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Scientific articles

Creencias de directores de escuelas en torno a las políticas de inclusión educativa en el sistema escolar chileno

Beliefs of school principals regarding educational inclusion policies in the Chilean school system

Crenças dos diretores escolares sobre as políticas de inclusão educacional no sistema escolar chileno

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Resumen

La demanda por construir una escuela cada vez más inclusiva es uno de los desafíos más importantes en la actualidad a nivel mundial. El caso de Chile es singular, ya que por décadas el sistema educativo ha sido regulado como una mercancía, lo que ha generado una permanente tensión entre el mercado y la inclusión escolar, ya que los principios que ambos promueven en la práctica cotidiana se contraponen. Por eso, el objetivo de este estudio fue conocer las creencias que sostienen los directores escolares de distintas regiones de Chile en torno a las políticas de inclusión. En términos metodológicos, se desarrolló un estudio cualitativo que, en una primera fase, consistió en la aplicación de 50 entrevistas semiestructuradas a estos actores, mientras que en la fase de profundización se desarrolló un estudio de casos múltiples a cuatro participantes a través de observaciones no participantes y entrevistas en profundidad. Entre los resultados se destacan las creencias de los directivos

que asocian a la políticas de inclusión con un aumento significativo de su trabajo burocrático; por otra parte, declararon que en las tareas de gestión cotidiana priorizan la demostración de calidad educativa sobre la inclusión escolar; finalmente, desde sus creencias proponen que las políticas en materia de inclusión son costosas en términos financieros y simbólicos, ya que los estudiantes diversos son costosos de educar y representan un peligro para el prestigio de sus escuelas en los mercados escolares locales.

Palabras claves: creencias, inclusión educativa, políticas de inclusión educativas, directores escolares.

Abstract

The demand to build an increasingly inclusive school is one of the most important challenges today worldwide. The case of Chile is unique, since for decades the educational system has been regulated as a market, which has generated as one of its negative effects a permanent tension between the market and school inclusion, since the principles that both promote in everyday practice are in conflict. The objective of this study was to know the beliefs held by school principals from different regions of Chile regarding inclusion policies. In methodological terms, a qualitative study was developed, which, in a first phase, consisted of applying 50 semi-structured interviews to these actors, while in the in-depth phase, a multiple case study was carried out with 4 participants through observations, non-participants and in-depth interviews. Among the most outstanding results are the beliefs of the principals who associate inclusion policies with a significant increase in their bureaucratic work, on the other hand, they declared that in daily management tasks they prioritize the demonstration of educational quality over the school inclusion and finally, From their beliefs, they propose that inclusion policies are costly in financial and symbolic terms, since diverse students are expensive to educate and represent a danger to the prestige of their schools in the respective local school markets.

Keywords: Beliefs, educational inclusion, educational inclusion policies, school principals.

Resumo

A exigência de construir uma escola cada vez mais inclusiva é um dos desafios mais importantes em todo o mundo hoje. O caso do Chile é único, pois durante décadas o sistema educacional foi regulado como uma mercadoria, o que gerou uma tensão permanente entre o mercado e a inclusão escolar, uma vez que os princípios que ambos promovem na prática diária se contradizem. Portanto, o objetivo deste estudo foi conhecer as crenças dos diretores escolares de diferentes regiões do Chile em relação às políticas de inclusão. Em termos metodológicos, foi desenvolvido um estudo qualitativo que, numa primeira fase, consistiu na aplicação de 50 entrevistas semiestruturadas a estes atores, enquanto na fase de aprofundamento foi desenvolvido um estudo de casos múltiplos com quatro participantes através de não observações. e entrevistas em profundidade. Dentre os resultados, destacam-se as crenças dos gestores que associam as políticas de inclusão ao aumento significativo do seu trabalho burocrático; Por outro lado, declararam que nas suas tarefas diárias de gestão priorizam a demonstração da qualidade educativa em detrimento da inclusão escolar; Finalmente, com base nas suas crenças, propõem que as políticas de inclusão são dispendiosas em termos financeiros e simbólicos, uma vez que a educação de diversos alunos é dispendiosa e representa um perigo para o prestígio das suas escolas nos mercados escolares locais.

Palavras-chave: crenças, inclusão educacional, políticas de inclusão educacional, diretores escolares.

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Background

The relationships between inclusion and educational markets have been described as tense and problematic, since in countries where school systems are regulated as markets there is a greater tendency towards “exclusion than towards inclusion” (Slee, 2012, p . 896). This dynamic originates because schools and their participants are mainly focused on providing a service that meets high quality standards, both for the State and for families. These standards are defined through indicators created by external entities that administer standardized tests or develop *rankings* of schools based on student performance on these assessments (Braun and Maguire, 2018; Liasidou and Symeou , 2018; Perryman *et al .* , 2017).

