Developing a Project to Investigate the Introduction of ICT to Mapuche Students in Chile

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ABSTRACT

The article describes the design of a study, using aspects of Actor Network Theory (ANT), to provide a level of understanding of how Mapuche students in Chile have shaped information and communication technology (ICT) to meet their needs, whether these are cultural, educational, work or other. The investigation aimed to analyse the impacts experienced by the Mapuche students as a result of the introduction of ICTs into schools where the predominant school population is composed of Mapuche students. The study described is still on-going and this article describes how it was set up and developed and how it is proceeding. A later article will describe more of the results.

KEYWORDS

Actor-Network Theory, Chile, Culture, Education, Environment, ICT, Mapuches, School Classroom

INTRODUCTION

The Mapuche are indigenous to the southern regions of Argentina and Chile, but this article focuses mainly on the Chilean Mapuche. Mapuche (Mapu = Tierra [Land], che = gente [people]) are one of the many American aboriginals that have strongly conserved their traditions, beliefs and identity (Montero 2009). The Mapuche mainly inhabit the south of Chile with a significant number concentrated in or around rural communities such as Osorno, Temuco and Bio-Bio. According to the 2002 Chilean Census, 692,192 were considered to be indigenous, of which 87.3% are Mapuche (INE 2008). From a regional perspective, Pepin (2002) indicates that the rural population of the Osorno region is composed of 80% Huilliches (Mapudungun for "*people of the south*", they are also of Mapuche descent) and the remaining 20% of German descent. According to Merino and Pilleux (2003) the region of the Araucania has a significant number of Mapuche, mostly in rural areas and bordering 40% of the population.

This study makes use of Actor Network Theory (ANT) to provide a level of understanding of how Mapuche students have shaped the technology to meet their needs, whether these are cultural, educational, work or other. Considered as actors, the Mapuche are a militant society that fought a long war of attrition against the Spanish conquistadors and has ever since maintained a warring mentality to the numerous attempts by subsequent governments and policies to dispose, relocate and sometimes eliminate the Mapuche from their lands. To this day, the Mapuche continue to fight for the lands resulting in attacks on property and individuals from both sides of the conflict, hunger strikes by jailed Mapuche leaders and other forms of protest. These events are often reported in the newspapers and appear to have polarised the relationship between the Mapuche, Government (both

central and local), landowners and the police (La Nacion 4 May 2015, La Nacion 20 May 2015). The Mapuche have opted to also raise their concerns in the United Nations (UN) to intercede on their behalf with the Chilean government (Enlace Mapuche Internacional 2014).

Pepin (2002) argues that the Mapuche's education levels, retention levels, desertion, access to schools and resources are all important factors that show significant differences when compared to a population of urban schools. In addition, access to rural schools is also made difficult due to geographical, resource scarcity, cultural and economic factors.

This investigation aimed to analyse the impacts, if any, that have been experienced by the Mapuche students as a result of the introduction of ICTs in schools where the predominant school population is composed of Mapuche students. It studied the use, perception, teaching and teachers as well as their culture from an anthropological perspective in order to analyse the impact of ICTs on their culture as absorbed by those Mapuche students and their immediate community.

BACKGROUND

Various ethnic groups reside in Chile, including the Aymara in the north of Chile and the Mapuche in the south, particularly in the Araucania region. The Mapuche, unlike other indigenous communities in America which came into contact with the Spanish, were able to reverse the effects of colonisation and maintain their cultural identity, beliefs and territory. This was achieved by waging war against the Spanish and latter against the newly formed colony and country (Llancaqueo 2006). During the colonial years, the Mapuche maintained a prolonged opposition to the Spanish crown which culminated in the Mapuche conflict or the War of Arauco, as it is referred to in Chilean textbooks and only ended in 1891 (Montero 2009).

It is evident that in situations where there has been a conquered society, the historical and socio-anthropological description of the conquered seems to be misrepresented by the self-perception of the dominant society as being the guardians of the roots of their society. It is evident that in Chile, society would most often deny their mestizo roots and see themselves as more closely related to their Hispanic or European roots and which according to Merino and Pilleux (2003) and Merino (2007) translates to various forms of discrimination by the non-Mapuche.

Roy (2005) argues that globalisation has been occurring since 1492, at least with the well documented discovery of the Americas, or when Manila was founded in 1571 as a Spanish entreport to link Asia and the Americas. In essence, the need for resources or commercial links induced worldwide connections. Given the impact that these connections had on the native Americans, the introduction of new ideas, culture, slavery, diseases, religion and languages forced the natives to adopt, adapt or succumb to these intrusions. It can be argued that in today's globalisation context, the actors have evolved and so have the actants. But hitherto if we juxtapose the earlier intrusions to the latter ones, specifically to the introduction of ICTs, the elders of the Mapuche, that is the Machi who holds a special position by holding the religious ceremonies, the Lonko, who is the head of a community and Werkens, who are usually the counsels to the Lonko and messengers of the community. These roles are significant for they are in charge of maintaining and imparting the values of the Mapuche (Pepin, 2002) and may now find themselves in a diminishing position whereby the old held tradition (or Obligatory Point of Passage) is being eroded by the ubiquitous nature of these technologies and the ease of access to information.

Schugurensky (2010) argues that while status refers to rights and duties, identity refers to issues of belonging and meaning and that the distinction of status and identity is particularly evident in multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural states. He argues that identity is entrenched in language,

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