



# **EXPLORING EFFECTIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CHALLENGING CONTEXTS: A STUDY IN TWO CHILEAN REGIONS**

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**BY**

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***Dedico esta tesis a mis queridos padres...***

*I dedicate this thesis to my mother Rosa Alvarado Vargas and my father Rene Balbontín Ramirez. They have patiently understood my adventurous life in search of knowledge and life experiences. Despite fearing for me and the challenges that life far from my country could bring, they never said “don’t do it” or “you can’t”. They have always believed in me and without their support I would have never been able to achieve this. Thanks Mamá and Papá.*

# Abstract

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*School effectiveness in areas of social deprivation is a fundamental issue for every society, because it is related to social justice, equity and development, which are important matters for every developed or developing country. Social justice in education means that any student, whatever their social background, has equal access and opportunities to receive an education of quality.*

*It is often considered that schools in the poorest neighbourhoods provide a lower quality of education than institutions in more advantaged areas. Nevertheless, taking into account all the barriers that some schools have to face, there are some institutions that seem to make a difference. They have demonstrated that it is possible to be more successful in terms of educational outcomes, despite the impact of their student intake from disadvantaged backgrounds.*

*This study intends to contribute to the school effectiveness field through the study of effective secondary schools from two important regions in Chile, which are characterised by their disadvantaged student intake. The main aim of this research is to gain greater understanding of the particular characteristics of effective schools in challenging contexts and the influences of these particular features on the students' academic outcomes. A sample of schools was selected after the analysis of the students' academic achievement demonstrated in their results in a national examination over a period of 3 years. The sample only considered schools with a student intake characterised by high social vulnerability. These schools were analysed using case studies and a mixed methods research approach. The intention was to explore the school processes that support effectiveness and to generate some illuminating findings, in order to contribute to educational policy and practice.*

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# Table of Contents

---

|                             |      |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Abstract .....              | ii   |
| Acknowledgements .....      | iii  |
| Table of Contents .....     | vi   |
| List of Tables .....        | xi   |
| List of Figures .....       | xii  |
| List of Abbreviations ..... | xiii |

## **I. Chapter 1: Introduction**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1.0 School effectiveness research (SER) .....   | 1 |
| 1.1 Rationale for my research .....             | 3 |
| 1.2 Main aim of the research .....              | 4 |
| 1.3 Research questions guiding this study ..... | 4 |
| 1.4 Outline of the thesis .....                 | 5 |

## **II. Chapter 2: The Chilean Educational System**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 2.0 Introduction .....   | 8  |
| 2.1 Country profile .....  | 8  |
| 2.2 Main characteristics of the Chilean school system .....                              | 12 |
| Classification of schools by type of administration and funding .....                    | 14 |
| Secondary school system .....  | 15 |
| Special educational programmes .....   | 16 |
| 2.3 Assessment systems .....   | 18 |
| National assessment system (SIMCE) .....   | 18 |
| International assessment .....   | 22 |
| 2.4 Higher education system .....  | 23 |
| 2.5 Previous reforms of the Chilean educational system and the problem<br>of equity..... | 26 |
| 2.6 Summary .....  | 34 |

## **III. Chapter 3: Literature Review**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 3.0 Introduction .....                                | 35 |
| 3.1 Overview of school effectiveness research .....   | 35 |
| 3.2 Definitions of school effectiveness .....         | 39 |
| 3.3 Stages of school effectiveness research .....     | 42 |
| 3.4 School effectiveness in deprived contexts .....   | 48 |
| 3.5 Methodology of school effectiveness studies ..... | 50 |
| Value added analyses .....                            | 51 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Methodological advances in the last 20 years .....                                      | 51 |
| 3.6 Models of school effectiveness .....  | 54 |
| The Scheerens Model (1990) .....  | 56 |
| The Slavin/Stringfield Model (1992) .....   | 57 |
| The Comprehensive Model of Educational Effectiveness by<br>Creemers (1994) .....        | 59 |
| The Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness by<br>Creemers & Kyriakides (2008) ..... | 62 |
| 3.7 Key features of effective schools .....   | 65 |
| 3.8 Linking school effectiveness and school improvement.....                            | 72 |
| 3.9 School effectiveness research around the world .....                                | 76 |
| SER in the developed world .....  | 76 |
| SER in Latin America .....  | 83 |
| Research production and findings in the Latin American context.....                     | 86 |
| What is the future of Latin America research on school effectiveness?.....              | 89 |
| SER in Chile .....  | 90 |
| 3.10 Criticism of the field of school effectiveness .....                               | 96 |
| 3.11 Summary .....  | 98 |