The case of Chile is one of the most representative examples of an educational market worldwide. In fact, it has been the subject of various investigations that consider it a “unique case” in the global panorama, since for more than 40 years Chile has operated according to the principles of supply and demand in education, with minimal state regulation that has been increasing over time, but which remains essentially subsidiary (Carnoy, 2005; Verger *et al.*, 2016). However, these market principles applied to education have not been able to solve the problems related to educational quality. Instead, they have exacerbated levels of segregation and segmentation between students from wealthy families and those who come from contexts with high levels of socioeconomic vulnerability (Bellei, 2015; Bellei and Muñoz, 2021; Villalobos and Quaresma, 2015).

In order to counteract this trend, the State of Chile—through public policy instruments—has progressively generated mechanisms for compensation and market correction in the field of education, through the promulgation of legislation that have promoted equal learning opportunities for all students (Inostroza, 2020). For this reason, since the 90s of the last century, important economic and human resources have been injected through so-called *compensatory policies*, such as the programs to Improve the Quality of Education at the basic, secondary and rural education levels (MECE Programs), as well as targeted support for schools that demonstrated persistently and permanently low quality in poverty sectors, such as the P-900 program (900 schools intervened), among others (Armijo, 2020; Cox, 2012; Oliva, 2008; Saura and Mateluna, 2020).

Then, at the beginning of the 21st century, a significant change occurred in the logic of educational policies due to the pressing need to improve the quality of education, since, despite a decade of support focused on school institutions, the expected results were not being achieved, as pointed out by several experts (Alarcón and Donoso, 2018). In response to this crisis, *accountability* policies were adopted, with significant consequences (Carrasco *et al.*, 2019; De la Vega and Picazo, 2016; Falabella, 2016). An example of these was the Preferential School Subsidy Law (SEP) (2007), which provided schools with special donations for each student in a “vulnerable” situation in exchange for meeting goals in the Educational Improvement Plans (PME) and, especially, in the standardized test SIMCE (Education Quality Measurement System).

At the same time, a new institutional framework dedicated to the improvement and supervision of schools through accountability mechanisms was established. This included the creation of the Education Quality Agency (ACE), in charge of developing and

implementing the SIMCE test and advising schools in terms of quality, as well as the Superintendency of Education, whose function is to guarantee compliance with educational policies in educational institutions (Falabella, 2016; Inostroza and Falabella, 2021).

At the same time, another major concern in Chilean educational policy was the promotion of school inclusion, which responded to a pressing social demand, since Chile was lagging behind international standards and faced various challenges in its implementation (López, et al . . 2018; Sisto , 2019). As a result, a gradual process of enacting multiple legislations related to inclusion began. Initially, these laws focused on educational integration to promote access of students with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN) to regular schools through the School Integration Programs or PIE (Mineduc, 2013). Subsequently, actions were promoted that not only addressed the presence of students with disabilities and SEN, but also distinguished between different SEN and promoted co- teaching , as established in Decree 170 (Decree 170, 2010). In addition, aspects such as social mix, the end of student selection and the elimination of co-payment by parents through the School Inclusion Law or LIE (Mineduc, 2015) were considered. The curriculum was also diversified through Decree 83 (Decree 83, 2015) and the evaluation process was reformulated with Decree 67 (Decree 67, 2018).

Having explained the above, it can be indicated that the objective of this study was to know the beliefs held by school principals from different regions of Chile regarding these educational inclusion policies.

Theoretical framework

Beliefs

Decades of scientific research demonstrate the importance of studying teachers' beliefs as a construct of theoretical and practical relevance. In this sense, the work of Pajares (1992) stands out, who points out that beliefs can have a great impact on how people carry out their daily actions, since they not only condition the actions of individuals, but also influence how they act. perceives and understands the world in general . Therefore, it is very relevant to understand how beliefs are formed and developed, as well as to understand the impact they have on individuals.

According to the aforementioned author, beliefs are “the individual judgment about the truth or falsity of a proposition” (p. 309), as well as the result of a complex process that involves external information through experience, knowledge acquired from education and

the influence of culture and society. In the field of teaching, Pajares (1992) deduces that teacher beliefs are complex cognitive constructions that develop from a variety of influences, including experience, academic training, culture and context. Furthermore, it proposes a classification of beliefs into three main areas: i) beliefs about teaching, ii) beliefs about learners, and iii) beliefs about oneself as a teacher. These areas are divided into subcategories related to content, organization, learning environment and evaluation, and would be crucial for teachers' decision-making, as well as for the success of their students.

To the previous definition and classification, of course, we must add those provided by other authors, who often highlight different characteristics, such as its implicit or explicit nature, its situational or general contextualization, its stability and its relationship with knowledge and its function (Fives and Buehl , 2012). In fact, Buehl and Beck (2015) argue that beliefs are part of a complex, interconnected and multidimensional system of relationships, so they can vary in their degree of conviction and be organized into separate sets, allowing the coexistence of incompatible beliefs. or inconsistent. Furthermore, despite being relatively stable, they can also be flexible and change with time and experience.

Regarding research linking school principals' beliefs to inclusion and school inclusion policies, it has been scarce at the national level. However, there are studies that provide valuable background on the beliefs and challenges that these actors have faced in the implementation of inclusion policies, in particular, the School Inclusion Law (LIE) (Quiroga and Aravena, 2018; Rojas, 2018; Rojas *et al .*, 2021).

