ABSTRACT

The paper reflects on the presence of indigenous peoples in the higher education system, focusing on the Mapuche; it extends the debate to the broader issue of cultural diversity. The paper traces the historical route that has made the Mapuche presence possible and the current challenge that this poses for higher education institutions, the state and society as a whole. The authors suggest that the mass coverage offered by higher education has failed to solve the problem of inequality (which is particularly prevalent among indigenous peoples). The existence of more diverse university communities needs to be discussed and requires policies that go beyond the issue of access to higher education. Coexistence is also an issue that needs to be addressed as well as the contents that articulate academic activities as a whole.

Key words: cultural diversity, education, democracy