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Exploring the lived experience of one rural teacher in an Indigenous context in the Chilean Northern Territory: A narrative inquiry

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About the author

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Abstract

There is a high rate of teacher attrition in Chile, particularly in Indigenous schools. Understanding how the experiences of teachers working in these contexts affects their professional practice will help to retain them. Through the teachers' lens, using a narrative inquiry design, this study aimed to understand how educators face the challenges of teaching in rural and Indigenous settings. Findings of this study show Chilean teachers' lack of knowledge about Indigenous culture and tradition. Teachers do not know about Indigenous students' personal characteristics and this is affecting their teaching. It was also found that teachers' inaccurate expectations about rural life, the extreme living conditions and emotional and geographic isolation, and the lack of professional recognition contribute to teachers' exhaustion in the rural and Indigenous context. The findings of this study may contribute to future research and be useful for education stakeholders and universities that are in the process of finding improvements to teaching practices and teachers' education programs.

Keywords

rural and Indigenous schools, Chilean teachers, teachers' attrition, teachers' lived experiences, narrative inquiry



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Introduction

In this article I explore the experience of one Chilean teacher working in a rural and Indigenous community. The aim of this research is to explore the knowledge and preparation that Chilean rural teachers need in order to teach successfully in Indigenous contexts. This research identifies the main issues and key problems that teachers face when they work in these rural Indigenous settings. The development of special skills and knowledge needed to work in Indigenous rural contexts, as part of preservice teacher education, would help to increase teachers' confidence to teach in rural contexts, as well as to work with a diverse range of students in non-rural locations. Better prepared teachers contribute to the improvement of rural and Indigenous education and also contributes to the recognition of Indigenous rights. As the United Nations (2008) declared, Indigenous people are equal to all peoples and, consequently, they have the same rights to a high-quality education that allows them to enhance their wellbeing and improve their future quality of life (p. 7).

The value added by this study is to give rural teachers a voice. Stories about teachers' experiences can help educators to understand the difficulty of being a teacher as it can be useful to know how to prepare new teachers. This study explores the lived experience of Quimal, a teacher who has been successfully teaching in an Indigenous context in the Chilean Northern Territory. Through a narrative inquiry design, this study presents her story and experiences when she worked for an Indigenous community. A key finding of this study is the lack of teacher preparation to work in rural and Indigenous areas in Chile, which jeopardises the quality of Indigenous education. More broadly, this study found that teachers have a lack of incentive and support to work in these settings, which suggests the necessity to evaluate local and national educational policies.

The Chilean context

In Chile, 52.48% of public schools are rural (Ministry of Education in Chile [MINEDUC], 2017), and 12.8% of the Chilean population declare being Indigenous (Chilean National Institute of Statistics, 2017). The educational level of Indigenous students living in rural areas is 48% for primary school, 6.7% for secondary school, and just 0.4% finish tertiary education (World Bank, 2015). These percentages help explain the lack of teachers with an Indigenous background working in Indigenous communities. Additionally, schools with a high percentage of Indigenous children obtain lower scores in national standardised testing compared with non-Indigenous schools (Webb, Canales, & Becerra, 2017). The absence of guidance for teaching in rural contexts in the Chilean Teachers' Professional Program evidences the lack of discussion about how to improve rural and Indigenous education through teachers' professional development. In 1978, the Intercultural Program was implemented, and this is still being taught in schools (Becerra-Lubies & Fones, 2016). This program gives some flexibility for rural schools with Indigenous students to adjust the National Curriculum according to the students' needs (Catriquir & Duran, 1997). The purpose of this program was to provide Chilean Indigenous students with the knowledge needed to contribute to national sustainable development through education.

Some researchers claim that although the Intercultural Program has been implemented in some rural communities, it has been unsuccessful in terms of coverage and community acceptance (Quilaqueo, Quintriqueo, Torres, & Munoz, 2014; Ortiz, 2009). From the Chilean Indigenous scholars' perspective, to be successful, an intercultural program must articulate Indigenous wisdom with disciplinary knowledge. Also needed is to modify the power structure inherited from Chilean colonisation, but this is not currently occurring

(Quilaqueo et al., 2014). Webb et al. (2017) claim that in order to improve Indigenous education, more needs to be done to increase the number of Indigenous teachers working in these settings.

