

Inter professional work in schools: changing trajectories of vulnerability to school dropout among secondary students

Trabajo interprofesional en los centros escolares: cambiando trayectorias de vulnerabilidad a la deserción en estudiantes secundarios

Montecinos, Carmen⁽¹⁾; Castro, Gabriela⁽¹⁾; Díaz, Rocío⁽²⁾; Manríquez, Lizette⁽¹⁾ & Edwards, Anne⁽³⁾

(1) Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Chile) (2) University of Chile (3) University of Oxford

Abstract

Preventing school drop-out requires inter professional work that addresses in a coordinated manner the multiple individual, school and structural factors that lead a young person to leave formal schooling. This study examines the configuration of inter professional work that is designed and implemented in two Municipal Departments of Education in Chile to prevent the truancy and drop-out among students in secondary education growing in a situation of social vulnerability. Data were produced through in-depth interviews with a total of 63 actors, including municipal-level and school level professionals, parents and students. These two cases show contrasting models in their approaches. The first model is oriented to offer psychosocial support so that adolescents can develop their life project; psychologists, social workers and teachers, under the leadership of the municipal-level coordinator and the school principal, deploy relational agency and relational expertise to develop common knowledge; and students feel that their needs are addressed. In the second case, the model focuses on the prevention of truancy and drop-out; the expertise provided by psychologists and social workers fails to expand motives in the practices of teachers; and students point out that psychosocial intervention is more of a barrier than a support. These results highlight the importance of designing psychosocial supports that consider students' voices and the need to prepare professionals for coordinated inter professional work that aligns motivations to work together.

Keywords: school-dropout; inter professional work; vulnerable students; school leadership; psychosocial interventions

Reception Date

2018
September 20

Approval Date

2018
December 20

Publication Date:

2018
December 29

Resumen

Prevenir la deserción escolar requiere de un trabajo interprofesional que aborde de manera coordinada los múltiples factores individuales, escolares y estructurales que llevan a un joven a dejar la escolarización formal. Este estudio examina la configuración del trabajo interprofesional que se diseña e implementa en dos Departamentos Municipales de Educación en Chile para abordar la inasistencia y deserción de estudiantes en la educación secundaria creciendo en situación de vulnerabilidad social. Los datos fueron producidos a través de entrevistas en profundidad con la participación de 63 personas, incluyendo a profesionales, apoderados y estudiantes. El modelo del primer caso está orientado a ofrecer apoyo psicosocial para que los adolescentes puedan desarrollar su proyecto de vida; los profesionales psicólogos, trabajadores sociales y profesores, bajo el liderazgo de la coordinadora comunal y dirección escolar, despliegan agencia relacional y experticia relacional para desarrollar conocimiento común; y los estudiantes sienten que sus necesidades son abordadas. El modelo del municipio Cerro está centrado en la prevención de la inasistencia y deserción; la experticia que aportan psicólogos y trabajadores sociales no logra expandir las prácticas de los profesores, ni vice versa; y los estudiantes señalan que la intervención psicosocial se constituye más bien en una barrera. Los resultados resaltan la importancia de considerar la voz de los estudiantes en el diseño del apoyo psicosocial y la necesidad de preparar a los profesionales para el trabajo inter profesional coordinado que alinea motivaciones para un trabajo conjunto.

Palabras clave: deserción escolar; trabajo interprofesional; estudiantes vulnerables; liderazgo escolar; intervención psicosocial

Fecha de recepción

2018
Septiembre 20

Fecha de aprobación

2018
Diciembre 20

Fecha de publicación

2018
Diciembre 29

Corresponding author / Autor de contacto

Montecinos, Carmen. Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Chile). Av. Brasil 2950, Casilla 4059, Valparaíso (Chile). Email: carmen.montecinos@pucv.cl

In countries around the world school dropout is a problem that incites the interest of researchers and policymakers seeking to achieve universal coverage. In the European Union, for example, diverse initiatives have deployed to reduce school dropout to a rate of less than 10% by 2020¹. These initiatives, among other things, propose measures such as: removing barriers for the completion of secondary schooling; securing the transition between different levels of schooling, the promotion of school environments that satisfy the individual needs of students, as well as the promotion and support for the participation of multi-professional teams (European Union, 2013).

These initiatives are also observed in public policy seeking to achieve full coverage in secondary education in Chile. Among these, a number of initiatives have focused resources on improving equity and the quality of education in schools funded by the state. Additional financing to schools that serve students in situation of social vulnerability² has made possible the hiring of non-teaching professionals (Raczynski, Muñoz, Weinstein & Pascual, 2013; Valenzuela & Montecinos, 2017). It is recognized that to educate children growing-up in situations of social exclusion multi-professional teams are required in order to remove barriers for their effective participation in the educational process.

As an example, The Inclusion Law of 2015 establishes that each school should form a professional team responsible for teaching everyone how to learn to live together (School coexistence team). It includes a team coordinator, the guidance counselor, inspector general, and psychosocial support professionals (psychologist, social worker or another professional with a social sciences background) (Ministerio de Educación: Mineduc, 2017). Amplifying the available

professional expertise in schools recognizes that vulnerability is a product of interrelated aspects in a student's life (family, poverty, housing, etc.). The incorporation of psychologists and social workers (psychosocial duo) presents challenges and opportunities to institutional practices and the work carried out by the school management team.

Policies that mandate the placement of different professionals in schools are not sufficient to address in a comprehensive manner the vulnerabilities of students at-risk of dropping out. The participation of a wide spectrum of professionals to support students implies the availability of relational resources to configure inter-professional work that has a shared purpose (Edwards & Downes, 2013). How do people in different professional practices collaborate to prevent school dropout? The current study addresses this question.