Regarding the relationship between principals and school inclusion policies at an international level, studies indicate that, historically, principals have focused on leading administrative management processes and school curriculum. However, due to the growing diversity of students in school organizations, this phenomenon has led them to redirect their efforts towards the creation of more inclusive and equitable schools (Gómez-Hurtado, 2013; Murillo *et al .*, 2010). In this sense, the literature suggests that, although there are no defined characteristics of inclusive principals, it is possible to point out that these actors facilitate inclusion when they promote democratic or participatory leadership that fosters shared visions about the importance of diversity in schools and that assume this. diversity as a professional and ethical responsibility (Blackmore , 2009).

Regarding the research carried out in Chile that links principals with inclusion policies, it has focused on the study of perceptions, attitudes and beliefs around a specific policy: the School Inclusion Law (LIE), which It began to be implemented in 2016. The

findings related to this legislation indicate that the role of managers is fundamental in the management and change of attitudes in teaching teams, as well as in the communication and promotion of public policies related to the inclusion in their educational communities (Quiroga and Aravena, 2018).

On the other hand, Rodríguez and Rojas (2020) maintain that the performance category granted by the Education Quality Agency (ACE) is directly related to the willingness of managers towards this policy. In this sense, the principals of schools categorized as having high performance express greater confidence in the possible changes that the arrival of new students could bring, since they believe that they will continue to demonstrate academic excellence through standardized evaluations such as the SIMCE. In contrast, managers of institutions categorized as having insufficient performance are critical of the transformations introduced by the LIE, since they associate the admission of socioeconomically more vulnerable students with poor academic performance and problems of school coexistence.

Educational inclusion and school inclusion policies in Chile

Educational inclusion is a polysemic concept that acquires a particular meaning depending on the epistemic perspective (biomedical, social, critical or postcritical approach) from which it is conceptualized (Infante, 2010; Peña, 2013). In the case of this study, inclusion in education will be understood as a process that promotes beliefs, discourses and school practices aimed at generating equal learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their origins, characteristics and individual needs. Furthermore, this process seeks to promote in educational institutions the recognition of diversity as an intrinsic value and, therefore, seeks to materialize actions aimed at positive discrimination and social justice for those groups that have historically been marginalized in formal education due to various social markers such as gender, race, vulnerability, ethnicity, language, migration, among others (Graham and Slee , 2008; Slee , 2019).

From a historical perspective, the concept of inclusion in the Chilean educational system is relatively recent in its use and application. Initially, student diversity was conceptualized from special education as an intrinsic deficit of students. Consequently, it was believed that this “deficiency” should be corrected through interventions from the health sciences, including medical and orthopedic therapies and treatments, with the aim of

correcting any biological or psychological deviation of the students (Infante et al., 2011 ; Peña, 2013).

Later, between the 1970s and 1980s, the term *special educational needs* (SEN) derived from the Warnock Report (1978) began to be used. This concept referred to the needs that any student could present during their schooling - whether due to disabilities or various conditions - which had to be addressed by psychology, psychopedagogy and psychiatry professionals. The purpose was to achieve, through adequate treatment, the incorporation of these students into regular schools, which was known as educational integration. These initiatives, however, were insufficient to guarantee equal learning opportunities for all students, especially for those considered “diverse” (Infante, 2010; Inostroza and Falabella, 2021; Peña, 2013).

In this context, at the end of the 20th century, the school inclusion movement emerged at an international level, which was later adopted in Chile through agreements in this area. Inclusion sought not only the physical presence of all students in the classroom, but also to guarantee that each of them received a quality education and social recognition that emphasized diversity as an intrinsic value of the human species. Therefore, the school system and educational institutions had to adapt and work to provide all the necessary conditions for each student to develop their maximum potential in human terms and, in particular, in relation to learning (Albornoz et al . , 2015; Inostroza-Barahona and Lohaus -Reyes, 2019).

Now, given that in today's society school inclusion is one of the most relevant demands of the 21st century, both in Latin America and in Chile, the Government has made progressive and significant progress in the promulgation of legislation to address the growing diversity. from students. Thus, since the mid-1990s, policies have been implemented that promote targeting and positive discrimination towards students in general, with a special focus on those students who have more difficulties accessing regular education or who have been excluded. for decades, as well as those who are present in educational institutions but face significant challenges in their learning process (López et al . , 2018; Benavides-Moreno et al . , 2021).

For the purposes of this research, school inclusion policy will be conceptualized as legislation whose main objective is to promote actions of positive discrimination in students who, due to various social markers, have been identified as “diverse” and who are at potential risk of exclusion or abandonment of the regular educational system. This definition includes policies that provide both material and human resources to improve the educational

experience of all students, as well as those that seek to eliminate barriers to access to schools or that seek to modify the curriculum and assessment to promote comprehensive learning for all students. students (Inostroza, 2022).

The policies considered “school inclusion” in the Chilean educational system are summarized in the following table, which cover a period of approximately 30 years.