International research suggests that teachers' professional development must include skills improvement to work in rural contexts (Ma Rhea, 2015; Osborne, 2003; Vera, Osses, & Schiefelbein, 2012). However, there are several unanswered questions in the literature: What skills and knowledge do teachers need to teach successfully in rural and Indigenous contexts? How could these skills be developed in teacher education programs? Most of the research that has been undertaken in Indigenous communities and schools in Chile is in the south of the country because these regions are where the majority of the Indigenous population are located (Becerra-Lubies & Fones, 2016; Ortiz, 2009). Thus, the reality of local Indigenous peoples' education, and the experiences of their teachers in the North of Chile, seems to be unknown.

Teachers' perceptions of their preparation and knowledge to teach in rural areas

Research suggests that teachers construct their own beliefs and perceptions about teaching from their experiences inside the educational system (Chong & Low, 2009). In Chile, most of the teachers working in rural and Indigenous contexts do not know about local traditions because they were educated in urban settings (Becerra-Lubies & Fones, 2016). Thus, the concern is that there is a gap between teachers' perceptions and the reality of teaching in rural school contexts. Ma Rhea (2015) argued that the effort in preservice teacher education in universities is more focused on the transmission of knowledge rather than on skills development. In most Chilean universities, Toledo (2015) found that the focus of teaching programs is centred mostly on theory rather than practice. When early career educators begin to work in schools they feel unprepared to face daily school situations. It appears to be worse in rural and Indigenous contexts (Toledo, 2015; Vera et al., 2012; Williamson, 2004). For example, Toledo (2015) claims that 'teachers reported most often a high need for professional development in teaching students with special needs and teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting. When starting their careers, teachers in Chile do not have formal induction programmes' (p. 3). There appears to be a gap between teachers' education and the real situation in schools. An example is the study conducted by Turra, Ferrada, and Villena (2013). They investigated the perception of teachers working in Mapuche rural schools in the south of Chile. Results revealed that teachers are satisfied with the general teacher education received at universities if they were placed in urban schools. However, teachers believe that their preparation to work in rural Indigenous context is unsatisfactory. Teachers working in rural and Indigenous areas need to learn which strategies are more relevant to know about and use, and that are applicable for learning in Indigenous schools (Ma Rhea, 2015). Nevertheless, most research about teaching in different Chilean contexts has been focused on preservice teachers' perceptions of their teaching experiences. The perceptions and experiences of in-service teachers remains unclear (Becerra-Lubies & Fones, 2016). Also, Becerra-Lubies and Fones (2016) suggest the importance of understanding in-service teachers' perceptions of teaching in Indigenous settings. The use of these perceptions to guide initial teacher education is the only way to improve their education to effectively teach in Indigenous contexts.

Teachers' expectations

Studies suggest that teachers' behaviours are mediated by their expectations, and consequently, these affect their students' performance (Vera et al., 2012). However, there

is a lack of research with regard to rural teachers' beliefs and expectations. For example, Vera et al. (2012) claim that studies 'have been focused mainly on the educational system performed in urban areas, in primary, secondary and higher education, underestimating what occurs in the country rural areas' (p. 1). In addition, the literature suggests that teachers' expectations about their professional skills could affect their motivation and retention at schools (Sharplin, O'Neill, & Chapman, 2011). How might this situation affect rural teachers? Osborne (2003) found that teaching in Indigenous contexts 'involves anticipating what it might be like to live and teach in a remote setting and preparing to work effectively across cultures' (p. 17). Furthermore, research conducted in Mexico found that most teachers have different backgrounds than their students. This can cause teachers to have wrong ideas about their students' characteristics and consequently have unrealistic expectations about teaching in this specific context (Alfaro & Quezada, 2010). Kelchtermans (2017) claims that unrealistic teacher expectations about the school context may cause a 'feeling that one can't live up the self-imposed (or internalised) standards or ambitions' (p. 8), and it may result in leaving teaching. As discussed before, many teachers have a lack of knowledge of rural settings in general (and specifically Indigenous) settings; therefore, it appears that it is crucial that teachers have realistic expectations of teaching in rural and Indigenous settings so they are better prepared.