#### **IV. Chapter 4: Research Methodology**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 4.0 Introduction .....  | 99  |
| 4.1 Linking my educational interests, philosophical assumptions and<br>methodological choices ..... | 100 |
| 4.2 Philosophical assumptions underpinning my research .....  | 102 |
| 4.3 Research methodology .....  | 106 |
| 4.4 Research design .....   | 114 |
| 4.5 Research sampling .....   | 119 |
| Schools samples .....   | 119 |
| Typical schools sample .....  | 121 |
| Atypical schools sample .....   | 121 |
| Geographical setting .....  | 122 |
| Negotiating access to schools .....   | 122 |
| Headteachers sample .....   | 123 |
| Teacher sample .....  | 124 |
| Student sample .....  | 126 |
| Parent sample .....   | 126 |
| 4.6 Instruments and techniques of data collection .....   | 128 |
| Questionnaire-surveys .....   | 128 |
| Focus groups .....  | 131 |
| Semi-structured interviews .....  | 134 |
| 4.7 Pilot study .....   | 135 |
| 4.8 Data analysis .....   | 137 |
| Analysis of questionnaires (QUAN element) .....   | 137 |
| Analysis of focus groups and interviews (QUAL elements) .....                                       | 139 |
| Integration of QUAN and QUAL data in the school portraits .....                                     | 139 |
| Cross-case analysis and data integration .....  | 140 |
| 4.9 Ethical issues .....  | 144 |
| Researcher's role .....   | 145 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity .....                         | 146 |
| 4.10 Assessing the quality of the design and inferences of this MM study..... | 147 |
| 4.11 Summary .....  | 151 |

## **V. Chapter 5: School Portraits**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 5.0 Introduction .....   | 153 |
| 5.1 Atypical school portraits .....  | 155 |
| 5.2 Background information of Araucaria School .....                                     | 156 |
| 5.3 General profile .....  | 156 |
| 5.4 Analysis of distinctive school features influencing educational effectiveness .....  | 158 |
| Focus on success .....   | 158 |
| Teacher professional commitment .....  | 162 |
| School climate .....   | 164 |
| School leadership .....  | 166 |
| Expectations of students' performance .....  | 167 |
| 5.5 Summary of findings .....  | 168 |
| 5.6 Background information of Canelo School .....  | 169 |
| 5.7 General profile .....  | 169 |
| 5.8 Analysis of distinctive school features influencing educational effectiveness .....  | 171 |
| Focus on success.....  | 171 |
| Teacher professional commitment.....   | 172 |
| School climate .....   | 174 |
| School leadership.....   | 175 |
| Expectations of students' performance .....  | 177 |
| 5.9 Summary of findings .....  | 179 |
| 5.10 Background information of Rauli School .....  | 181 |
| 5.11 General profile .....   | 181 |
| 5.12 Analysis of distinctive school features influencing educational effectiveness ..... | 183 |
| Focus on success .....   | 183 |
| Teacher professional commitment .....  | 185 |
| School climate .....   | 187 |
| School leadership .....  | 188 |
| Expectations of students' performance .....  | 190 |
| 5.13 Summary of findings .....   | 192 |
| 5.14 Background information of Avellano School .....                                     | 194 |
| 5.15 General profile .....   | 194 |
| 5.16 Analysis of distinctive school features influencing educational effectiveness ..... | 196 |
| Focus on success .....   | 196 |
| Teacher professional commitment .....  | 198 |
| School climate .....   | 199 |
| School leadership .....  | 201 |
| Expectations of students' performance .....  | 202 |
| 5.17 Summary of findings .....   | 204 |
| 5.18 Typical schools portraits .....   | 205 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 5.19 Background information of Quillay School .....            | 206 |
| 5.20 General profile .....                                     | 206 |
| 5.21 Analysis of schooling aspects .....                       | 208 |
| School climate .....   | 208 |
| Leadership .....   | 210 |
| School practices and contextual factors impeding success ..... | 212 |
| Teacher commitment .....                                       | 215 |
| Expectations of students' success and motivation .....         | 216 |
| 5.22 Summary of findings .....                                 | 218 |
| 5.23 Background information of Lenga School .....              | 220 |
| 5.24 General profile .....                                     | 220 |
| 5.25 Analysis of schooling aspects .....                       | 221 |
| School climate .....   | 221 |
| Leadership .....   | 224 |
| School practices and contextual factors impeding success.....  | 225 |
| Teacher commitment .....                                       | 228 |
| Expectations of students' success and motivation .....         | 229 |
| 5.26 Summary of findings .....                                 | 231 |
| 5.27 Summary .....   | 233 |

## **VI. Chapter 6: Cross-Case Analysis**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 6.0 Introduction .....                                | 234 |
| 6.1 Methodology used in analytical tables .....       | 234 |
| 6.2 Analytical tables by categories of analysis ..... | 237 |
| School climate .....                                  | 237 |
| School practices focused on success .....             | 240 |
| School leadership .....                               | 244 |
| Teachers' professional commitment .....               | 249 |
| Expectations of students' success .....               | 251 |
| 6.3 Summary of main categories analysed .....         | 254 |
| 6.4 Summary .....                                     | 257 |

## **VII. Chapter 7: Discussion**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 7.0 Introduction .....  | 258 |
| 7.1 What are the general factors that help to explain the greater academic<br>success of this purposive sample of schools serving areas of social<br>deprivation? ..... | 259 |
| Factor 1: Strong focus on success .....   | 259 |
| Planning for success .....  | 260 |
| Teacher evaluation .....  | 264 |
| Use of incentives .....   | 266 |
| High importance given to teachers' professional development....   | 268 |
| Strong focus on external assessment .....   | 270 |
| Factor 2: Effective leadership practices .....  | 273 |
| Factor 3: High level of teachers' professional commitment .....   | 278 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Factor 4: Positive school climate .....   | 280 |
| Factor 5: High expectations of students .....   | 283 |
| 7.2 What are the distinctive features in these schools that influence<br>greater educational effectiveness? .....                   | 287 |
| Distinctive features of Araucaria and Rauli Schools .....   | 287 |
| Distinctive features of Canelo School .....   | 290 |
| Distinctive features of Avellano School .....   | 291 |
| 7.3 How does school history and context influence educational effectiveness? .....  | 293 |
| How history has influenced effectiveness .....  | 294 |
| How context influences effectiveness .....  | 296 |
| 7.4 What are the elements that differentiate these particular institutions from<br>other serving similar student populations? ..... | 299 |
| School climate .....  | 300 |
| School practices focused on success .....   | 303 |
| School leadership .....   | 306 |
| Teachers' professional commitment .....   | 308 |
| Expectations of students' success .....   | 310 |
| Student motivation .....  | 312 |
| Adverse contextual conditions .....   | 314 |
| 7.5 Summary .....   | 322 |