Table 1. Policies considered “school inclusion” in Chile

Policies	School Integration Program (PIE)	Preferential School Subsidy (SEP)	Decree 170/2009	Decree 83/2015	School Inclusion Law (LIE) of 2015.
Themes and actions	Regulates and promotes the incorporation of students with disabilities or diagnosed SEN into regular schools.	Increases the amount of the school subsidy according to the level of vulnerability of the student body by 60%. Incorporates accountability mechanisms with high consequences.	It typifies and classifies students' SEN, distinguishing between permanent and temporary SEN. It provides special school subsidies according to the clinical diagnosis that the students have.	It promotes curricular diversification and proposes a model for the diversification of classroom teaching through Universal Learning Design (UDL).	It proposes an end to profit for schools that receive state subsidies, eliminates the selection of students and the co-payment made by parents. Increases the school subsidy and inaugurates the School Admission System (SAE).

Source: self made

Methodology

Design

The present research was carried out using a qualitative approach (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Flick, 2014), which focuses on thoroughly and holistically understanding a social phenomenon, taking into account the contexts and voices of the actors involved. To organize the information collected that constituted the discursive corpus, two phases were carried out: an exploratory one, which involved the application of semi-structured interviews with 50 school principals in different regions of Chile. Then, in a deepening phase, an ethnographically oriented multiple case study approach was used (Guber, 2015), which included non-participant observations and in-depth interviews with four previously selected participants.

Participants

In the exploratory phase, 50 school principals from various regions of Chile participated, who were selected mainly based on criteria of accessibility, availability, and dependence on the school (municipal or subsidized private) (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). These participants were contacted using two methods: videoconference interviews via Zoom for 30 managers, and in-person interviews for the remaining 20 participants, for which the provisions imposed during the covid-19 pandemic were taken into account.

Regarding the characteristics or attributes of the participants in the first phase, an equitable distribution was sought in terms of gender (25 male and 25 female), dependence on the school (25 in municipal schools and 25 in private establishments subsidized by the State), and work experience (principals with at least 5 years of professional experience were prioritized).

In the deepening phase, the participants for the case studies were selected considering inclusion criteria, such as having participated in the first phase of research, availability and accessibility for ethnographic monitoring during an academic semester (equivalent to 5 months), having training or not on issues related to school inclusion, and have at least 5 years of experience as a school principals. In addition, gender parity and diversity were ensured in terms of the dependency of the establishments in which these managers worked.

The following table provides a characterization of the case studies that participated in the deepening phase:

Table 2 . Case studies from the deepening phase

Name	Establishment dependency	Region (commune)	Vocational training	Work history
Alberto	Public	Metropolitan (Santiago)	Master	5 years
Beatriz	Public	Metropolitan (Colina)	PhD in education	20 years
Carlos	Subsidized private school	Metropolitan (Talagante)	PhD in education	30 years
Daniela	Subsidized private school	Metropolitan (Lampa)	Master	10 years

Source: self made

Procedures

In the exploratory phase, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the 50 principals, which were based on a script that contained 12 open questions related to the participants' beliefs about educational inclusion, school inclusion policies, barriers and facilitators to the implementation of these policies, and perceived tensions between the principles of inclusion and those of the market in Chilean schools. These interviews were conducted in person and remotely, each lasting an average of 1 hour and 15 minutes, resulting in a total of approximately 62 hours and 30 minutes of recording.

In the deepening stage, non-participant observations of the principals who were part of the case studies were carried out. These observations were recorded through field notes, which were later transcribed and expanded by the research team. The field notes focused on practices related to the implementation of the principals' beliefs regarding school inclusion policies in their daily management and pedagogy work. These observations were carried out over a period of 5 months, equivalent to an academic semester, with weekly visits to schools lasting 6 hours each.

In addition, two in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the case study participants. These interviews aimed to deepen the implementation of the beliefs that had been expressed in the previous phase, in relation to school inclusion policies in their daily routine. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

In summary, in the deepening phase, a total of 480 hours of non-participant observation (120 hours for each school principal) and 8 hours of in-depth interviews were collected. Taken together, this represents a significant discursive corpus for the study.

Analysis techniques

To systematize the collected discursive corpus, an initial process of open and axial coding was followed, guided by the stages proposed in grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin , 2002). This procedure was carried out with the support of the Atlas ti qualitative information analysis *software* , version 22.0. After identifying the preliminary categories, a content analysis was carried out (Bardín , 1996; Mayring , 2000) by repeatedly reading the texts and grouping them into larger sets according to their semantic similarity. These sets were organized into three main categories, which are described in the following section.

Results

Among the most significant findings, the following stand out: firstly, it is observed that school inclusion policies do not seem to be generating a real increase in the levels of inclusion in educational institutions. Instead, they are resulting in a significant increase in the bureaucratic burden for managers because these policies have expanded the amount of administrative tasks they were carrying out.

Secondly, it is evident that, for managers, inclusion does not occupy a central place in their responsibilities, since it is perceived as a second-order task compared to the fulfillment of goals related to the demonstration of quality through tests. national standardized tests, such as the SIMCE and the PAES (Test for Access to Higher Education), as well as accountability towards the State and families.