Lack of knowledge about Indigenous lifeways

As previously discussed, researchers suggest that teachers' knowledge of rural and Indigenous context is unsatisfactory in Chile in general, as in other countries, but particularly in northern Chile. This idea is supported by the absence of guidelines to teach in rural contexts in the Chilean standards of teachers' professional development (Ministry of Education in Chile, 2012). The standards show a lack of value given to Indigenous knowledge in the Chilean educational system. For example, the students' ethnicity is named as part of the common diversity in the classroom, similar to gender, religion or socioeconomic background. Thus, there is no particular standard to teach in Indigenous areas. There is an assumption that rural and Indigenous education is the same as urban education. In Australia, Ma Rhea (2004) claims that it is crucial to recognise that Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge are equal. Consequently, it requires competent and well-prepared teachers, particularly in Indigenous lifeways (Ma Rhea, 2015). International scholars agree that in order to respect Indigenous education, in-service teachers must learn about local culture, language, celebrations, history, the engagement protocol, identity, Indigenous communities rights and socioeconomic justice (Anderson, Rennie, White, & Darling, 2017; Ma Rhea, 2015; Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk, & Robinson, 2012; Osborne, 2003; Vera et al., 2012). Additionally, teachers must receive cultural training because they need to know about the lifeways of the community, and it is useful for their integration into the school's life (Ma Rhea, 2015). In considering the Chilean context, Ortiz (2009) agrees, claiming that if this knowledge is missing, teachers could be detached from the Indigenous culture, and consequently, pedagogical practice might impact negatively on Indigenous Chilean students' identity. Furthermore, Quintriqueo, Torres, Sanhueza, and Friz, (2017) state that if teachers working in Indigenous contexts have knowledge of the local culture, ethnicity, and identity, they can achieve a social transformation through an education that considers the individual differences.

Teachers' living conditions and sense of belonging in rural communities

The literature evidences that issues affecting teachers in rural communities include the lack of facilities, teachers' attrition, and feeling of belonging. The situation of Chilean rural

teachers cannot be examined without understanding the context in which they live. For example, Mafora (2013) states that teaching in rural areas involves facing some uncomfortable situations, such as a lack of amenities, clean water and power supply. According to the Chilean National Institute of Statistics (2016), 12% of Chilean teachers work in rural schools. Most of these schools are located in isolated communities where access is difficult and facilities are scarce. For example, there is a lack of health services, and some connectivity services, such as the internet and electricity, are also restricted (Williamson, 2004). Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) found that teachers' participation in a school community contributes to generating mutual trust and improving long-term relationships. Alternatively, Bauch (2001) found that the isolation of living conditions affects the sense of place and belonging to the community: 'Through our sense of residence, we form our worldview and understanding of other persons as well as ourselves' (p. 8). It seems that many teachers in Chilean rural and Indigenous communities are living and working in isolation. With regard to this situation, Williamson (2004) suggests that it is crucial to create intercultural spaces to break the rural teachers' professional isolation. He also argues that quality improvement of Chilean rural education requires not just pedagogical actions, but the improvement of school infrastructure and pedagogical equipment, and better incentives for rural teachers, such as higher salaries.

Summarising, some of the main concerns that teachers of Indigenous students face are: teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and preparation to perform successfully in this setting, and the lack of specific training to teach in rural settings. Also, it is apparent that the assumption that teaching in rural and Indigenous areas requires the same skills and knowledge as teaching in urban areas may be affecting the quality of rural education. This could explain the low scores that Indigenous rural schools obtain in the National Assessment SIMCE (system of measurement of the quality of education) compared with urban schools (Agency of the Quality of the Education, 2015). In addition, the literature reveals that the lack of discussion about the need to improve teachers' living conditions in rural contexts could be causing teachers to leave these schools. Although there is some evidence of how these issues affect rural settings, it seems that there is no research about what is happening in the Chilean context, particularly in schools located in the Northern Territory.

Theoretical framework and methodological approach

This research embraces the ideas of the social constructionist paradigm. Crotty (1998) claims that in this paradigm, knowledge is constructed by individuals in their interactions with their social world. He also suggests that meaning is not discovered but is constructed by 'human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting' (p. 43). Consequently, there is not a 'universal truth'; instead, the meaning will depend on the different interpretations of reality. Individuals depend on their culture, which guides human behaviour and experiences. Using this paradigm, this research will describe a teaching experience in a specific context. The emphasis will be the understanding of the teacher's own perceptions and problems faced in this rural setting from her own perspective.

Theory of experience

With a basis in the understanding of teachers' life experience, this study is supported by the theory of experience (Dewey, 1997), which claims that educative experience in community gives individuals the option of applying new knowledge to new situations. This learning can be developed towards their own experiences and also through the learning obtained from others' experiences (Dewey, 1997). This idea is consistent with one of the

main objectives of this project, that is, to give teachers information about the knowledge needed to improve their future practices in rural and Indigenous contexts. From this perspective, even though the study was conducted in a particular region in the Atacama Desert in Chile, the findings will be also useful for reviewing the National Educational Policy.