## **VIII. Chapter 8: Conclusions and Implications**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 8.0 Introduction .....  | 323 |
| 8.1 Lessons from atypical schools .....                       | 325 |
| 8.2 Recommendations for practitioners and policy makers ..... | 327 |
| 8.3 Contribution to knowledge .....                           | 339 |
| 8.4 Limitations of the study .....                            | 345 |
| 8.5 Recommendations for further research .....                | 346 |
| 8.6 Final words .....   | 350 |

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| <b>List of References</b> ..... | 352 |
|---------------------------------|-----|

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| <b>Appendices</b> ..... | 382 |
|-------------------------|-----|

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Appendix 1: Example of participant consent form (teachers).....             | 382 |
| Appendix 2: Example of research information sheet (teachers) .....          | 384 |
| Appendix 3: Example of questionnaire-survey (teacher version-English).....  | 386 |
| Appendix 4: Example of questionnaire-survey (student version-Spanish).....  | 392 |
| Appendix 5: Example of semi-structured interview schedule (headteachers)... | 398 |
| Appendix 6: Example of focus group topics checklist (parents).....          | 403 |
| Appendix 7: Example of NVivo interview coding in tree nodes.....            | 404 |

## List of Tables

---

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table 2.2.1: Years of schooling .....   | 13  |
| Table 3.7.1: Edmonds' five school effectiveness factors list.....                 | 66  |
| Table 3.7.2: Lists of effectiveness factors considered by Scheerens (Part A)..... | 67  |
| Table 3.7.3: Lists of effectiveness factors considered by Scheerens (Part B)..... | 68  |
| Table 3.7.4: Lists of effectiveness factors considered by Scheerens & Bosker..... | 69  |
| Table 3.7.5: List of effectiveness factors proposed by Reynolds & Teddlie.....    | 71  |
| Table 4.5.1: Schools sample overview .....  | 123 |
| Table 4.5.2: Number of participants who took part in fieldwork .....              | 127 |
| Table 6.2.1: Analytical table-school climate.....                                 | 237 |
| Table 6.2.2: Analytical table-school practices focused on success .....           | 240 |
| Table 6.2.3: Analytical table-school leadership .....                             | 244 |
| Table 6.2.4: Analytical table-teachers' professional commitment .....             | 249 |
| Table 6.2.5: Analytical table-expectations of students' success .....             | 251 |
| Table 6.3.1: Summary table-main categories' overall results .....                 | 254 |

# List of Figures

---

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Figure 2.1.1: Map of Chile (regional division) .....              | 10 |
| Figure 3.6.1: The Scheerens Model (1990) .....                    | 57 |
| Figure 3.6.2: The Slavin/Stringfield Model (1992).....            | 58 |
| Figure 3.6.3: The Creemers Preliminary Model (1994) .....         | 59 |
| Figure 3.6.4: The Creemers Model (1994).....                      | 61 |
| Figure 3.6.5: The Creemers & Kyriakides Dynamic Model (2008)..... | 63 |

# **List of Abbreviations**

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BERA: British Educational Research Association

CICE: Centro de Investigaciones Culturales y Educativas (Cultural and Educational Research Centre Team)

CIVIC: Civic Education Study.

EER: Educational Effectiveness Research.

ICCS: International Civic and Citizenship Education Study.

ICILS: International Computer and Information Literacy Study.

ICSEI: International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement

IEA: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

IIEE: Investigación Iberoamericana sobre Eficacia Escolar (Iberoamerican School Effectiveness Study).

IQ: Intelligence Quotient.

ISEIC: International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre.

ISERP: The International School Effectiveness Research Project.

ISIP: International School Improvement Project

ISTOF: International System for Teachers Observation and Feedback

JUNAEB: Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas (National Association of School Assistance and Scholarships)

LGE: Ley General de Educación (General Law of Education).

LOCE: Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza (Organic Constitutional Law of Education).

LLECE: Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación (Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education).

MECESUP: Mejoramiento de la Calidad y Equidad de la Educación Superior (Higher Education Quality and Equity Improvement Programme).

MINEDUC: Ministerio de Educación (Ministry of Education).

MM: Mixed Methods.

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment.

PSU: Prueba de Selección Universitaria (University Selection Test).

QUAL: Qualitative.

QUAN: Quantitative.

REICE: Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación (The Iberoamerican School Effectiveness E-journal of Research on Quality Effectiveness and Change in Education)

RINACE: Red Iberoamericana de Investigación sobre Cambio y Eficacia Escolar (The Iberoamerican School Effectiveness and Improvement Research Network)

SE: School Effectiveness.

SEM: Structural Equation Modelling.

SEN: Special Educational Needs.

SER: School Effectiveness Research.

SES: Socio-economic Status.