Finally, there is a widespread belief among school leaders that inclusion is costly. This does not only refer to the economic and human resources that would be needed to implement it, but also on a symbolic level. Consequently, there is a perception that by including “diverse” students, school institutions could reduce their quality standards and, therefore, their prestige within local educational markets.

School inclusion policies: increase in bureaucratic work

Participants predominantly emphasized that the implementation of educational policies—whether related to school coexistence, quality, or inclusion—inevitably leads to a significant increase in administrative workload. Furthermore, and regardless of the specific topic of politics, they indicated that in most cases they readjust their agendas when they learn of the arrival of new legislation or ministerial decree. This is done to allow enough time to first understand the regulations in detail, then to communicate them to their teaching teams, and also to create space in their offices for additional filing cabinets or folders. These are used to collect all necessary documents, reports and forms, as well as any other written records that can serve as evidence in the event of future supervisions or audits. This is how the managers interviewed in the first phase described it:

What I believe when they tell me that a new educational policy will come, regardless of the topic, I immediately know that I must leave time to learn the policy and then in the teachers' councils share it with my colleagues and obviously I must open a new folder to fill it with forms , reports, records of many things, because, in the end, if they come to supervise, the only thing that matters is that you have all the papers and receipts (school principal 27).

Policies in general, in my experience, are always about bureaucracy and administrative work. You always have to be gathering more and more evidence to demonstrate that the policy is being fulfilled. Now, I think that unfortunately, if the focus, for example, is inclusion, the policy should focus more on children's learning and not on collecting papers, because I waste a lot of time administratively and I worry about my children learning (school principal 18).

In line with the participants' statements in the previous paragraphs, the majority of principals stressed that the arrival of new policies not only implied an increase in the administrative workload, but also tended to divert attention from the original purpose of these policies legislations. Despite their beliefs that these policies should contribute to the learning of all students, they expressed that what seemed to matter most to authorities and oversight entities was the existence of written evidence demonstrating the implementation of the policies, rather than delve into whether these regulations really generated improvements in the learning of all students.

Regarding school inclusion policies, participants believed that these legislations would effectively promote greater inclusion in their respective educational institutions, which would mainly translate into the allocation of additional financial and human resources to improve student learning. with disabilities or special educational needs (SEN).

In the following fragments, the interviewees from the exploratory phase expressed their beliefs in this aspect:

I think that inclusion policies are welcome, as long as they help us with more resources to meet the needs of children who are integrated and who have disabilities. But sometimes, inclusion policies do not do that and are even contradictory, because, for example, the Inclusion Law, in the end was about mixing students from different economic strata and not about providing greater inclusion (principal 37).

Apart from all the papers that must be gathered for each policy, I believe that inclusion policies in recent years have not aimed much at inclusion, because instead of strengthening with resources to improve the learning of children with Special Educational Needs, They have been moving towards issues of social mix, gender, and wearing uniforms, but they have not aimed at learning (school principal 21).

While most of the principals interviewed believed that the recently enacted inclusion policies were beneficial for their schools, they expressed criticism that these legislations did not focus on the disability or special educational needs (SEN) of students. Instead, they believed that these regulations addressed issues that were not directly related to their conception of inclusion. For example, according to the principals, the School Inclusion Law—which seeks socioeconomic diversification in educational institutions, the elimination of profit by supporters, and the end of the arbitrary selection of students—did not align with a legal initiative intended to improve the learning of students with SEN or disabilities. The same occurred with regulations linked to gender and the adaptation of the curriculum and the evaluation of learning, since their perceptions of inclusion were more influenced by a biomedical approach.

Despite these criticisms, in one of the case studies, one of the principals mentioned that it had been very positive that the current legislation on school inclusion went beyond the “old integration paradigm.” In this regard, he expressed the following:

I love that inclusion policies have left behind the old paradigm of integration. Because now, they no longer only consider students with disabilities and Specific Educational Needs, but now they talk about gender, the use of the social name of trans students, diversification of the curriculum and more authentic evaluation and that tells me that now, They are understanding that inclusion is more than disability or children who have the most difficulty learning (school principal case study 3).

In summary, in this section it was observed, first of all, that the beliefs of managers regarding educational policies tended to consider that these generated an additional burden of management and administrative work, which in turn reduced the time available for student learning, regardless of their particular situation. Secondly, it was evident that deep-rooted beliefs still persisted among some principals about inclusion, mainly interpreted as the integration of students with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN) in regular classrooms. However, it is important to highlight that this belief was not generalized, since in the case studies a broader understanding of inclusion was appreciated, related to equal learning opportunities for all students.

The demonstration of quality on school inclusion

One of the most prominent themes for the participants was the tension between the demonstration of quality through scores in standardized evaluations (SIMCE and PAES) and school inclusion policies, since the belief prevailed among the principals of that the priority should be quality over compliance with inclusion policies. This was because quality was evaluated annually and the results on these tests determined whether their educational institutions would be rewarded or penalized. In contrast, school inclusion legislation, although important for principals, only required demonstrating the relevance of expenses allocated to specialized personnel and pedagogical resources to promote inclusion in their respective educational communities. The following excerpts from the interviews illustrate this perspective:

Obviously I believe that quality and inclusion go hand in hand, but in a system like the Chilean one, where competition is the main thing, we have to focus on quality, on demonstrating that we have a good SIMCE score or that we are doing well in the PAES and in this way we avoid punishment and at the same time they give us bonuses for academic excellence (school principal 4).

