Education
Source: Own elaboration

4. Discussion

When analysing the study by Sánchez et al. (2023) on the perception of university teacher trainers on interculturality issues in a university in south-central Chile, an interview with 8 academics determined the competences that the trainers think teachers should have in order to favour interculturality in teaching and learning processes, one of which was empathy, which is a quality that teachers should have in order to place themselves cognitively and affectively in the place of the students, understanding their needs, emotions and perspectives. Among the main limitations that educators have had to go through, it is evident that their training processes do not incorporate intercultural competences, considering that their curricula are rigid and not

very disciplinary in nature, in the same way, due to the lack of public policies that promote the integration of intercultural education, biases are generated when implementing educational practices focused on cultural diversity.

For their part, Pareja et al. (2021) in their study entitled "A Qualitative Study on the Intercultural Educational Sensitivity of the Professors at the University of Malaga (Spain)" define that through interculturality, issues related to human rights can be addressed and the values of respect, tolerance and empathy can be founded, in addition, through this concept, the interaction of cultures is valued, allowing the creation of spaces for coexistence to build collective identity. This position is

compared according to the results of the Pearson correlational analysis of the study, especially in question P5, which had a correlation value of 0.608 related to the function of interculturality as a space that promotes the exchange of knowledge between cultures while maintaining the ideology of tolerance, understanding and respect.

Eudaldo Espinoza (2020), designed a methodological strategy to address interculturality in teacher training, the proposal consisted of three stages: 1) propaedeutic, 2) implementation and 3) control. When evaluating the results before and after the application of this methodology, it was observed that racist and cultural prejudices still persist within the teacher training programmes; however, 17.9% of the teachers consider that their racist attitudes are 'very improvable', 29.8% consider that they could be improved, and after the application, 4% of the teachers stated that their behaviour could be very improvable and 5.5% could be improved.

León et al. (2020), similar to Espinoza (2020) in the study 'Teachers' Professional Performance and Their Preparation in Intercultural Education', developed a training program focused on conflict resolution and on strengthening teachers' competencies for addressing intercultural issues. The results show that 97.45% of the teachers stated that they had no knowledge of the principles of intercultural education; on the other hand, 89.3% stated that their adaptation to teaching students from other countries was done empirically, without any training in the area. With regard to their professional training, 55.5% of the teachers indicated that the guidelines within the university pedagogical process were not focused on intercultural education, resulting in 22.5% expressing doubts regarding this process.

In contrast, in the study by Roiha and Sommier (2021), which analyzed teachers' perceptions and experiences of intercultural education through a questionnaire, it was found that most teachers adopted a cultural-differentialist and essentialist approach. Moreover, due to their limited prior training in intercultural education, they demonstrated only a superficial understanding of structural inequalities such as racism and gender discrimination within the classroom.

In line with this perspective, Figueredo et al. (2020) analyzed the same issue and reported similar results regarding teacher training in intercultural education. Specifically, 30% of the participants indicated that there is no promotion of learning different languages and cultures, while 65.7% stated that their knowledge is solely theoretical and 49.1% reported having learned about interculturality through practical experience. Furthermore, the study highlights that 95% of their students do not acquire intercultural competencies expressed coherently across the curriculum, but only through certain isolated subjects

The positions of Figueredo et al. (2020) and are affirmed through the hypothesis of the study, showing that the knowledge of interculturality imparted by teachers can influence the construction of intercultural practices of their students through their ability to model inclusive attitudes and approaches to respect for cultural diversity. When correlating the variables, a significant value of 0.706 was obtained, so that training in interculturality allows teachers to recognise situations of inequalities of power, racism or gender, class or nationality discrimination, encouraging the creation of inclusive environments and, in the case of students, a space for recognition where they are not limited by their origin.

The results obtained in the research show a high reliability of the instrument used to evaluate the perception of university students with respect to the intercultural training of their teachers, the value obtained was 0.934, which indicates that there is a good internal consistency among the responses. Descriptive analysis of each item of the questionnaire revealed that questions P6 and P7 obtained mean scores of 4.04 and 4.03 respectively. The results obtained from this analysis reaffirm that students, through the teaching processes of their teachers, not only understand the concept of interculturality but also value the integration of this theme within their curricula as a means of reaffirming the coexistence of the diversity of cultures.

With respect to the correlation analysis of the hypothesis, a moderately strong positive

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correlation (r=0.706) was observed between the dimensions of knowledge of interculturality and how these influence the foundation of student practices. As teachers deepen and build their knowledge of intercultural issues, students will tend to develop an affirmative perception of cultural plurality by creating spaces that recognise diversity, promote inclusive education and are forged in respect and equity.

An analysis of the existing literature showed that despite studies whose research results reflected positive statistics, there are still gaps in the research on interculturality in teacher education. One of these is the position and experiences of teachers, who are an important part of the implementation of interculturality in the classroom. Therefore, future research should consider analysing both points of view and the factors that impede the optimal course of teacher training on intercultural issues, e.g. the lack of fourth level professionals with extensive knowledge on this topic.

The study provides significant evidence regarding university students' perceptions of the inclusion of interculturality in teacher education, highlighting the need to integrate content and practices that strengthen intercultural competencies within academic programs. These findings suggest that universities should review their curricular policies and emphasize the importance of designing institutional strategies that promote the continuous professional development of faculty in intercultural competencies, thereby consolidating UNAE's pedagogical–educational model.

Among the limitations of the study, it is acknowledged that the analysis focused exclusively on students' perceptions, without incorporating the perspectives of teachers or the evaluation of actual classroom practices. For future research, it is recommended to expand the sample to include teachers and administrative staff, as well as to integrate mixed methods that involve direct observation and longitudinal analyses. Likewise, it would be relevant to explore the impact of intercultural training on professional performance and on the transformation of educational policies.

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