Data reported in this manuscript have been drawn from a broader research project that examined the management of psychosocial support through a multiple cases study design. The study the work of the psychosocial unit in each of four Municipal Department of Education (DAEM, in Spanish) in three regions in Chile, organizations through which public education is administered. For the current article, two municipalities have been selected because they present contrasting practices and focuses for the provision of psychosocial support. We examined the goals and priorities of the various professionals and how school members perceived the psychosocial support provided. In particular, our interest is on understanding how the incorporation of these new professionals, psychologists and social workers, generates configurations for inter-professional work. Using conceptual tools derived from Cultural-

¹ Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM (2010)2020. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

² In Chile, there are three types of educational providers: (a) municipal departments that receive a

subsidy from the State based on the number of students enrolled and their average attendance; (b) private providers that receive the same state subsidy per student; and (c) private providers fully funded by families

Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) their work is analyzed to identify relational resources in practices that enable or create barriers for coordinated and effective inter-professional work (Edwards, 2010).

Psychosocial Support in School Improvement Processes

School dropout is the product of a progressive and cumulative process entailing personal, family, social, school, and structural factors (European Union, 2013). Those who dropout do so because of reasons of health, economic needs, and the quality and pertinence of educational and social experiences offered by schools. Characteristics of the school system, such as the absence of alternative routes to complete schooling, retention practices, the lack of participation of students in decision-making and agency in their educational process contribute to a student's decision to stop attending school. Preventing school dropout requires a multi-systemic focus that goes beyond intervening a student identified as a "problem case." Circumscribing the problem of school dropout to certain "at-risk" students limits attention to the conditions in schools as well as structural aspects that create barriers for staying in school.

Adelman and Taylor (2006) proposed five recommendations with respect to school improvement processes (in this study it is extrapolated the municipal level) to address barriers to participation in school. In relation to the complexity of the factors that generate barriers, the planning of school improvement needs to include:

1. A focus on the design of a comprehensive learning support system that is multifaceted, cohesive and fully integrated into the plans for improving teaching.
2. Orientations to: strengthen, at the classroom level, students' involvement in the learning process; develop supports for transitions between schools; family involvement; develop mechanisms and procedures to respond to and prevent crisis situations; develop activities to extend the participation of the local community; and

support protocols for students and their families.

3. Orientations for the incorporation of standards and indicators related to barriers for learning, such as truancy, tardiness, behavioral problems, suspensions, dropout and number of students unjustifiably referred to special education.
4. Orientations to integrate school and community resources to offer a coherent and integrated intervention system that promotes healthy development, prevents problems, provides early intervention when a problem is detected, and support school attendance among students with chronic or severe problems.
5. Orientations to redefine and reframe roles and functions, redesign the structure and infrastructure to ensure that the support services highlighted in the previous points involve an economy of scale for schools in the municipality.

The scope of the present study does not address all of the areas proposed by Adelman and Taylor (2006) and is limited to the area of psychosocial support regarding orientations to incorporate preventative, remedial and monitoring activities around truancy, grade retention, and dropout. It examines how schools' and DAEM's resources are integrated with other local services to offer a coherent and integrated intervention system that promotes healthy development, prevents problems, and offers early interventions when a problem is detected.

Regulatory Framework of Public Policies Associated with Psychosocial Support in the Chilean School System

The Preferential School Subsidy Law (SEP) has been in place since 2008 in primary school and 2013 in secondary school. It mandates that each school creates a School Improvement Plan that is expressed in a Performance Equal Opportunity and Excellence Agreement associated with the additional resources that the government gives for each priority

student³. At the DAEM level, this agreement specifies aspects such as: pedagogical and curricular responsibilities, consultancy for external technical advice, the production and use of information to monitor improvement goals (Raczynski et al. 2013). Often included among these goals are indicators associated with school dropout, grade retention, and attendance.

The Inclusion Law, and the National Policy of School Coexistence from the same year, defined new regulations and criteria to act in cases of conflicts in the school. An important axis of this policy is the principle that considers a student as a subject of rights and the school as the guarantor of that right, on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Both frameworks indicate that schools should: ensure the right to education for all students, safeguarding students' entry and permanence in the system; establish special support programs for students with lower academic performance or who need support with behavioral issues that affect coexistence; and establish a procedure for expulsion and cancellation of enrollment, actions that will only be adopted after due process that is in agreement with current legal standards (Ministerio de Educación, 2017). The participatory elaboration of protocols for disciplinary actions specifying those responsible and the consequences and their wide dissemination in the school community, are also required. The Superintendent of Education supervises compliance with these regulations, with DAEM subject to sanctions if there is noncompliance.

Conceptual Frame for Analyzing Inter-professional Work in Schools

³ Priority students are those for whom the socioeconomic condition in their homes might create difficulties for a successful participation in schooling. The proportion of these students is used to calculate the school's Educational Vulnerability Index (IVE). To qualify, students must meet one or more of the following criteria: participate in the system for Social Protection of Chile Solidario; be

The expertise required to resolve the problem of vulnerability in a student's educational trajectory is distributed among different professionals. From an inter-professional perspective, all team members need to recognize and work with the best available expertise to reconfigure the trajectory of a student. Coordinating an answer that draws from different types of expertise requires *relational agency* (Edwards, 2010).

Relational agency is defined as an ability to align one's thoughts and actions with those of other professionals in order to interpret the problems of practice and to respond to those interpretations (Edwards, 2010). For example, a teacher and a psychologist work with a student who has irregular attendance. While the teacher thinks that the psychologist needs to work on the parental norms in the student's home, the psychologist thinks that the teacher needs to design learning activities that motivate student's in-class participation. So that both professionals can help, both need to expand their initial interpretation of the problem, recognizing that it is not only one or the other interpretation. This reinterpretation, however, is not exempt from difficulties since professional practices offer us identity and teachers, like psychologists, work in practices that maintain their identity as professionals. It is difficult, therefore, to change practices to accommodate new ideas and new professionals in our tasks.

Relational agency makes it possible to agree on what the inter-professional team is trying to achieve. The ability to work with other professionals involves two aspects:

1. Expanding the aim of the activity to recognize the motives and resources that other professionals bring to the conversation when interpreting the

in the third most vulnerable in the Household Social Records; be classified in Tier A in the national health fund; family income, mother's level of formal schooling (or father or caregiver), the rural status and the degree of poverty in the community in which the family lives (Artículo N° 2, Ley 20.248, 2008).

problem. For example, the teacher understands that he not only teaches mathematics, but also teaches the student to feel confident in solving math problems. The psychologist, on the other hand, recognizes that the teacher must take care of many students simultaneously and has limitations to respond to students individually.