I do not deny that inclusion is important, but when we have to account for what we have done in inclusion, the people from the Superintendency of Education review the financial issues. So, since the SIMCE is given every year and we are measured through that test, we place our priority on the SIMCE, because if we start to do poorly, our prestige goes down, they punish us and the school intervenes and we have a lot of respect for that. and fear (school principal 7).

In general terms, participants stated that while inclusion policies were relevant to the institutions they led, their priority fell on demonstrating quality because their schools would be judged based on the scores obtained by their students on evaluations. standardized, which would determine whether they would receive “rewards or punishments.” Furthermore, from their perspective, compliance with school inclusion policies simply required maintaining a record of all financial and accounting documents that demonstrated the appropriate use of economic resources allocated to inclusion.

This belief is reflected in one of the non-participant observations carried out in a school that was part of a case study in the in-depth phase:

The researcher was talking with the principal of one of the schools. Then, the head of the Technical Pedagogical Unit (UTP) knocks on the door and bursts into the office. The following dialog was then generated:

Head of UTP (addressing the principal) : Principal Daniela, excuse me for interrupting you, but we have to apply the SIMCE test in the fourth basic years and we need all students to take the test. So, I come to ask you if you authorize me so that in the next hour I can change the subjects that they had for the essay.

Principal Daniela (addressing the head of UTP) : No problem, talk to the teachers about the change of activity. Ah! Children from the Integration Program must also take the essay, so take them out of the PIE and take them to the classroom.

[The head of UTP leaves, nodding her head, and now the principal Daniela addresses the researcher].

Principal Daniela: You see what I mean. First comes quality, then comes everything else. Because I can be very inclusive, but they are not going to reward me for that, because SIMCE still rules in Chilean schools, so the

priority, unfortunately, is not with inclusion, but with measuring quality (field note, principal Daniela).

In the exposed situation, it can be observed how the beliefs of the principals give priority to tasks related to quality, which is why they leave the guidelines of school inclusion policies in the background. In fact, the agenda of the participants' daily activities focuses on preparing students for the SIMCE exam, which is why the individualized pedagogical supports for students with special educational needs who participated in the School Integration Project (PIE) are modified.

In summary, the principals' beliefs were focused on demonstrating quality instead of school inclusion due, mainly, to the existing structural barriers. Simply put, quality is measured and given incentives or punishments, so it is high on participants' agendas. On the other hand, inclusion is not measured, and there are no rewards or sanctions that directly affect the remuneration of the managers and teaching teams of the schools run by the participants in this research.

The costs of inclusion: resources and prestige in the school market

Among participants in both the exploratory phase and the case studies, there was a predominant belief that school inclusion was costly. This means that the financial resources necessary to provide adequate pedagogical supports to meet the individual educational needs of each student in practice exceed the subsidy provided by the State of Chile. Furthermore, they were emphatic in pointing out that the symbolic costs linked to the incorporation of students considered “diverse” in their respective educational institutions have been perceived as high in terms of prestige.

This last aspect was especially relevant for the principals of subsidized private schools, since they consistently and repeatedly stated that students incorporated under the protection of inclusion policies could have lower performance in standardized evaluations (SIMCE or PAES). This, in turn, could result in a decrease in the school's classification (as insufficient or low quality), leading to the loss of academic excellence and, as a consequence, the possible migration of families and their families. students towards private paid or elite establishments.

Regarding the first finding mentioned, the participants in the exploratory phase indicated that although they were aware of the scarcity of resources coming from the State in

terms of education, in their daily work these funds destined for inclusion were insufficient. This was supported by two of the participants in the exploratory phase:

To be honest, I know that money is scarce and that the State does what it can to make inclusion work, but we as principals have to juggle, like in a circus, so that we have enough to hire inclusion specialists and to buy the teaching material that each child needs according to their needs. So, we appreciate the resources, but they are insufficient for all students to learn equally (principal 35).

Today we seek to ensure that students have equal learning opportunities and that what they learn is of quality, but the resources are insufficient, since it is not enough for all students, since inclusion is not just about more children with difficulties entering, and that we have them in the same room, the objective is for them to learn and develop, and that has not been achieved and not by my will or by the team of teachers, this happens because inclusion is very expensive and the resources of the State are very rare (school principal 33).

In line with the previous argument, one of the case study participants in an in-depth interview mentioned the following:

For us, including has been very costly. Firstly, because the grant resources do not allow each student to learn according to their needs, since it does not allow us to hire a professional for each need: we do not have interpreters for sign language, or specialists in the autism spectrum or a shadow tutor, then, we decide if we focus on certain children and leave the others without resources and that hurts us, it worries us, because each student should have the right to a quality education, but the policy remains in good intentions (Carlos, school principal).