SI: School Improvement.

SIMCE: Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación (System to Measure the Educational Quality).

SNED: Sistema Nacional de Evaluación por Desempeño (National Evaluation System based on Performance).

TER: Teacher Effectiveness Research.

TIMMS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.

UN: United Nations.

UNASUR: Union de Naciones Sudamericanas (Union of South American Nations).

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UTP: Unidad Técnico-Pedagógica (Unit of Curriculum and Evaluation)

VET: Vocational Education and Training.

VITAE: Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and Effectiveness.



# CHAPTER 1

---

## 1. Introduction

### 1.0 School effectiveness research (SER)

School effectiveness research (SER) has been an area of growing interest over the last 40 years: its development originated as a response to the work published by Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972). These studies highlighted the fact that the particular school attended by a student was not influential in his or her academic outcomes and proposed that certain contextual factors, such as, family background, economic and cultural background, race and IQ had a greater impact on student outcomes. As a reaction to these studies, which were extensively criticised, many researchers started to conduct school research with the intention of validating the role of the school as an important determinant of students' educational outcomes. It was as a result of this that the first school effectiveness studies started to emerge during the early 1970s.

Early SER studies validated the importance of school for students' academic achievement and social outcomes, but they also acknowledged the significance of contextual factors when assessing the effectiveness of a school. As a result of the first studies analysing school effectiveness, some main factors were found to be strongly associated with effective schooling: strong educative leadership, high

expectations of students' academic results, emphasis on the basic skills, a safe and disciplined climate and frequent evaluations of student progress (Edmonds, 1979).

From the 1970s until today, school effectiveness research has been an important area of interest, first, for developed, and more recently, for developing countries. During the last two decades, the importance of educational accountability has increased substantially, and this has engendered a growing concern about educational standards and equity. School effectiveness (SE) has joined forces with the school improvement (SI) field, in order to not only produce knowledge about effective schooling, but also to implement actions to increase the educational quality delivered by schools. Gradually, school effectiveness studies have increased their complexity by considering the many levels of interaction taking place at educational organisations such as, 'school level,' 'classroom level,' 'student level' and 'contextual level' (Creemers, 1994; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008). The teacher's role, classroom interactions and educational leadership have also been emphasised in school effectiveness research and linked to school improvement (Creemers, 1994; Harris et al., 2003; Day et al., 2007; Kington et al., 2011). The diversity of actors and areas that are addressed by school effectiveness research has resulted in researchers in the area renaming the field 'educational effectiveness research' (EER), which could be considered a more inclusive name. However, for the purposes of the present research, I have decided to mainly use the traditional term 'school effectiveness research' (SER) because it is more representative of what I am actually looking at in this study: namely a group of effective schools.

## **1.1 Rationale for my research**

After some years of experience working as a teacher and educational and vocational counsellor in different types of schools, I became aware of the significant differences between schools in terms of educational quality. My experiences in the municipal, private-subsidised and private educational sectors (see Chapter 2, section 2.2) helped me to realise the considerable differences between these schools in terms of students' educational outcomes and level of expectations. I witnessed the inequalities of the educational system that, at the same time, mirror the inequalities of society in general. In Chile, not all students have access to the same quality of education because they cannot afford it (see Chapter 2, section 2.5). This fact has important implications in terms of equity and social justice. Frequently, educational quality is significantly affected by contextual factors, such as background characteristics of the student intake (Lupton, 2003; Brunner, 2005; Harris et al., 2006). All these factors represent obstacles for the effectiveness of schools.

Due to all the factors previously mentioned, I became particularly interested in the field of school effectiveness with a special emphasis on disadvantaged contexts. I wanted to study the characteristics that make a school more effective, in order to produce some beneficial knowledge that could have an impact on Chilean educational policy and practice. In my personal view, a valuable contribution for the development of the educational system of a country, and, consequently, for the development of a country, is to work to increase the understanding of the

necessary conditions that will allow the quality and equity of education to be raised, with special attention paid to the most disadvantaged students.

## **1.2 Main aim of the research**

The main aim of this research is to gain greater understanding of the particular characteristics of effective schools in areas of social disadvantage and the influence of these particular features on the students' educational outcomes. In order to do this, a group of Chilean secondary schools which are located in socially deprived areas and which serve students at social risk are analysed. A mixed methodology approach is used to explore the features that seem to make these institutions particularly effective despite their context.

## **1.3 Research questions guiding this study**

1. What are the general factors that help to explain the greater success of this purposive sample of schools serving areas of social deprivation?
2. What are the distinctive features of each school that seem to make them more effective in terms of students' educational outcomes?
3. How do school history and context influence effectiveness?
4. What are the elements that differentiate these particular institutions from others serving similar student populations?

5. What are the lessons that can be learnt from these schools and the recommendations for practitioners and policy makers?

#### **1.4 Outline of the thesis**

In Chapter 1, I introduce the concept of ‘school effectiveness research’ (SER) and I present the rationale for this study, establishing its significance in the context of Chilean education. I also describe the main objective and research questions guiding this study. Finally, I briefly describe the contents of each chapter.

In Chapter 2, I present the background to this research by analysing the Chilean educational context. Firstly, I provide a brief overview of Chile as a country. After that, I explore its current educational structure and organisation, assessment system and higher education system. In addition to this, in the last part of the chapter, I explore the main educational reforms in the last decades and some current educational issues, such as the student demonstrations that have taken place during recent years. I link these issues with concerns about educational equity.