2. Aligning professional answers with the new understandings and interpretations of a problem and with the answers of other professionals in the development of the intervention for an expanded object of activity. This entails listening to what other professionals say, understanding what they consider as needed interventions and jointly generating new intervention tools.

Relational agency is differentiated from networking that is based in the interpretation of a professional who is asked to bring his or her resources to work directly with the student. *Relational agency* does not imply that the distinct expertise of the professional is weakened, rather the idea it be strengthened. In our example, the teacher is not asked to take on the work of the psychologist or the social worker. Working with the motives of other professionals is not the same as doing the work of others.

Edwards (2011) proposes the concept of *relational expertise* to refer to a professional's ability to obtain and understand what is significant for those who collaborate on the development of an activity and to make explicit to others what is important for one as a professional. In a team that displays *relational expertise*, each professional in the team knows what support others can provide, recognizes the points of views and motivations of those who inhabit other practices, and align motivations in order to work together. This facilitates a joint diagnostic of the strengths and needs of the student at risk of dropping out and collaboration in the design of an answer.

It is through the construction of *common knowledge* of those called to collaborate that what is important for each profession is

recognized. Recognizing that different professions are shaped by distinct motives and respecting those motives helps understand what is important for the other professional. For a teacher what is important is being able to carry out a class without interruptions. For a psychologist what matters is the student's emotional wellbeing and for the social worker that the student has access to a scholarship. These distinct motives show, from the contributions of each one, what a holistic answer that prevents school dropout entails.

Constructing *common knowledge* in an inter-professional team involves planning time (productive meetings) for open conversations regarding topics such as (Edwards, 2011):

1. Understanding students in a holistic manner, in their widest contexts.
2. Clarifying the purpose of work and being open to different alternatives.
3. Understanding one self and the values that sustain one's practice.
4. Knowing and understanding the motives and values of other professionals.
5. Having a pedagogical stance towards work.
6. Answering to the needs that others define.
7. Using rules in a flexible manner, to create innovative responses that include calculated risk.
8. Creating and developing more and better tools that facilitate collaboration.
9. Learning in and from practice, recognizing and utilizing the available knowledge in the other professions.

To synthesize, in the diagnostic stage as in the definition of possible solutions, the set of interrelated factors leading to dropout must be addressed in a systemic way (Downes, 2016). Approaching this complexity in a more efficient manner and with better coherence requires coordinated work among institutions at the municipal level (horizontal coordination) and among institutions at different levels of the educational system (vertical coordination between DAEM and schools) (Edwards, Daniels, Gallagher, Leadbetter, y Warmington,

2009). The present study analyzes how in two DAEM and in one of its respective schools that offers secondary education, psychosocial support for students vulnerable to dropping out of school is understood and enacted (in Chile, the 1st through 4th levels are youths between 14 and 19 years).

Method

Design and participants

The research reported in the present article utilized a multiple case study design (Yin,

2009). The Municipal Department of Education selected were those that in a previous study had been characterized as displaying different approaches for the provision of psychosocial support in general and in their strategies for dropout prevention, in particular. As shown in Table 1, 63 people participated from these two DAEM: 27 secondary students; 14 teachers; 9; 2 DAEM level directors; 2 DAEM level Psychosocial Area coordinators; 2 school principals; and 7 direct support professionals (psychologists, social workers, and guidance counselors).

Table 1- Participants in each DAEM and School

DAEM Los Arreboles	N° of Participants
DAEM Director of Education	1
DAEM Psychosocial Coordinator	1
Principal at Cerro Alto School	1
Psychosocial Team at Cerro Alto School	2
Teachers at Cerro Alto School	6
Students at Cerro Alto School	11
Parents at Cerro Alto School	3
DAEM Los Cabos	
DAEM Director of Education	1
DAEM Psychosocial Coordinator	1
Principal at Isla Verde School	1
Psychosocial Team at Isla Verde School	5
Teachers at Isla Verde School	8
Students at Isla Verde School	16
Parents at Isla Verde School	6

Procedures and instruments

The coordinator of the psychosocial unit in each DAEM was contacted by telephone to explain the purpose of the study and invite their participation. Once the Director of Education of DAEM consented, the coordinator identified a school that would be invited to participate. The school principal was then contacted to explain the study and the participation itself. Once participation was accepted, in consultation with school staff, interviews with DAEM and school level participants were scheduled.

A researcher went to DAEM's office to individually interview participants at that level

(Director of Education and Coordinator of the Psychosocial Area). In each school, the principal was individually interviewed and group interviews were conducted with: members of the psychosocial team, a panel of teachers, a panel of students, and a panel of parents. The school principal selected these participants.

An interview protocol was developed for each of type participant (see Table 2). Before the interview started, participants signed a consent form. The interviews were audio recorded, lasted between 40 and 90 minutes and were later transcribed for a content analysis.

Table 2 - Themes Addressed in Interviews with each Type of Participant

Main Psychosocial Themes	Subthemes	Participants				
		DAEM Director	DAEM Psychosocial Coordinator	School Principal	School Psychosocial Team	Teachers Students
Organization of psychosocial services (DAEM)/	Development of the structures, purposes, main tasks, composition of teams, and resources	X	X			
Perceptions of the psychosocial work developed	Critical psychosocial needs, main actions, achievements, goals, challenges, and indicators	X	X			
Integration of the psychosocial and pedagogical areas	Psychosocial-technical pedagogical coordination, approach from school improvement plan	X		X	X	
Students' characteristics	Social, academic, motivations and interests	X	X	X	X	X X
Perceptions of students psychosocial needs	Perceived needs, support provided and requested, opinions about the effectiveness of this support	X	X	X	X	X X
Inter-professional work	Spaces for joint work, barriers and facilitators, purposes.	X	X	X	X	X
Networking	Spaces for joint work, barriers and facilitators, purposes	X	X	X	X	X

Data Analysis

For data analysis, first, the researchers agreed on a thematic matrix that was validated with a sample of the transcripts. This matrix was later adjusted and applied to all of the interviews of a specific case. The entire team later audited the results of the analysis of each case in order to refine the interpretations and reach a consensus. Finally, the results were organized according to three axes, which made it possible to reveal the relational tools in the configuration of inter-professional work: (a) the general model for psychosocial support, (b) the distribution of work and coordination among the different professionals, and (c) the effectiveness of the model from the perspectives of the different individuals interviewed.