In the previous quote, the concern of the principals for the quality of education that students receive in their respective schools is reflected. In fact, they question inclusion policies because, although the diversity of students in regular education institutions has increased, financial resources are insufficient to cover the needs that these students present in their learning processes. Therefore, principals are forced to allocate economic resources selectively to prioritize the pedagogical support of some children with certain conditions, to the detriment of others who also require individualized pedagogical support.

As the last relevant finding in the framework of the managers' beliefs, the concern for the symbolic costs that school inclusion policies entail stands out. Most participants stated that the increase in enrollment of “diverse” students, as a result of the new laws, has generated a greater workload for both administrators and teachers, which is more worrying for private schools. subsidized, as these learners could potentially cause significant declines in standardized test scores. Consequently, educational institutions could lose their prestige within the respective local educational markets.

In the following fragments you can identify some of the beliefs of the school principals of subsidized schools in the exploratory phase in this regard:

We know that inclusion is very positive, but it is expensive and it has worked against us. 2 years ago we had excellent scores in SIMCE at the community level, but since children began to arrive due to the SAE of the Inclusion Law we have been lowering our performance and that apparently is going to be a trend from now on and in some moment, we are clear, we will lose academic excellence (principal 21).

In our school there was a lot of inclusion of migrant students from municipal schools and it happened that we lowered the scores on both the SIMCE and the PAES and now, we have a flight of students and families, and that is complicated, because before, we were not so inclusive and We were doing well and we had prestige, but now that we have opened the doors we run the risk of not being classified as a “good school” (principal 49).

As can be seen in the previous fragments, the participants from subsidized private schools expressed a strong conviction that the students admitted through school inclusion policies were responsible for the initial decline in the academic results of their respective institutions, which, In an educational market context, it meant losing its prestigious position in local communities. This phenomenon could also result in the migration of families and their children to schools with a history of superior performance, which in turn led to loss of enrollment. Consequently, a history and trajectory in which its institutions had stood out for their quality and high academic performance was abandoned.

On the other hand, for managers in the municipal or public sector, the symbolic costs related to the implementation of inclusion policies and the admission of students considered “diverse” were different compared to those of the subsidized private sector. In this case, the difficulties and challenges were related to other types of student diversity, such as migrant

students in northern and central Chile, specifically those whose mother tongue was not Spanish, which meant that they did not receive special subsidies. These situations were expressed in an interview from the first phase of the research.

We thought that the issue of migrant students would not be a problem because they speak Spanish and come from neighboring countries, but we have many of these Venezuelan, Colombian and Peruvian children who have a hard time learning and their needs are not considered as Temporary Special Educational Needs or Permanent and for them there is no special subsidy and therefore there is no money for us or for them (school principal 3).

Here the issue of migrants has been complicated, since we have received many Venezuelans who already bring problems and children from Haiti and in most cases the Haitians do not speak Spanish and so we have to start the process from scratch. And that affects us as a school, because the low score we have on the SIMCE lowers us and complicates things because not all teachers know Creole and we know that they are going to punish us for continuing to drop on the SIMCE (school principal 14).

Finally, in relation to beliefs related to the costs associated with the implementation of school inclusion policies, two key points stand out: first, the participants indicated that these costs vary depending on the dependency of the establishment and its relative position in terms quality, measured through SIMCE. Furthermore, they considered that the resources provided by the State were not sufficient to guarantee equal learning opportunities for all students.

Secondly, the belief was identified that symbolic costs were more relevant in subsidized private schools. This was because students considered “diverse,” admitted thanks to these policies, were associated with poor performance on standardized assessments. As a result, schools ran the risk of losing their quality categorization, prestige and academic excellence, an aspect that was especially emphasized by the principals of subsidized institutions compared to municipal or public ones.

Discussion

The objective of this research was to know the beliefs of school principals in Chile regarding current school inclusion policies in an educational context that is regulated like a market. Among the most significant findings was a widespread belief among participants that the policies increased the bureaucratic workload. More specifically, when it came to laws related to inclusion, principals stated that they had to dedicate time and effort in their schedules to collect a large number of forms, student evaluation reports, accounting documents, among others. These documents mainly served as evidence to justify that they were taking the necessary actions for the inclusion of students and, in this way, avoid possible sanctions or punishments.

From the managers' perspective, it seemed more important to demonstrate accountability in terms of financial resources than to show concrete evidence that effective actions were being implemented to ensure equal learning opportunities for all students.

These results agree with international research carried out in educational systems oriented by market principles, where New Public Management *prevails as an approach that emphasizes the need to demonstrate* the implementation of policies through standards and quantitative indicators . This, however, often relegates to the background the qualitative, procedural and comprehensive evaluation of compliance with issues so crucial for schools and their participants, such as school inclusion (Braun and Maguire, 2018; Liasidou and Symeou , 2018; Perryman *et al* ., 2016).

Likewise, the beliefs declared by managers about the collection of evidence, mainly in the financial field, agree with several studies carried out in Chile. In these it has been detected that educational actors, under the logic of the market and the new public management, focus more on demonstrating quality and responsibility than on developing spaces for reflection, collaboration and procedural work related to topics such as inclusion (Inostroza and Falabella , 2021; Valdés and Fardella , 2022; Villalobos and Quaresma , 2015).