In Chapter 3, I explore the school effectiveness literature in order to provide a substantial overview of the relevant research in the area. Specifically, I present a general exploration of SER which includes definitions of SER; the main areas addressed by SER; the stages of SER; the methodology of SER; models of school effectiveness; key features of effective schools and the links between the areas of school effectiveness (SE) and school improvement (SI). In the last part of the

chapter, I reflect on the status of SER around the world, including Chile and Latin America. Finally, I address the main criticisms of SER.

In Chapter 4, I provide an overview of the methodology adopted. I start by trying to establish a connection between my educational interests, philosophical assumptions and methodological choices. I justify my choice of methodology in relation to my philosophical assumptions and my research aims. In addition, I provide a rationale for the use of mixed methods and I explain the use of a case study design to investigate schools. I also discuss my research samples; the methods used for data collection and the analysis processes. Additionally, I provide information about the pilot study and ethical issues. In the last section of the chapter, I reflect on the best ways to evaluate the quality of my research findings.

In Chapter 5, I present a summarised portrait of each school included in this study. In the first part of the chapter, I explore the four atypical schools and in the second part, the two typical schools<sup>1</sup>. In the school portraits, I present a thematic analysis of the main categories/themes associated with effectiveness. These themes emerged from my qualitative and quantitative findings, thus I illustrate each category using evidence from both sources.

In Chapter 6, I present a cross-case analysis of the six schools. Through the use of analytical tables in which I integrate my qualitative and quantitative findings, I compare the schools. Specifically I evaluate the findings from previous stages of analysis, across all the schools. I also assess the significance of the presence of

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4, section 4.5, for a description of atypical and typical schools.

these factors for each individual school. Overall judgements about the significance of each category for each school are made at the end of each table. In addition to this, interpretations and comparisons between typical and atypical schools are presented after each table. In the last section, I present a summarised analysis of the main categories.

In Chapter 7, I discuss my first four research questions (see section 1.3). Firstly, in addressing the two first questions, I reflect on the themes or factors that emerged from my study. I link these reflections with elements from the literature. Secondly, in addressing the third question, I establish connections between the effectiveness of the institution and its history and contextual elements. I try to provide a critical account of how these elements influence the effectiveness of the institutions. Finally, in addressing the fourth question, I reflect on each element that differentiates atypical schools from typical ones, trying to establish patterns that characterise effective institutions and less effective institutions in challenging circumstances.

Finally in Chapter 8, I summarise my main findings and state some recommendations for practitioners and policy makers. In doing so, I address my last research question (see section 1.3). Additionally, I also state the main contributions of my research and I critically analyse the limitations of my study. Finally, I give some recommendations for future research in the area, especially in the Chilean context.

# CHAPTER 2

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## 2. The Chilean Educational System

### 2.0 Introduction

In the following chapter, I describe the context in which Chilean education is situated. Firstly, I briefly provide some information about Chile as a country (2.1) in order to contextually situate this study. Secondly, I undertake a general examination of the main characteristics of the Chilean school system (2.2). Specifically, its organisation and structure, the secondary school system and the special programmes targeted at students who require particular attention or special educational arrangements. Thirdly, I address the assessment systems, including the national examination, SIMCE, and the international assessment processes in which Chile takes part (2.3). In addition to this, I explore the higher education system (2.4). Finally, I provide a reflection on previous educational reforms in Chile and the implications of these for the equity of the system (2.5).

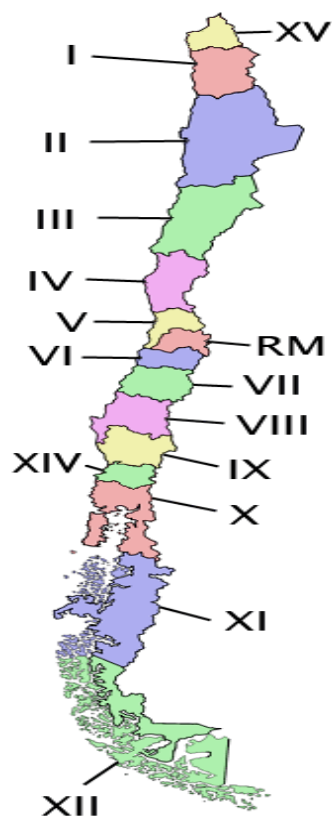
### 2.1 Country profile

For the reader to understand the specific context of this research, it is important to provide some information about Chile as a country, so I have included this within this chapter. Chile is a South American country with a population of around 17 million. Its neighbouring countries are Argentina, Peru and Bolivia. In terms of its



main geographical characteristics, it is a long, narrow country 4,300 kilometres long (or 2,700 miles), and on average 175 kilometres wide (or 109 miles). It has the Andes Mountains as a natural border separating Chilean territory from Argentina and to the west Chile is bordered by the Pacific Ocean with Peru and Bolivia making up the northern border. Chile's landscape and weather is very diverse, for example, in the north there is the Atacama Desert, which is the driest in the world. Contrastingly, in the south of the country there are native forests where the nature is virgin and extreme and the weather is wet and cold during much of the year. Chile is divided into 15 regions (see figure 2.1.1) which are subdivided into provinces and each province is further subdivided into districts ('comunas'). These districts or 'comunas' are administered by local authorities known as municipalities (city councils). The biggest regions are II (126,049.1 km<sup>2</sup>), XI (108,494.4 km<sup>2</sup>) and XII (132, 297.2 km<sup>2</sup>), but the most populated are the Metropolitan Region (RM), with a population of 6,745,651, and the Bío Bío Region (VIII), with a population of 2,009,549. The main Chilean cities are Santiago (the capital of the country), Concepción and Valparaíso. Santiago and Concepción are the capitals of the Metropolitan and Bío Bío regions respectively, and it is from these two regions that my schools were sampled. The Bío Bío Region is located 320 miles to the south of Santiago.

