

Inclusion Programs in Higher Education: a Hearing Impairment Perspective.

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Abstract. Since the enactment of Law 20.422 (2010), universities have developed admission systems that guarantee equal opportunities and social inclusion of people with disabilities, based on the principles of independent living, accessibility and universal design, intersectoriality, participation and social dialogue. The following research analyzes the implementation of university inclusion programs aimed at Deaf people, from the point of view of managers and students who participate in them. Its design is qualitative, cross-sectional, with a phenomenological approach. Four managers and three deaf students participated, corresponding to the total population of students of the two higher education institutions that participated in the study. The managers and students answered a semi-structured interview that addressed the topics of: commitment to learning, academic leadership, program management and disability support. The results show a high awareness of the importance of inclusion programs that have an impact on institutional culture, a passive role of administrators and an attribution of greater responsibility to teachers regarding the academic success of deaf people; significant divergences are observed in all areas of the study between the discourses given by administrators and students. The results are discussed in the light of the literature and measures are proposed to contribute to overcoming the difficulties present in the initiatives that seek the inclusion of students with profound hearing impairment.

Keywords: Profound Hearing Impairment, Inclusion, Deaf Culture and Higher Education.

1 Introduction

Higher Education in Chile is constituted by a diversified system integrated by three types of institutions (Universities, Professional Institutes and CFT), which receive Deaf students, committing to deliver technical supports to provide quality education (Law 21.091, 2018).

The III National Study on Disability (ENDISC III, 2022) indicates that 17.6% (2,703,893) of the population aged 18 years and over lives with some disability, of which 8.2% present Hearing Impairment (213,000).

In order to provide an educational and social response, Law 20.422 (2010) is used, which aims to ensure the right to equal opportunities for people with disabilities, which leads universities to develop inclusion programs for the permanence of deaf people. This action has not been exempted from difficulties, and it is an educational problem for a group of young Deaf people who are studying in Chilean Higher Education Institutions.

2 Theoretical Framework

Profound hearing impairment means any person with a degree of hearing loss equal to or greater than 90db, therefore, hears only high intensity sounds, preventing hearing the voice, understanding, and producing oral language unless he/she receives specialized care. In terms of educational needs reports (Paz-Maldonado, 2020; Mainardi-Remis, 2018):

- Difficulty in the development of autonomous comprehension skills of academic information.
- Guided written expression.
- Scarce stimulation of residual hearing.
- Precarious construction of self-concept, positive self-esteem, and balanced emotional development.
- Confused acquisition of contextual, value and attitudinal information.

The educational responses to these difficulties are mainly the use of sign language interpreters, incorporation of technical equipment, visual reinforcement and lip reading, which have been insufficient to achieve the inclusion of deaf people in higher education (Ibáñez et al., 2018). The lack of knowledge, pedagogical tools, awareness and willingness about the necessary adjustments for the inclusion of Deaf students are the main barriers for HEIs to provide the necessary adjustments for the entry, permanence and graduation with quality of the Deaf population (Contreras et al., 2021).

3 Method

The following research analyzes the implementation of University Inclusion Programs aimed at Deaf people in two Higher Education Institutions in southern Chile. Its design was qualitative, cross-sectional, with a phenomenological approach. Four managers and three deaf students participated, corresponding to the total population, who answered a semi-structured interview that addressed the following topics: commitment to learning, academic leadership, program management and disability support. The interviews were subjected to content analysis using Atlasti software.

4 Results and Discussions

The results obtained show that in terms of commitment to learning, there is coincidence among the informants, because, although they adjust to the regulations in force (Law 20.422), the concern for Deaf people is of an administrative nature, which leads to delegate responsibility to teachers, being the role of the director's passive.

Regarding academic leadership, there are coincidences in the lack of knowledge of managerial responsibilities, along with observing dependence on the Sign Language Interpreter for communication and understanding of the Deaf Culture.

The management of inclusion programs shows that there is concomitance in the importance of reasonable accommodations for access to information, but dichotomy in the knowledge of physical spaces for learning.

Finally, in support for disability, there is concurrence in the hiring of human and technical resources, but dichotomy in the knowledge of the institutional culture and the spaces available to ensure communication between the deaf and the hearing.

At the same time, there is a dichotomy in the knowledge of technologies to teach the Deaf, because although there are algorithms to create subtitles, it is important to consider that the hearing follow the grammatical structure of: subject, predicate and adverb; while the Deaf follow the structure: adverb, subject and verb, therefore, they do not use articles, prepositions or conjunctions when writing or reading.

Based on the above, guidelines and measures are proposed that could facilitate a better implementation of these programs in those universities that assume the challenge of including Deaf students.

5 Conclusions

It is concluded that the Inclusion Programs in Higher Education institutions present important difficulties in their management, in the definition of roles and functions of

those involved to respond to profound hearing impairment. This is aggravated by a contrary perception among students and managers, of the levels of progress in these matters, revealing a distance and low awareness of the problems and challenges of these programs in those who must ensure the success of their implementation and guarantee the incorporation of the Cultural factors of the Deaf communities in their transit.

6 Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of the study is the number of participants, which is consistent with the low inclusion of Deaf students in universities. Future research should address a larger number of universities and incorporate the perspective of other educational actors. In addition, the importance of the use of technologies for Deaf students studying at universities should be raised, since Latin American countries are pioneers in real-time voice recognition tools or avatar-assisted sign language, which allows increasing the admission and retention of Deaf students in universities.

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