In fact, regarding principals' beliefs about the perceived tension between inclusion policies and demonstration of quality, it was observed that quality predominated as a priority for participants. This was because accountability, with its significant consequences in terms of sanctions and punishments, had been more relevant than other considerations, such as inclusion and social justice.

These results are in line with international research that has shown that when educational systems are regulated as markets or quasi-markets, the principles related to inclusion and their mandates tend to be postponed and even overlooked, in favor of standardization, homogenization, competition and the fulfillment of goals expressed in quantitative standards (Braun and Maguire, 2018; Hall and McGinity, 2015; Liasidou and Svensson, 2014).

In more concrete terms, this research revealed how the daily practices of principals were oriented towards training students to take the standardized SIMCE test, instead of focusing on personalized work adapted to the needs of students with difficulties in accessing the learning on equal terms. As mentioned above, the scientific literature has documented this trend, which limits the responsibilities of school leaders primarily to the demonstration of quality.

Finally, in relation to the principals' beliefs about the costs associated with inclusion policies, differences were observed between the participants depending on the department of the establishment they directed. However, in general, managers believed that the costs related to the acquisition of pedagogical materials and the hiring of professionals to promote equal learning opportunities for students far exceeded the resources granted by the State through subsidies or vouchers. . . This created difficulties in determining which group of students would be given priority, which posed ethical dilemmas, as in practice some students were left without support or resources.

Following the previous argument, the principals of subsidized private schools expressed, in relation to the symbolic costs, that the increase in “diverse” students in their institutions as a result of the implementation of inclusion policies substantially decreased the performance of their respective educational organizations in standardized tests, specifically in the SIMCE. This finding coincides with studies that suggest that the School Inclusion Law (LIE) generated tensions in this type of schools, since the school principals believed that students who came from public schools faced significant learning difficulties and, coming from vulnerable sectors, They also caused coexistence problems. This, in turn, led to the gradual loss of the prestige that these schools had historically maintained (Quiroga and Aravena, 2018; Rojas *et al.*, 2021).

Regarding the beliefs of municipal school principals, they stated that, although their tension with inclusion policies was not related to the prestige derived from high academic performance, they faced difficulties because they were institutions in which all students had

right to enter, without payment barriers on the part of parents or selection filters. This had caused, according to their beliefs, an additional workload for teachers and a shortage of specialists to provide pedagogical support to students with specific needs, such as migrant children and young people and those whose mother tongue was not Spanish, such as students coming from Haiti.

Conclusions

The beliefs of the principals of the schools participating in this research in relation to school inclusion policies in Chile can be summarized in three main points. Firstly, they expressed that these legislations generated an additional burden of bureaucratic work instead of improving learning. Secondly, they argued that school inclusion was considered a minor issue compared to educational quality, which is the main priority in a school market like the Chilean one. Finally, they stated that the financial and symbolic costs associated with these legislations had negative effects on management and pedagogy in their respective educational communities, resulting in the loss of prestige and privileged position in the local school market.

Among the most notable reflections that can be derived from these beliefs, first of all, are the challenges and obstacles that school principals face in Chile due to school inclusion policies. Indeed, in a market environment, they are forced to focus more on the generation of written tests related to the economic and human resources allocated to inclusion than on creating spaces and opportunities to raise awareness and collaborate with their teaching teams in the understanding and effective application of these policies, with the aim of guaranteeing equal learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their individual needs and characteristics (such as ethnicity, language, race, vulnerability, etc.).

On the other hand, participants' beliefs suggest that these policies are influenced by market logic. In this sense, they argue that if a financial incentive (such as a bonus or prize) were established to implement inclusion, this would be considered a priority as well as educational quality. Furthermore, they state that accountability mechanisms with meaningful consequences (rewards and punishments) would be more effective in ensuring that inclusion is addressed seriously and does not depend solely on the will or sensitivity of a particular principal.

Finally, it is revealed that, due to the limitations imposed by the educational market for the effective implementation of inclusion in Chilean schools, principals seek explanations for the limited professional capacities available in their institutions. In this sense, they attribute these limitations to the State, which provides insufficient economic and human resources to support school communities in the implementation of inclusion.

Furthermore, regarding students who enter through these legislations, they are perceived as potentially “dangerous”, since they could reduce the quality of education and the prestige of these educational institutions. Regarding this perception, it would be important for principals to reflect more deeply on their beliefs and their ability to carry out inclusive actions despite the limitations imposed by the State, the market and the students themselves with the aim of guaranteeing the best experience. educational possible.

Future lines of research

Additional research is proposed to delve deeper into two of the critical points identified in this research: first, the beliefs of principals in relation to the symbolic cost of inclusion attributed to students who have joined schools as a result of these legislations. Secondly, carry out studies from ethnographic perspectives that allow us to understand how the beliefs of principals are manifested in relation to legislation on inclusion. Specifically, one could explore how these actors interpret and apply policies in their daily work contexts (Ball *et al.* , 2011).

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