Methodology

This research used a narrative inquiry design, which has an emphasis on the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin, Caine, Lessard, & Huber, 2016). The design is appropriate for attempting to understand one teacher's knowledge and experience. Schaefer and Clandinin (2018) used a similar approach in their recent research about the experiences of teachers who stopped teaching after five years. Schaefer and Clandinin claim that narrative inquiry allows valuable information and understanding about the personal and professional lives of teachers and about their 'professional knowledge landscape' (p. 60) to be collected. Also, this study gives voice to one rural teacher, as doing this is central to a narrative design (Creswell, 2014).

According to Clandinin (2016), narrative inquiry design considers a three-dimensional space. The first dimension is temporality, the second is place, and the third is sociality (Clandinin et al., 2016; Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007; Creswell, 2014). From this perspective, this research presents the event in a chronological order and in the rural setting where the experience occurred. Lastly, the social dimension influencing the teacher's story was considered and described through the teacher's memories. In this research, the participant and researcher interacted co-constructively, and the story is related in this article using the teacher's words, with several quotations. Then I discuss this information as a researcher. The comments include additional information and the description of some of the participant's emotions observed in the interview.

Selection of the participant

The participant, who was selected using purposeful sampling, is a teacher with experience teaching in a rural and Indigenous context in the Atacama Desert of Chile. Quimal was the pseudonym used to name the participant. She represented an example of successful practice in this setting, as was demonstrated by her teaching in one of the higher performing schools in the national assessment SIMCE, thus considered as one of the best rural schools in the region (Agency of the Quality of the Education, 2015). Also, she was nominated for various awards and performance accolades. A successful case was chosen because this participant, through her own experience, could help to answer the research question about what skills and knowledge are needed to teach in a rural and Indigenous context.

Data collection

The story was collected through participant interview. Three types of questions were asked: *sensitising*, which was related to issues and concern, that is, what challenges were faced when arriving at this rural school; *theoretical*, referring to event and action; and lastly, *practical* questions as a recommendation for other teachers in similar situations (Strauss & Corbin, as cited in Webster & Mertova, 2007). The interview also included general questions. The aim of the interview was to collect information that could assist to understand in depth the experience of teaching in rural and Indigenous contexts, and also

to encourage the participant to reflect critically on her practice. The interview was audio recorded and additional researcher notes were taken.

Data analysis and creation of the narrative

Analysis of the data involved four phases.

Step 1—Transcription: The interview was manually transcribed by the researcher. It was necessary to translate the transcription into English, as both the participant and the researcher are Spanish speakers.

Step 2—Creating a narrative based on the interview data: The narrative highlighted the situation that evidences the challenges, issues, and problems that the teacher faced working in rural and Indigenous contexts.

Step 3—Sharing the narrative with the participant: After finishing the narrative, the story was translated to Spanish and shared with the participant. She suggested some changes and added new information.

Step 4—Revising the narrative using the participant's input: The narrative was improved and completed using the participant's feedback. Several times, direct quotations of the teacher were used; this allowed the accuracy of the teacher's voice about her experiences (Carter, 1993).

Trustworthiness

Narrative design does not produce generalisable results to another different context because it is based on human experience in a specific context. Thus, the findings could be impacted by the context, time and critical events (Webster & Mertova, 2007). However, the results of this research still give a general perspective about what may happen when teaching in rural and Indigenous communities of Chile, and may be the start of new investigations in the same or different locations.

Creswell (2014) suggests that the trustworthiness of a narrative design is validated by the participants' collaboration. To ensure that this research is believable, the participant (using her own language) checked the data sources and final result during the research. To keep the focus on Quimal's story, chronology, town, and a school description were considered, and narrative emergent details were reported (as described in the data analysis section). The participant had a close collaborative participation through the whole process by offering continuous and accurate feedback. Additionally, the narrative coherence and the use of quotations give the sense of authenticity of the story (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Lastly, as stated in the introduction, my knowledge and personal experience living and working in rural and Indigenous communities might produce a possible bias. However, it also gives me valuable insights that other researches would not have (Hamm, 2014). Thus, my responsibility as a researcher was to reduce these biases through a proper study design and subsequent analysis.

Findings: Quimal's story

In this section, Quimal's experiences of living and teaching in an isolated Indigenous community are presented. Similar to other schools located in the Atacama Desert, this

school has a combined classroom, teachers are non-Indigenous, and most of the students are Atacameños. The findings are presented as a co-constructed narrative, with my voice as a researcher framing the story, and by incorporating significant parts of the data that are Quimal's voice. These include some passages of her personal life such as her arriving at the community, getting to know her students, professional concerns, and her reasons for leaving.