Results

Case 1 DAEM Los Arreboles⁴: Limited relational agency, relational expertise, and opportunities to create common knowledge

Antecedents of DAEM Los Arreboles and the School

The Department of Education at Los Arreboles municipality manages 16 schools. The school visited for this study was the Cerro Alto School that offers technical-professional training for its secondary students. A total of 730 students were enrolled from pre-K to 12th grade in 2017. The IVE for 2016 was 87% in secondary school.

Psychosocial Support Model in Los Arreboles

The psychosocial intervention model that has been generated at Los Arreboles dates back to 2009, after SEP law was enacted. For the Director of Education, addressing the demands of this law involved “*incorporating the professional perspectives of people who, not being from the education area, had a strong component in the social and community areas that would allow us to make progress*”. The ultimate goal of psychosocial support is to

⁴ DAEM and school names are pseudonyms. Some indicators have been slightly changed to protect the anonymity of participants.

reverse trajectories of vulnerability that place students at risk.

From a rights approach, ¿what does it come down to? To the protection of fundamental rights and this is about access to education, (...) this rights approach connects us with what UNESCO tells us (...) access to education, permanence in the system, and we take care of that permanence. (Director of Education, DAEM Los Arreboles).

The DAEM at Los Arreboles has involved a wide range of staff (DAEM coordinator, school principal and psychosocial team) in the construction of the necessary protocols and in the articulation of a network with external institutions. Regarding this last aspect, the resources they provide are essential:

For example, you can think that in a very large school for the psychosocial duo [psychologist, plus social worker], it is possible to do a workshop in each classroom (...) but it is full of networks that want to do things in schools. For example, SENAME networks, like OPD, all have a line of work in schools. (Los Arreboles Psychosocial Coordinator).

In each school, an inter-professional team has been formed that maintains a close relationship with the DAEM Psychosocial Coordinator. She periodically meets with the school teams with the purpose of updating information, action protocols, and offering needed training. She hopes that each team tailors these general orientations according to each school's context.

The psychosocial duo at Cerro Alto includes a psychologist and a social worker, both full-time as of 2017. The previous year, each had a half-time contract but the principal managed to get additional funding to expand their hours. The principal points out that the main tasks of the duo are associated with the students who have experienced a infringements of their rights. Although, they have focused also on issues related to school coexistence. The latter seeks to protect a good environment for those who work at the school:

Their [the duo's] main task is to defend the rights of the students. In general, this is the number one priority, but also securing coexistence and rights of the workers as well. One way or another, even though this is not in the SEP law, they have adopted this commitment and it has been very positive because they have helped coexistence at the school a lot. (Principal, Cerro Alto School).

Division and Coordination of Work for Psychosocial Support at Cerro Alto

The model contemplates interventions that unfold in three phases. The *Extended Phase* is directed towards the whole school with activities that promote healthy school coexistence, students' affective, sexual and socio-emotional development, and their rights. The second phase, *Preferential*, tackles intact classes that present behavioral and/or emotional difficulties. The *Individual* phase involves working with students and/or families that have been identified as presenting problems that put at risk their permanence in the school system and/or the physical, psychological, and emotional integrity of these adolescents.

For the professionals of the psychosocial duo, their principal motive is to have a positive impact on these young people's lives. Although the model emphasizes the extended phase, in practice the demand that these professionals recognize is the individual phase associated with solving urgent issues:

For example, we have conducted interventions on school coexistence with ninth graders. Unfortunately, it is a bit hard to work on prevention, because we are always putting out fires, so to speak. There is always that, that this child, that this child here, that now, that this blows up, but it blew up, so now one has to intervene with that class (Psychosocial duo CE Cerro Alto).

The participation of the inspector and homeroom teachers emphasizes the detection of problems. The focus is particularly in addressing students' absenteeism when a risks

of dropping out is present. For these issues DAEM has action protocols for the intervention and referral from teachers, inspectors, and duo. These are expected to be implement to the best of their ability.

Teachers, with inspectors, are prioritizing students who have trouble with attendance, who are not manageable by the teacher. Because the first one who has to address it is the teacher, we have not wanted to take the responsibility of attendance away from the teacher (...). The student comes to the class of a teacher, not to the class of the social worker or the psychologist. (Psychosocial Coordinator, Los Arreboles)

Some teachers point out that solutions involve their participation beyond the detection of needs. Considering the available time, however, their answer is the referral to the duo. The referral model passes the student from one professional to another without the possibility of developing common knowledge to give an integral response that prevents school dropout.

D1: I have to provide assistance in the first instance, but I have to refer. Because I cannot spend much time with him, I have to move forward with the content. I have to see, I try to get it as fast as possible and if maybe it's in my hands, I do what I can. (Teacher, CE Cerro Alto)

The duo expresses that their work is valued and supported by the principal at Cerro Alto, who intervenes when requested. The time that required by attention to individual students, together with the confidentiality that requires the treatment of each case, strains the duo's relations with teachers. Even though they recognize that the homeroom teacher should be informed, they think that many of the teachers do not understand the work the duo carries out and are unjustly criticized. The following excerpts exemplify a scarcity of relational agency or the lack of alignment in motives when teachers and the duo intervene with the students. In this way, teachers' practices are not influenced by the practices and professional motives that the duo contributes.

Rather, teachers' expect the duo engage in clinical work with students:

P2: All teachers believe that their cases are the only cases (...) that theirs are the most important. We have a list of more cases to attend to.