**Figure 2.1.1: Map of Chile (regional division)**



In relation to political administration, Chile is a unitary presidential republic and the government is democratic. All the governments since 1991 have been democratically elected with the majority being left wing. The exception is the current government which has a central-right orientation. The political history of Chile before 1991 is complex. For 17 years was a dictatorship led by a military government, with Augusto Pinochet as leader. This government took power with a coup d'état in 1973, from the socialist government of Salvador Allende. I have considered it important to mention these facts about the country, since the educational reforms that were promulgated during the military regime radically

changed the educational system in Chile, especially in terms of administration and funding. This topic will be discussed later in this chapter (see section 2.5).

Nowadays, Chile is a country characterised by political and economic stability. It is one of the leading economies in Latin America and in 2010 it became the first South American country to join the OECD<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, Chile is also characterised by high economic inequality, which is also evident in the educational system. This issue is addressed in another section of this chapter (see section 2.5). In addition, Chile is also a member of the United Nations (UN) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR<sup>3</sup>) and it has commercial agreements with all the major economies of the world. In the Human Development Index 2011 Report, Chile holds the 44<sup>th</sup> position out of 187 countries and it is the Latin American country with the highest ranking position. In this report, Chile was considered among the countries with very high human development. Given this information about Chile, it is possible to understand why the country is placing increasing importance on the quality of its educational system. As a member of organisations such as the OECD and UN, the Chilean educational system is being constantly evaluated and compared with other economies. Therefore, nowadays there is growing concern about Chile's results in national and also international educational assessment systems (see section 2.3).

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<sup>2</sup> OECD stands for Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

<sup>3</sup> UNASUR stands for Unión de Naciones Sudamericanas (Union of South American Nations).

## **2.2 Main characteristics of the Chilean school system**

As a way of clarifying some concepts about the Chilean educational system that are discussed later in this thesis, I considered it important to include a section that gives an overview of the main characteristics of the system. I am aware that the organisation of the educational systems differs considerably between countries, thus it is important to provide the reader with some general information about this particular educational context. In relation to the years of schooling, Chile has 12 years of mandatory education, which are divided into 8 of primary education<sup>4</sup>, followed by 4 years of secondary education<sup>5</sup> (see table 2.2.1). Until 2003, secondary education was not compulsory, but a reform to the system, which came into effect in 2004, made 12 years of education mandatory for all pupils. Pre-school education is not compulsory, but a significant number of children attend pre-school institutions for at least 1 year, before primary school.

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<sup>4</sup> Educación Básica

<sup>5</sup> Educación Media o Secundaria

**Table 2.2.1: Years of schooling**

| Grade/year  | Ideal age | Educational level                       |
|---|-----------|---|
| <b>Pre-school (Pre-kinder/ kinder)</b><br><br>(A significant number of children attend this level for at least 1 year, frequently when they are 4-5 years old). | 3-5       | Pre-school education<br>(not mandatory) |
| <b>Year 1</b>   | 6         | Primary education<br><br>(mandatory)    |
| <b>Year 2</b>   | 7         |   |
| <b>Year 3</b>   | 8         |   |
| <b>Year 4</b>   | 9         |   |
| <b>Year 5</b>   | 10        |   |
| <b>Year 6</b>   | 11        |   |
| <b>Year 7</b>   | 12        |   |
| <b>Year 8</b>   | 13        |   |
| <b>Year 1</b>   | 14        | Secondary education<br><br>(mandatory)  |
| <b>Year 2</b>   | 15        |   |
| <b>Year 3</b>   | 16        |   |
| <b>Year 4</b>   | 17        |   |

In 2010, the total school enrolment was 3,324,441, including pre-school, primary and secondary educational levels. The total coverage of pre-school education was 37%; primary education was 95% and secondary education 81% (considering students in the age group). In Chile almost all students start primary school, but a small percentage of them do not remain in, or do not complete, primary education. The situation is worse in secondary education, where according to the percentages given almost 20% of students do not complete the level. Many of them leave school during the last years of secondary education. The main reason for the drop-

out rate is social vulnerability. However, school coverage is much higher now than it was 20 years ago. An important review of Chilean educational policies reported a decrease in the school drop-out rates and an increase in educational coverage. This review explained these favourable facts in the following way:

“This expanded access is associated with rising expectations regarding education among lower income families, in a socio-cultural context that considers education to be a decisive factor for social mobility, and a school system that has become much better at receiving children from the poorest two quintiles of the population, providing them with assistance and keeping them studying.” (OECD, 2004, p.33).

### ***Classification of schools according to type of administration and funding***

The schools selected for this study and presented later in this thesis have some particular characteristics related to their type of administration and funding. For this reason, it is important to mention that regarding these two aspects, Chilean schools are classified into four categories:

1. **Municipal schools:** These schools are administered by the municipalities (city councils) of each Chilean district (comuna). This system of administration was created in 1981 under the educational reforms promulgated by the military government. They are financed with public funding.
2. **Private-subsidised schools:** These schools are administered privately but are financed by a per-pupil public subsidy and parental contributions.