A portrait of Quimal

'The context should not limit the student.'

Quimal is a primary teacher. She is a specialist in maths and has been teaching for 10 years. She has a Master in Educational Policies. After five years of working in the south of Chile, close to the rural community where she was born, Quimal decided to apply to become a teacher in a public rural school in the Northern Territory of Chile in 2012.

I applied for a public application to teach at this school, they called me, and so I went to work in the community close to San Pedro de Atacama. I thought that this challenge could be important because I could contribute to Indigenous communities, delivering quality education to their children. I was motivated by the students' context. I believe that the context should not limit the student. In this case, they have a remote rural context, because they are very distant from the urban centres.

Quimal said that after graduating, students in rural areas must go to bigger cities in order to continue their studies. Thus, they have to move away from their homes to have a better education and in doing so, they leave their traditions and culture, which are an important part of their Indigenous identity. This motivated Quimal to work in this context, as she believes that keeping the students in the Indigenous communities could help keep alive the local traditions. For Quimal, education must be fair for all, and this means giving all the students, rural and urban, the same opportunities.

Arrival in town

'I looked around and I thought: there is nothing, there is nothing!'

It was all fast. I had to show up on Wednesday and the classes started on Thursday. I arrived very early in San Pedro de Atacama, the closest town. At noon the driver picked me up. After 100 kilometres away, where there is nothing, just desert, the driver tells me: 'Teacher: that green spot, those trees that you can see there, there is the town where your school is located.' I looked around and I thought: there is nothing, there is nothing!

Quimal remembered her arrival with emotion. She did not realise her house was going to be inside the school and that her job would be all day, every day. All the prior conversations with the employer related to the work were by telephone, so she did not have much information about the place and the working conditions. Quimal was surprised about the isolation. Her house was not a house; it was a little room without a bathroom, which was outside and shared with all the teachers and school staff. This was particularly complicated in winter. In the town, the temperature falls to below zero, thus going to the toilet at night could be very dangerous for her health. Another thing that caught her attention was that there was no bed, just a mattress on the floor. Soon after her arrival, she understood that she would have to let go of many things, and appreciate the few

comforts she had. At this point, she felt that she would have to adapt and accept the living conditions as there was no choice.

I had a mattress on the floor. I had no comforts. I felt that I personally had to let go many things. I also valued what I had (...). Anyway, I enjoyed being there, had to walk to go shopping, going up to the highest place to see the sunset. When I was contemplating, I thought: 'I decided to come, nobody forced me to come here.'

Getting to know the students and the community

'I thought: how am I going to do it? I had never taught classes like that!'

My first time in the classroom, I introduced myself to the students. The class was combined; it means a third and fourth grade in the same classroom. I thought: how am I going to do it? I had never done classes like that! Something that really caught my attention were the students' physical characteristics, which are typical of the Indigenous people from the North (Atacameños). These were different from what you normally see. So, I started to get to know the students. The children showed up and what impacted me was how shy the children were. They were really introverted, they did not participate, they did not speak, so it was difficult to know where they were going and it was going to be very difficult to move forward.

Quimal was interested in knowing the reason why the students were shy. Soon she discovered that it was due to the community's characteristics. Also, she knew that in the past some teachers had made fun of the students; for example, jokes about local dance and traditional celebrations. Her colleagues and her own students told her about this situation; therefore, they did not like to participate in class because they were afraid of the teachers' reactions:

[In the past] there were classes in which the children were ridiculed. Little by little, I got to know that, and it was sad for me. I understood many things—for example, why the students' distrusted the newly teachers arrived. I realised why many parents were overprotective. They did not want this situation to be repeated.

Quimal met these teachers because they had monthly meetings. They were moved to other schools and towns but they had not been fired. She realised that they were older and that they had low levels of motivation:

They were of advanced age. Sometimes the fatigue after so many years of teaching plays against your motivation. I do not want to justify, but I think that the teachers' attrition could provoke this kind of attitude. That was to the detriment of the children. Maybe at the beginning there was no bullying from the teachers to the students, but after some time it was presented.

Quimal also believes that the teachers' lack of empathy was because the students were from a rural and Indigenous community. She knew that some teachers were making fun of the students' traditions, even outside the classroom. For example, regarding the community carnival, which is a typical religious celebration, some students did not want to participate. Quimal had the impression that they were worried because some teachers might have made fun of them if they danced as was the tradition. Quimal thought that through this behaviour, the teachers wanted to establish the differences between them and their students. She could not understand the lack of teachers' empathy and respect among the Indigenous traditions:

Some teachers make fun of their students because they do not know the traditions. Knowing takes time, getting involved with the community. Maybe I was lucky enough to arrive in a period of time when I had a lot of energy. This allowed me to get involved, to go to the important archaeological sites of the community, to get to know a lot about their traditions, to investigate. I feel like I gave my best. I learnt a lot from them and that helped them move forward.