P1: You have to constantly be saying "yes, but look, you know what? I had to work with a more urgent case". You have to constantly explain [to the teacher why we have not worked with the student]

P1: [the expectation of the teacher is] for the social worker to go daily, weekly to the classroom to see which child has missed school and we say, "it is the other way around, you are the first, you are the entrance route, you have to let us know" (Psychosocial duo, CE Cerro Alto)

The teachers interviewed, however, recognized the work that the duo has done, and understand that the demand for interventions exceeds the available resources:

D2: We are aware that they have done what they can, because with all the cases, you imagine all the courses, they get referrals from the PIE, they get referrals from the homeroom teachers. Each problem that exists, arrives at the duo. So, it is too much. (Teacher, CE Cerro Alto)

The number of non-teaching hours allotted to teachers does not consider time to work with the duo, but does consider time to work with the special education team in relationship to students with special education needs (PIE):

D3: It is not like with PIE, with PIE we have [established hours]

D1: They are assigned hours for homeroom teachers, but these do not consider the duo

D1: I am going to refer a boy and they [duo] do the work and everything in the hallway "Hey, how did it go, with the boy?" (Teacher, CE Cerro Alto)

The priorities that the institutional practices define for the work of the duo (i.e., infringement of rights to education) come in

tension with the needs identified by students and parents interviewed. The latter are concentrated in demands for support on mental health issues with a clinical focus on psychological attention, agreeing with the perception of the teachers. In the interviews, students do not use a discourse associated with problems of social vulnerability and are critical with respect to how Cerro Alto provides psychosocial services.

E1: *More emotional, if they see that people are [feeling] bad, that they speak with you, that they ask you. It is the same as what we are talking now, that they incentivize you to come to high school, because you spend almost every day here and with the same people. (Student, CE Cerro Alto)*

E2: *Look at sexuality, the only thing they want is to wash your mind so that you don't get pregnant, but they don't support you in anything. (Student, CE Cerro Alto)*

E3: *The psychologist, because there are many people who have problems in their homes and they should ask. This year I have not seen a single psychologist in my classroom, and I have peer who I know, I know needs to go. And there is nothing. (Student, CE Cerro Alto)*

According to these students' views, the demand for mental health is not addressed through the referral to external providers. Even more, they do not see in the referral actions a genuine interest in their wellbeing.

E6: *If something is very bad, they refer you to...another psychologist and then another and if not, a psychiatrist, until you go even more crazy (Student, Cerro Alto)*

E4: *At the end what they do is only cover up the problem, not help you (Student, Cerro Alto)*

E6: *To make it look like they care, in that sense (Student, Cerro Alto)*

Effectiveness of the model implemented in Cerro Alto

The psychosocial duo as well as teachers point out that adding these new professionals is insufficient to tackle all of the objectives that the model proposes. Teachers point out that the lack of spaces for inter-professional work presents a barrier:

P1: I think that a lot would improve if we worked, one day, where a youth and not only the teacher meet, but they [duo] are also there, alongside the teacher. Then, it is evident that we are totally focused on him, not only the duo, not only what the psychology and the social worker see, but the teacher is there and attentive, the homeroom teacher is attentive to that youth. (Teacher, CE Cerro Alto).

The principal at Cerro Alto points out that the model of detection and referral has been effective in reducing absenteeism: *"we have raised attendance. Today, the general inspector told me, "Mrs. Principal, I am happy because attendance has increased enormously."*

From the perspective of the students, however, the model of psychosocial support in Cerro presents significant obstacles. The students perceive the process of referral as invasive and many times has unwanted consequences. The critique is clear: the network does not contain their needs, but rather amplifies them, abandoning and punishing the students. The model does not consider the participation of the students in the decisions that affect them.

E2: *The solution that was offered when I tried to leave high school was they would call the police and they would tell my mom. In other words, file a lawsuit against my mom because I wanted to leave high school; that was it. If I did not come to school, they would report it. (Student, CE Cerro Alto)*

E3: *She had to go to court and my aunt was asked to be my legal guardian and not the SENAME (...). They did not talk with me because I missed [school], but rather straight to SENAME. (Student, CE Cerro Alto)*

The difficulties for integrated work between school professionals, impinges upon students whose life situation is transferred as isolated pieces from one professional to another:

E7: I'm having a hard time with attendance but I get tired because I work, I study. One time I went and spoke with the principal, with the counselor, the inspector and afterwards upon arrival they still asked me, "Why do you arrive late?" Or "Why this?, Why do you miss so much?" What?, do I have to tell the whole school for them to leave me alone? Tell all my problems for them to understand me? (Student, CE Cerro Alto)

Case 2 DAEM Los Cabos Development of relational agency, relational expertise and common knowledge

Antecedents of Los Cabos and the school

The Department of Education at Los Cabos municipality manages nine schools. The school visited for this study was Isla Verde School that imparts a scientific-humanist curriculum, covering grade levels from the 2nd transitory Kindergarten to 12th. In 2017, 975 students were enrolled: 250 in high school, 638 in elementary school, and 87 in preschool. The IVE for 2017 was 73.2% in high school.

Los Cabos: Los Cabos Psychosocial Model

The Department of Psychosocial Support, dependent of DAEM, was created in March of 2016. In this department the DAEM Unity of Coexistence was formed with the main purposes of developing and implementing actions and programs to promote and encourage school coexistence, generating appropriate conditions to improve school climate, the delivery of learning, and students' psychosocial wellbeing. To address situations and cases that require interventions in mental health, legal or financial topics, in conjunction with school teams it has developed an external network for psychosocial intervention.