3. **Corporation schools:** These schools are vocational institutions managed by corporations and financed with public funding and parental contributions.
4. **Private-paid schools:** These schools are administered privately and are financed solely from parental contributions.

According to information provided by the Ministry of Education, the total number of schools in the country was 12,036 in 2011 (MINEDUC<sup>6</sup>). Of these, 43% are municipal schools, 50% are subsidised schools and 7% are private schools.

### *Secondary school system*

This particular research is focused on secondary education. In Chile, as shown in table 2.2.1, the secondary tier of education takes 4 years. Secondary schools can be classified according to the type of education that they provide: humanistic-scientific schools with an academic orientation; professional-technical schools with a vocational orientation and polyvalent schools that offer both academic and vocational routes.

Humanistic-scientific secondary schools offer a general curriculum which includes traditional subjects, such as mathematics, language and sciences, and this pathway is more oriented towards higher education. The majority of schools in Chile have this orientation.

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<sup>6</sup> MINEDUC stands for 'Ministerio de Educación' (Ministry of Education)

Vocational secondary schools provide students with the opportunity to study a specialisation leading to employment after they finish secondary school. In the past, students started such courses from the first year of secondary school, which meant that they follow their specialisations for four years. Today the situation is different, due to a curricular reform that took place in 1998. This reform extended the general curriculum (academically based) from the 8 years of primary education to 10 years, and hence to include the first two years of secondary education. Therefore, vocational schools can only provide vocational education during the last two years of secondary school (Years 3 and 4, see table 2.2.1). At the national level, the number of occupational areas considered in vocational education is 14 and the number of specialities 46. As mentioned later in this chapter, all the schools included in my sample have a vocational orientation, although one of them is polyvalent, which means that it offers both vocational and academic routes.

### ***Special educational programmes***

Inclusive educational systems that integrate students with different educational needs, providing them with an equal opportunity to receive a quality education have increasingly become a requirement for the educational agendas of developing countries. In the following lines, I describe two of the inclusive educational programmes present in the Chilean system.

***Adult education:*** In Chile, there is a programme of adult education which is targeted at people who are older than the usual minimum age to start primary or



secondary education (16 years old is the limit to start secondary education). This programme offers in-person education (normally provided by schools in an evening school shift) and a flexible programme (which is structured to take account of the students' availability). The main objective of this programme is to promote opportunities for human, cultural, social and economic development, which is beneficial for the personal development of individuals and consequently for the progress of the country.

***Special educational needs programme:*** This programme focuses on the provision of special educational support for children or adolescents who have special educational needs (SEN). This support is provided through the use of specialised teaching staff, material resources and facilities. The main objective is to provide extra support to students who require special attention because they have a disability affecting their capacity to learn or to adapt to the typical classroom environment. This type of education is provided in mainstream schools, by specialists who work with small groups of children or with individual students, and in special schools. Today in Chile, around 850,000<sup>7</sup> students have special educational needs (SEN) and it is imperative to improve the coverage of special education services because the evidence indicates that in 2010 only 228,000 students received special support (MINEDUC).

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<sup>7</sup> In 2010, total school enrolment was 3,324,441, including the pre-school, primary and secondary educational levels.

## 2.3 Assessment systems

### *National assessment system (SIMCE)*

As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the most important criteria used to select my sample of schools were the results of a national examination known as SIMCE<sup>8</sup>. This exam has been the method used to measure educational standards in Chile since 1988. All the students in Year 4 of primary education have to take this test every year. In addition, this test has to be taken by either students in Year 8 of primary education or students in Year 2 of secondary education (see table 2.2.1), alternating between these two levels each year. This test is designed by the curriculum and evaluation unit of the Ministry of Education and its main objective is to provide reliable indicators of Chilean educational standards. This test is a standardised instrument applied by external evaluators in every school in the country. Traditionally, the subjects measured have been Language (Spanish) and Mathematics and, in some years, Sciences. Only recently, in 2010, two new subjects were introduced with an evaluation every two years. English SIMCE is applied to students in Year 3 of secondary education and Physical Education SIMCE to students in Year 8 of primary school.

SIMCE scores provide information about the attainment of a group of students from each school, which are compared to both the results of previous years in the same school, and to the results of other schools. In addition, results also provide information about each measured class within a school, which is compared with

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<sup>8</sup> SIMCE stands for ‘Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación’ (System to Measure the Educational Quality).

other measured classes in the same school. Scores are reported using a standard scale with a mean of 250 points (OECD, 2004).

As previously indicated, the main objective of SIMCE is to obtain accurate information about educational standards in Chile, in order to use this information for educational improvement purposes. The more specific uses of the test are:

1. **To focus the intervention** by detecting schools that demonstrate lower results, in order to support these institutions with special programmes (P-900, High School for All<sup>9</sup>). The information about SIMCE results is also useful for the allocation of resources.
2. **To provide incentives for teachers** by taking into account the SIMCE results for a school and their changes over time. Schools are ranked based on SIMCE scores and schools which demonstrate a good performance are given economic rewards that go to teachers. The national teachers' evaluation system (SNED<sup>10</sup>) considers SIMCE results as an essential element.
3. **To analyse educational policies** by using the SIMCE scores to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational projects and support programmes that have been implemented, in order to improve educational quality.
4. **To design of educational policies** by identifying the weaknesses of the system and the areas in which more emphasis must be placed for

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<sup>9</sup> Educational improvement programmes that have been introduced in Chile in schools that require additional support.