On the path: professional concerns

'The knowledge about their culture helps me to contextualise teaching.'

Quimal had never worked in a rural community before, or in a combined classroom. Thus, many times she felt that she was not prepared to teach in this context. She had the perception she was doing a bad job. For these reasons, she criticised the teacher training that she had received:

When I was studying to become a teacher, I never had a subject that taught me what to do in rural contexts or multigrade schools. I knew this kind of school [existed] because I had visited some as a test examiner. I dreamed about working in these settings. Then it was difficult to realise that you spent four or five years studying and nobody ever told you that these rural schools existed and how they worked. So, including this knowledge as part of university professional training is needed. You do not know what decisions you can make and fate can lead you to work in this context, but what are you going to do there?

Something that was problematic for Quimal was the lack of knowledge about local culture. On occasions, this interfered with her work. For example, the community had local celebrations that were very important to them. As most of the students participated in the celebrations, their classes had to be suspended. They were also worried about rehearsing dances or were making their costumes, so no one went to classes before and during these festivals, and this affected Quimal's class schedule:

When you are a new teacher you do not know about these celebrations, nobody tells you about it. You learn on the road, but at the beginning of the year, you do not know that it is going to happen in August.

The Indigenous community works differently to other communities in that they have their own leaders. In the school, this is highly valued. The community does activities to include the school, and in the same manner, the school does activities to include the whole community. Quimal is convinced that knowing the local culture and traditions can improve teaching. For this reason, having excellent communication with all the community members and the students is essential:

In a rural school it is mandatory to know the families and their traditions. What they do, what they eat. The knowledge about their culture helped me to contextualise teaching. Thus, to participate in their celebrations and getting involved with the communities is a must. I think a teacher has to be open to learning. I learned a lot from their traditions, from their customs. I was using their culture for the classes. To talk about the corn, the orchards, what here was produced, their dances, and everything related to their context.

She also believes that the relationship with colleagues is important, particularly with more experienced teachers, as they can assist you with their previous experience at the school. Quimal thinks that every rural teacher needs to know how to work in a team. If there is a

problem with your colleagues you need to solve it immediately because they are your only support.

As a rural teacher, you always need to maintain a good relationship with your colleagues. If there are any difficulties, you must tell them instantly. Firstly, because the school is isolated and sometimes you feel lonely. You have no other friends there, so you must interact with them all day. Secondly, in a rural school, it is important to be clear that one works for the institution. This means that if they change your colleagues or the school's principal you have to continue doing a good job.

Leaving the community

'I was a committed teacher, with good results. But, there are no guarantees for teachers. There is a lack of recognition.'

After three years teaching in the school, in 2014 Quimal left the community. Although she recognised that the experience of teaching in this setting represented a big step forward in her professional career, she decided to quit. The reasons were the living conditions and the lack of professional recognition.

To live there was difficult. Although it is economically attractive to go and work there, it is not easy to adapt to the lifestyle. A teacher can have a strong sense of commitment but at some point, the living conditions affect you. Many teachers have become sick from the high temperatures. I had to be very resilient. I learned to enjoy the small things.

Quimal married a member of the community and they decided to have a child. This change in her life made her think of the necessity of having at least some type of health services nearby but there was not even one. Thus, she decided to leave the community.

Quimal's story revealed her perceptions when she arrived at the community and her experiences of teaching there. It shows how difficult it can be to teach in an Indigenous remote area. Other reasons for leaving the community were the professional constraints that she faced, such as her lack of preparation to teach in this context and the lack of facilities.

Discussion

Although this study explored the experience of only one teacher, it illustrates some of the problems that new non-Indigenous teachers are likely to face when teaching in rural Indigenous communities; problems such as geographic isolation, the lack of amenities and commodities, insufficient knowledge about students' characteristics, and the absence of professional recognition by the Department of Education are all visible in Quimal's story. Moreover, some other issues appeared. These were related to her self-perception of being a 'bad' teacher, the loneliness she experienced, and the need to be resilient. In the following section, these issues are discussed in relation to the literature.