At the school level, multidisciplinary teams have been formed, including: a coordinator of school coexistence team, a psychologist, a counselor, the general inspector and a social

worker. The DAEM psychosocial coordinator holds periodic and systematic meetings with the school teams with the goal of updating information, practices and strategies for psychosocial support among all staff. In these meetings common knowledge is generated, highlighting how the identity of the professionals is placed under pressure:

For me, the benefits are in direct relation with the students, with those who for whom we work we should not forget that they are our focus (...). Through interpellations from colleague to colleague we have learned to have professional discussions. In the first instance egos had supremacy, I talked to you from the ego. (Communal Coordinator of Coexistence, Los Cabos)

Division and coordination of work for psychosocial support in the Verde School

For the principal at Isla Verde School, the professionals of the Orientation and Coexistence Team (EOC) come to deliver an additional expertise to teachers: "*which allows us to substantially improve behavioral issues, also sudden strong emotional situation, in which we as teachers and as a leadership team are often underprepared.*"

The entry of the new professionals was a challenge that was addressed by developing protocols that made it possible to carry out a well-organized work, with clarity regarding who was responsible for what tasks and when to make an internal or external referral. The school principal involved herself directly in the monitoring of students who were under the care of EOC. Leading monthly meetings, the principal sought to address in an integrated manner the needs of the students:

We have learned we have to make internal referrals. We receive a case and decide which person will work with the case, who is responsible and then we have weekly meeting with the duo to follow-up, share information. (Principal, CE Isla Verde)

Regarding the work of the psychologist, his/her responsibilities are the personal development of the students, attention and

monitoring of cases, and planning workshops on topics of sexuality, emotional development, and gender education. The social worker is responsible for the inter-sectorial management that coordinates with the external network. Additionally, she monitors and helps students who require services from these external services. Both professionals intervene on issues of coexistence and in cases of infringement of rights, as well as:

Behavioral difficulties, because that [alters] the normal development of the class, it alters the normal coexistence of the classroom (...) the emotional aspects, there are also many girls and boys with emotional difficulties that require our support, from our containment, our emotion” (EOC, CE, Isla Verde)

Beyond these responsibilities defined in DAEM’s guidelines, the EOC team shows their alignment behind a purpose shared by all members of Isla Verde School.

Build a common school identity. Although it transverses across all members, across all areas of the school, (...) the coexistence area has greater involvement (EOC, CE Isla Verde)

This focus on developing a sense of belonging as a strategy for preventing dropout and absenteeism is illustrated by Isla Verde’s principal:

Before I talked to you about the milestones, the milestones, and the workshops that demarcate moments for our students. For example, we have a milestone when transferring from fourth to fifth grade (...) when they move on to middle school, we have milestones for our students in middle school, we have milestones when graduating from eighth, grade, from high school.

The principal’s leadership supports these examples of a successful and satisfactory inter-professional work expressed by different actors. Additionally, we can observe relational expertise to construct common knowledge by involving teachers in preventative work. Teacher participation, particularly homeroom

teachers, seeks to hold them responsible for promoting good coexistence, attendance and a strong bond with students. The principal stresses that teachers’ role cannot be limited to making students referrals.

With the teachers also because the teacher refers a case, for example, “no, teachers, you have to have the ability”, because we have to saved time. Here, time is important” (Principal, CE Isla Verde)

Teachers expressed that their main task is to manage students’ learning through an inclusive curriculum. To know how to work with students who experience vulnerability, with special and/or social and economic needs implies knowing their students and identifying in a timely manner a variety of issues that could be going on in their lives.

We attend to the diversity that exists in the classroom; there are many that have learning problems, with PIE in charge (...). The other students who have emotional problems or problems in their homes, can have the ability but emotionally are not prepared to be within a classroom. (Teacher, CE Isla Verde)

Students told us that when they have had an urgent problem, they have been able to approach the EOC, mainly the psychologist and guidance counselor. Some students, however, show certain resistance to revealing in school the problems that they can be experiencing at home. Participating students recognized their teachers’ concerns for their academic success and wellbeing. They describe flexible teachers with whom they have close relations, who help them succeed.

E7: Teachers are super nice people, they help me a lot. At times I have gotten stage fright when speaking in English class and the teacher tells me, “Well, we will meet on Tuesday, and I will stay so that you can present to me alone”. The other teachers are equally helpful, to be able to not have difficulties. (Student, CE Isla Verde)

E5: They notice if the grades are falling or they are not participating as much in class or things like that (...). The teacher

notices (...). If she does not have a closeness with that person, she refers to the psychologist, who is much more approachable and one can be much more open with him. (Student, CE Isla Verde)

All of the professionals interviewed concurred that there are very few students who do not attend on a regular basis. With these cases, they intervene to figure out the cause and carry out actions that reintegrate the student into the school. The priority is to finish school independently of whether it is in this school or another. The students note that the school shows them that education has to do with the lives that they want for themselves and that they can choose a school to better suits them.

We have students in eighth and ninth grades, levels that show greater dropout (...). We have this psychosocial duo, they go to the homes to bring back students who stopped coming, "Why did you stop coming?" "No, because it's too hard." What do we do? We say, "No, you don't have to stop coming if it is too hard and if you feel that this is not your plan, that this school is not your plan, go to another school, we will help you." I take them to enroll at another school. (Principal, CE Isla Verde)

When facing absences, it is expected that the teacher makes first contact with the parents. Then, if necessary, the EOC intervenes to get parents to, in writing, make a commitment to send the student to school.

The topic of OPD is specified because the student has the right to an education, and parents are responsible for making this happen. On the other hand, when we make the home visit and no one is there, a notification is left, and notification has had good results for us (...). But, thankfully, the school attendance is good (EOC, CE Isla Verde)

The parents interviewed said that they did not know the general functions and specifics of EOC. They recognize that their pupils do not want to share their problems with their parents,

thus having support at the school is necessary. The students confirm what these parents said, claiming many do not have sufficient closeness to tell their dads and moms about their difficulties:

I prefer to talk with the kids, with my friends more than with my parents because I am not close to them (...). Therefore, help in developing closeness with your family is needed, to improve that relation, or finally to help you feel better because many times I have felt down, but I have had to stay quiet and deal with it.

The students feel supported by the professionals with respect to certain psychosocial issues, although they would like other types of actions regarding issues that expand beyond academics. Among these we find suggestions referring to sexuality and gender identity:

I think that it would be equally as good if they talked to us and we learned about that because there are people with that type of interests and (...) at times they feel bad because they think that the other people will laugh at them, that they will not be accepted (Student, Isla Verde)

Effectiveness of the model

There is broad recognition that having one psychologist for almost a thousand students is insufficient and the principal is negotiating with the DAEM to hire a second psychologist. Teachers point out that they do not have the necessary hours to participate in all of the workshops and trainings proposed by the coexistence team. While there are formal spaces for a collaborative work between PIE teachers and classroom teachers, this has not been considered for EOC professionals.