The story of Quimal made visible how the shock between teachers' expectations and the reality of the school can affect the teaching experience. As Chong and Low (2009) argue, teachers' perceptions depend on their own experiences as a student. Even though as a child Quimal studied in a small common school, it was not part of an isolated Indigenous community. Thus, when she arrived at the community, she suffered a shock about what she expected before her arrival and the real conditions in the town. She was confronted by

the living conditions, as she was expecting a house with a minimum of facilities, but found just a little room without a bed or bathroom. Also, she was surprised by the lack of privacy of her room because it was inside the school. These findings align with the suggestion made by Mafora (2013) that teaching in a rural community involves confronting inconvenient elements such as the lack of commodities and isolation. Nevertheless, these findings did not consider the extreme weather conditions that some rural teachers must face. In Chile, most of the northern rural schools are located near the hills, which means that the weather is extremely cold in winter, and there are no heating facilities. Thus, as Quimal claims, the weather can jeopardise teachers' health.

Quimal's deficient knowledge and experience of rural and Indigenous communities meant that she did not know her students' characteristics or how to teach in a combined school; for example, she did know about her students' shyness and how this could affect her teaching strategies. She declared that this affected her teaching because she tried to use strategies that she had used in urban areas but they were not effective. For example, some activities involved students' participation, but her new students would not participate because they were too shy, which is a common characteristic of this community. Additionally, an unexpected finding of this study was other teachers' lack of respect for students' traditions, which occurred before Quimal's arrival. She believes that this also may explain the students' shyness. It appears from the literature review that this situation has not been considered in Chilean research. Also, an understanding of this situation is important to generate a plan to prepare teachers to teach successfully in Indigenous settings and also develop their empathy about local traditions. Quimal's story provided one example of the lack of respect for the local culture and traditions that some teachers have. Looking through Quimal's lens, teachers do not spend enough time participating in local activities, and thus they ignore students' traditions. In addition, Quimal's story evidenced that the lack of teachers' involvement with the community was causing teachers' poor sense of belonging. This is opposite to the ideas of Bauch (2001), who claims that sense of belonging is affected by the geographic isolation. However, I believe that this is not the case in this community, as the lack of teachers' involvement was because they do not consider it to be important. Getting to know the culture needs time, and the high rates of teachers' rotation in Chilean rural schools is not helping to solve this issue.

This findings in this narrative show how the lack of teachers' empathy and knowledge about rural and Indigenous areas can jeopardise teaching and learning. This concurs with the findings of Toledo (2015), Vera et al. (2012), and Williamson (2004), who stated that newly arrived teachers are not prepared to face the common situations in rural contexts. This is a consequence of the current Chilean teacher education programs focused on learning theories rather than practice. Also, this situation demanded the need of generating new and suitable strategies and activities that the students' cultural background take into account. In other words, she learned how to teach in this context by adapting her teaching. It seems that teachers are using trial and error to find suitable strategies to teach in rural and Indigenous schools. This supports Toledo's (2015) research that graduate teachers in Chile have a lack of preparation to teach in rural and Indigenous settings. Newly arrived teachers must learn how to teach by experience. Thus, in Chile, Indigenous education provision and teacher education need to be improved.

Another issue caused by the lack of preparation to teach in Indigenous areas that affected Quimal was the lack of knowledge about the local celebrations. Quimal declared that during the first year of teaching in the community, she adjusted the teaching schedule several times, not only because the community respects Chilean celebrations, but also because they have their own festivities. It appears that not all of the local festivities are

scheduled at the beginning of the academic year. A change in the program proposed by the Chilean government may cause teachers stress because they have the pressure to comply with the curriculum. Also, their performances are assessed at the end of the year by the principal and local council. If teachers do not accomplish the national purpose, the evaluation of their performance can be affected, and consequently they can lose their job. Moreover, the changes in the teaching schedule to accommodate community celebrations may affect the coverage of the curriculum. If teachers had information about dates and local celebrations before arriving, they could accommodate their plans in advance, therefore avoiding delays in teaching the curriculum.

In addition, the lack of knowledge about the Indigenous lifeways may affect teachers' self-esteem. As declared by Quimal, if she ignores local knowledge, she cannot contextualise her teaching, and this may affect students' learning. Other teachers in Indigenous communities who feel that they are doing a bad job if their students have low results may leave their schools. This finding supports the work of Toledo (2015), who claims that teachers' confidence and enthusiasm at the beginning of their teaching career can help them avoid leaving the profession. In addition, Ma Rhea (2015) affirms that in order to improve Indigenous education in Australia, it is a requirement to have good teachers prepared for local lifeways. The same situation is valid in the Chilean context. If teachers are better prepared about local traditions, they can teach appropriately for the actual context, thereby improving their practice. Moreover, this would positively affect teachers' performance evaluation, increase their confidence and decrease their stress levels.

An interesting finding of this study is the necessity for rural teachers' resilience. This was not found in the literature reviewed. However, several times during the interview the word 'resilience' was mentioned. Quimal claimed that in order to continue teaching in the town, she needed to be resilient, because it was not easy to face the living conditions, the lack of facilities and the emotional isolation. The manner in which Quimal described the emotional isolation and how she faced it is crucial to our understanding of the importance of colleagues' support in a rural context. This is related to the sociality dimension of Clandinin et al. (2016). Particularly, this finding highlights the crucial role of the most experienced teachers in the professional development of the newly arrived ones. In Dewey's (1997) theory, teachers' experiences and expertise can represent valuable knowledge for new teachers, particularly in order to improve their practice in different contexts. A mentoring program to help prepare new teachers to teach in rural and Indigenous communities is needed.

Finally, an original contribution of this study is the evidence of how the lack of professional recognition can cause teachers to leave. Quimal said that the Department of Education does not have a mechanism for teachers' retention. Even when she was evaluated as a good teacher, they did not try to retain her. As Quimal suggests, the decision to move out of a rural context or leave the teaching profession entirely can be determined by the professional value that principals and authorities accord to teachers. Kelchtermans (2017) affirms that teachers need to be trusted professionally, and he claims that social recognition can be motivating for teachers and also be a wellbeing predictor. In contrast, although Quimal had the community's recognition, the local authorities did not encourage her to stay in the community. This situation shows the lack of policies and practices with regard to teachers' retention. It is considered urgent that local authorities assess the cost of teachers' rotation and also that the local government creates incentives to retain successful teachers. Teachers' attrition can have economic impacts, but more importantly, it can also impact students' learning. In addition, in opposition to Toledo's (2015) findings, this study shows that salaries and workload are not the main causes of teacher's attrition

in rural communities. On the contrary, the salary issue appears to be a motivation to work in remote areas. Nevertheless, this study found that for Quimal, the main cause of her attrition was the living conditions, which was revealed as part of the narrative place dimension. Finally, the emotional isolation and the lack of professional recognition, which are related to the narrative sociality dimension, were also causes of Quimal's attrition,.

Conclusion

This study explored Quimal's lived experience when she was teaching in a rural and Indigenous school in the Chilean Northern Territory. Through a narrative inquiry, this research presented the challenges that one teacher faced in this setting. By exploring Quimal's story, it was possible to understand how hard teaching is in a rural and Indigenous community. The complexities of teaching in these contexts include the poor living conditions (e.g. the lack of facilities and privacy), the isolation, the extreme weather conditions, and finally, the lack of preparation that teachers have to work in these areas. The lack of knowledge of local culture, traditions, and lifeways in Indigenous communities can affect teachers' experiences and performance. Chilean teachers are not well prepared due to their poor teacher education about rural and Indigenous contexts, and particularly the combined classrooms. Some teachers may drop out due to these conditions. Further, teachers' rotations in rural areas may be affecting the quality of Indigenous education, due to the lack of continuity in students' learning. These findings indicate the current limitations of Chilean teacher education in developing and sustaining quality Indigenous education. Addressing these limitations would lead to improving teacher education and professional development and reduce the impact of adverse teachers' experience when they arrive in Indigenous communities, as well as teacher retention.

The findings further indicate the need for teacher training in understanding and knowledge of local Indigenous cultures to contextualise teaching. Currently, for example, Indigenous wisdom and local celebrations are not being incorporated into school schedules as a rich learning opportunity. Thus, teachers in these areas need preparation and the willingness to get to know the local culture and traditions to make their teaching relevant for students. Moreover, this training will allow teachers to transform educational programs and practices that perpetuate racism and prejudice about social and cultural diversity. Additionally, teachers' participation in these local celebrations and sharing with the community could help them to understand the Indigenous lifeways and use it to improve their teaching. Better preparation and community involvement could also reduce the cultural shock between teachers' expectations and the actual life inside the communities when they arrive. Finally, this study evidenced that rural teachers must face the absence of professional recognition. Even when rural teachers feel committed to their role, the lack of recognition may cause a decrease in their motivation to teach. Therefore, local and national authorities need to be aware of this oversight and create better and more specific incentives and strategies for this recognition, which could also benefit attract new teachers.

Lastly, the findings of this study highlight the need for policy makers, local government and universities to create adequate programs for teachers' professional development that can sustain a quality Indigenous education.

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