Now when we refer, we have to do it in an informal manner because we do not have time, so we have to speak in the yard or when we have planning time go and talk about the situation, what is going on with the child and make the referral. (Teacher, CE Isla Verde)

The professionals interviewed stated that in the year and a half that the EOC has been operating, important advances have been achieved, even though improvement is always possible:

The attention, those students are being cared for, they are in treatment, there is monitoring of the cases, they get the treatment, they are existed, (...) the teachers can work more calmly, we have gone down in annotations in the class books, eh...few are absent, good attendance to classes. (Principal, CE Isla Verde)

The psychologists, for the amount of students that are here, are not enough (...) but they always have a very good disposition and always suggest things and fortunately I have had good results working with psychologists for the secondary grade levels (Teacher, CE Isla Verde)

The students, on their part, suggest that in their interactions with the psychologist and the counselor they have found help to solve their problems:

They give one the tools so one can improve or solve that problem that one has and also they support you and speak with you. One feels supported in that area, like me, I felt supported when the psychologist listened to me and started to tell me what I could do or what the problem was and how to resolve it, why it happened and such (Student, CE Isla Verde)

The answers that the school constructs in cases of rights infringement present important dilemmas for the professionals. The principal exemplifies this when she reflects on the case of a student in whose house drugs were consumed, asking what is best for that girl. She is forced to refer, but if the institutions have demonstrated insufficiencies in the support of the youth, what can be done?

The girl does not want, does not want, she is really struggling to not become what her older sisters are. So you say, how can you help, how, how, because we reported her,

we already reported her, will she go to SENAME? What is best, but she wants, do you understand me? What we are doing there (...) so you...you...question if this or the other is better. Also, legally, as the principal I have to make a report, therefore, many times we find ourselves in very complicated situations (Principal, CE Isla Verde)

Discussion

The two cases presented in this article differ in their approach to addressing indicators of school attendance and retention as they provide psychosocial support to secondary school students. In the Los Arreboles municipality and its school, Cerro Alto, the psychosocial model is characterized as bureaucratic and focused on social vulnerability. This approach is in tension with the demands of young people since their problems are not resolved through referrals to external agencies that students perceive as punitive.

Although from the DAEM level it is promoted and insisted that the psychosocial duo should favor a preventive approach, in practice the demand that these professionals recognize responds to an individual intervention approach with "cases" of students identified because of repeated absences or experiencing rights' infringements. This individual approach is also demanded by young people, but not because of their situation of social vulnerability but because of their emotional and affective needs. In contrast, professionals mobilize actions around psychosocial problems such as teenage pregnancy, alcohol consumption, drugs and school dropouts. This difference between the support that young people expect and that offered by professionals has also been reported in other studies with Chilean youth (Berger, 2004).

For the students at Cerro Alto School who participated in this study, their needs are not the priority of the model that has been implemented. Rather, they end up attending school in order to avoid a worse situation such

as their mothers being sent to jail or them being sent to a center for boys and girls whose parents could not protect the rights of their children. As observed in the commentaries of the students, these practices generate resentment and distrust towards the intentions of the professionals. Examining the consequences of these perceptions on issues of school coexistence deserves empirical attention in the next studies.

In Los Cabos there is an aligned discourse among DAEM, school and students that places at the center of their work the wellbeing and life project of these youth. To prevent dropout and absenteeism, the diverse professionals work jointly, looking to generate in students a sense of belonging toward school. Just like in Cerro Alto, there is work with external networks and there is the possibility of making absenteeism a judicial matter, but this is the last resort when the internal intervention does not provide a result. Like in Cerro Alto, in Isla Verde School, the demands for professional services from the duo exceed the available human resources. In this last school, however, dropout and absenteeism were not reported as a frequent problem. This could be an effect of the efficiency of the model; an interpretation that requires more study. In the voices of the students, preventative work centered in socio-emotional development appears to satisfy their expectations.

These adolescents express concerns focused on a better communication and closeness in relations with their parents, on issues related to the construction of their gender identity and on emotional support when they confront situations that affect them. The preventative work involves instances for collaboration among the duo, teachers, and the principal of the school makes possible the generation of common knowledge.

The voices of the students at Isla Verde show us that their school has developed a space that contains them, in which they feel accompanied in defining their life project. The interest to keep them in school leads the principal to help and find another school that would be more appropriate for students' interests. She is not

worried that if the student leaves, the dropout indicator in her school will rise. Students stay in school because it makes sense for them to be there and not to avoid punishment.

The model of psychosocial support that is implemented is both DAEM and that is replicated at the school level, is based on students' right to education. To defend and promote this right, DAEM level coordinators have produced protocols to tackle absenteeism and dropout. The utilization of protocols to solve different situations runs the risk of being interpreted in a prescriptive manner, generating responses that do not adapt to the problems of the students. This type of use converts them into an unnecessary bureaucracy that discourages professionals from looking for more relevant answers for the students (Ainsworth y Hansen, 2011).

Paraphrasing Munro (2011), a system of protection requires being centered in the children and youth as individuals with rights and not in an eminently bureaucratic procedure that answers legal requirements. Cerro Alto is poignant in revealing the silence of exclusion that Downes (2016) notes when criticizing the absence of students' voices when tackling school dropout. Moreover, this silence is contrary to Article 12 in the Convention of the Rights of the Child., which states that "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child." (United Nations, 1989 p. 13-14).

Students should have the opportunity to be heard, in all judicial or administrative procedures that affect them; in our cases in the system of referral to external networks. In the case of Cerro, based on what students reported, it is evident that this right is not respected. The right to participate in the decisions that affect them seem to be more present in Isla Verde School, but this is not totally clear from the data produced. Future studies could investigate tensions in how schools address both rights, as shown by the principal of the Isla Verde when reflecting on the processes for reporting situations of infringement as mandated by law.

Downes (2016) adds that it is particularly necessary to document the experiences of youth at risk of dropping out who experience poverty and social exclusion. The interventions that schools develop through their model of psychosocial support should represent “an instance for students to develop, and not exclusively centered in the prevention of psychosocial problems” (Berger 2004, s.p.). To establish from the optics of youth the concerns addressed by a psychosocial support model is to value them as subjects of their own history, generating instances “to reflect about themselves and the resulting possibility of signifying their own experience.” (Berger, 2004, s.p.)

The findings of this study reinforce Edwards’ (2010) proposal with respect to tools and relational capacities for inter-professional work that is effective in reversing the trajectory of young people at risk of leaving early formal education. In both cases the importance of creating structures that enable the development of common knowledge is observed. At the school level it is essential that the management team, teachers and the psychosocial duo align their own motives and object of the activity to respond to the problems and needs that the students themselves recognize. This requires planning meeting time where professionals do not limit themselves to delegating work to other professionals or external networks. Taking as a reference the meetings held between the PIE team of special education teachers and general classroom teachers, meetings among teachers and the psychosocial team could be build into the schedule. In both cases there is a willingness to collaborate among the professionals. Likewise, the intention of the model in both cases is the prevention of dropout and other problems that contribute to it.

This study’s findings have implications for the preparation of “new” professionals that are integrated into schools. In their preparation it is important to develop tools that make it possible for them to identify and attend to what is important to teachers, to explain what is important in their own professional practices

and to try to align their motives and actions with what is important to the other actors in the school community. In terms of Edwards’ (2010) proposal this involves knowing how to use relational experience (using knowledge and motives of other to expand one’s own comprehension of the problem and its resolution).

References

- Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2006). *The school leader’s guide to student learning supports: New directions for addressing barriers to learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CorwinPress.
- Ainsworth, F., & Hansen, P. (2011). The Munro Review of child protection: Final report — a child-centred system: a review and commentary. *Children Australia* (Vol. 36). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1375/jcas.36.3.164>
- Berger, C. (2004). Subjetividad adolescente: Tendiendo puentes entre la oferta y demanda de apoyo psicosocial para jóvenes. *PSYKHE*, 13(2), 143-157. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-22282004000200011>
- Downes, P. (2016). Developing inclusive systems across the education, health and social sectors for early school leaving prevention. En M. Matthes, L. Pulkkinen, B. Heys, C. Clouder, L., & M. Pinto (Eds.) *Improving the quality of childhood in Europe* · Volume 6 (pp. 70-85). Brussels, Belgium: Alliance for Childhood European Network Foundation.
- Edwards, A. (2010). *Being an expert professional practitioner. The relational turn in expertise*. Springer: Dordrecht. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-3969-9>
- Edwards, A. (2011). Building common knowledge at the boundaries between professional practices: Relational agency and relational expertise in systems of distributed expertise. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 50(1), 33–39. doi: <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2011.04.007>

Edwards, A. & Downes, P. (2013). *Alliances for inclusion; cross-sector synergies and inter-professional collaboration in and around schools*. Brussels: EC

Edwards, A. & Thompson, M. (2013). Resourceful leadership: Revealing the creativity of organizational leaders. En A. Sannino & V. Ellis (Eds) *Learning and Collective Creativity: Activity-Theoretical and Sociocultural Studies*. London: Routledge. pp, 99-115.

Edwards, A., Daniels, H., Gallagher, T., Leadbetter, J., & Warmington, P. (2009). *Improving inter-professional collaborations: multi-agency working for children's wellbeing*. London: Routledge. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203884058>

European Commission (2013). *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support*. Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf

MINEDUC, División de Educación General, Equipo Unidad Transversalidad Educativa. (2017). *Orientaciones para la conformación y funcionamiento de los Equipos de Convivencia Escolar en la Escuela/Liceo*. Santiago de Chile. Retrieved from <https://www.mineduc.cl/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2017/04/convivencia-escolar.pdf>

Munro, E. (2011). *The Munro review of child protection: Final report — a child-centred system*. London: United Kingdom. Retrieved from <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/gove>

rument/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175391/Munro-Review.pdf

Raczynski, D., Muñoz, G., Weinstein, J., y Pascual, J. (2013). Subvención escolar preferencial (SEP) en Chile: Un intento por equilibrar la macro y micro política escolar. *Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación*, 11(2), 164-193. Retrieved from <http://www.rinace.net/reice/numeros/arts/vol11num2/art8.pdf>

United Nations (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

Valenzuela, J.P., & Montecinos, C. (2017). Structural Reform and Equity in Chilean Schools. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.108>

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Acknowledgements

This study was partially funded through grant Conicyt FB003

Authors / Autores	To know more / Saber más
<p>Montecinos, Carmen (carmen.montecinos@pucv.cl) Doctor of Psychology. Associate Professor in the School of Psychology and Executive Director of the Leadership Center for School Improvement at Pontificia Universidad Católica (PUCV) in Valparaíso, Chile. She has completed numerous publications on issues of professional learning and school improvement. Postal address: Av. Brasil 2950, Casilla 4059, Valparaíso (Chile)</p>	<p> 0000-0001-8382-1848  </p>
<p>Castro, Gabriela (gabriela.castro@pucv.cl) Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. She participates in different research projects on issues of public policy and works as a psychologist in schools.</p>	
<p>Díaz, Rocío (rocio.diaz@ciae.uchile.cl) Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology. She participates in different research projects on issues of public policy as a researcher in the Center of Advanced Research of the University of Chile.</p>	
<p>Manríquez, Lizette (lixanister@gmail.com) Lizette Manríquez: Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. She participates in different research projects on issues of public policy and works as a psychologist in schools.</p>	
<p>Edwards, Anne (anne.edwards@education.ox.ac.uk) Professor Emeritus of the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. Her research and numerous publications address professional agency, interprofessional work, and learning from a focus on cultural historical theory of activity.</p>	



Revista ELectrónica de Investigación y EValuación Educativa
E-Journal of Educational Research, Assessment and Evaluation

[ISSN: 1134-4032]



Esta obra tiene [licencia de Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).
This work is under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).