<sup>10</sup> SNED stands for 'Sistema Nacional de Evaluación por Desempeño' (National Evaluation System based on Performance).

educational improvement (e.g. national reading, writing and mathematics campaign).

5. **To evaluate the achievement of the curriculum** by assessing the student achievement level in relation to the curricular expectations.

In addition, it is important to mention that the use of SIMCE has received a lot of criticism from many sectors of Chilean society. This criticism is based on aspects such as, excessive expectations, diagnostic error, invalid information and insufficient information. This criticism has been gradually addressed by efforts that have sought to improve the quality of the test.

In relation to the use given to the information provided by SIMCE, it is possible to indicate that results are mainly used by economists who evaluate the quality of the educational system for implementation of budget related policies. Nevertheless, the information is not sufficiently used by educational researchers or practitioners. In general, schools and teachers do not make effective use of SIMCE results for educational improvement. Some of the reasons that can explain this situation are:

1. **Practitioners are sceptical about the reliability of the results of this test.** In relation to this point, teachers need more information to understand what these results mean in practice. They need to understand how this test helps the educational system.
2. **Teachers of other subjects (not measured by SIMCE) do not place the same importance on the test.** Since it is an examination only addressing certain school disciplines, the consideration of SIMCE results is not a

priority shared by all school members. In order to resolve this problem, school members should be convinced of the real value of this test for the improvement of their particular institution and they should work with a common objective.

3. **Traditionally, SIMCE results have been reported in a very un-user-friendly way, merely as a set of indicators without any guidance about how to improve the teaching in certain areas.** This problem has started to change recently. Academic achievement results should be accompanied by guidance and specific information for schools, in relation to the areas in which it is necessary to focus in order to improve the level of attainment in the future.

SIMCE can be regarded as an instrument of school accountability, thus there are certain pressures on schools to improve their results. When special intervention programmes or additional resources are given to schools, it is expected that the school will perform better. Other ways to apply pressure to schools, in a more positive way, are the use of incentives for schools. Extra pressure may come from school owners (in the case of private-subsidised schools or private institutions). This is frequently encouraged by free market competition between schools to attract students. In fact, school league tables are frequently used by some families to decide about the education of their children.

Finally, it is important to point out that the Ministry of Education is looking for more effective ways to use SIMCE results as a way to improve teaching and learning, and consequently educational quality. Traditionally, SIMCE results

have been more used for policy making and not sufficiently as an instrument to encourage reflection about the quality of education that schools are providing. This problem needs to be resolved with more effective use of SIMCE results. The information given by this examination should be complemented with other sources of information assessing aspects, such as educational coverage, equity in education and teaching practices.

### ***International assessment***

In addition to the national assessment system (SIMCE), Chile takes part in many other international education evaluation systems. These tests are: PISA (OECD), TIMMS (IEA), LLECE (UNESCO), ICILS (IEA), ICCS (IEA) and CIVEC (IEA)<sup>11</sup>. These tests have important differences from SIMCE, for example, they only evaluate a representative sample of students, whilst SIMCE evaluates all the students at a specific level. In addition to this, these tests give results per country and SIMCE gives results per school. In general the results of these evaluations demonstrate that the Chilean educational attainment is higher than that of other Latin American countries, but significantly lower than the attainment in developed countries. For example, the results of PISA 2009 demonstrate that Chile is the highest ranked Latin American country, but its results are considered significantly below the OECD average. These results indicate that there is still a lot to do in order to improve results, and one of the biggest challenges to increase educational quality in Chile is to improve the equity of the system. In relation to this point, Thomas et al. (2012, p.134) argue, “International comparative studies

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<sup>11</sup> See list of abbreviations.

have also pointed out that in Chile inequalities in education remain present” (OECD, 2002; OECD, 2007).

## **2.4 Higher education system**

This educational segment is not particularly addressed in this research, but it is an element considered in the reflections about educational expectations and future opportunities for students. Higher education was a matter discussed in all the secondary schools included in the sample, especially because of the problems of social inequality that affect the school system continue into higher education. Additionally, this chapter has the objective of situating this research in a particular context and giving the reader sufficient knowledge to understand how this context operates. For that reason, a holistic description of the elements of the Chilean educational system is justified and necessary.

Higher education in Chile is provided by three types of institutions: technical-training centres, professional institutes and universities. The structure of the current educational system in Chile is the product of decrees and laws that were promulgated in the 1980s and also from the Organic Constitutional Law of Education (LOCE) promulgated in 1990. These laws facilitated the creation of private higher education institutions which has resulted in the marketisation of education in Chile (OECD, 2004). During the last decades, the number of students enrolling in higher education has increased considerably, from 250,000 students in 1990 to more than 500,000 in 2002. During the same period, there was an increase from 12% to 32% in the proportion of students between the ages of 18

and 24 enrolling in higher education. In 2010, the percentage of the population in higher education was 33%. In addition, during the last years, there has been a significant increase in the number of students from the lower and middle classes gaining access to higher education (OECD, 2004). In terms of the financial assistance available to students to enable them to access higher education, there are subsidies, scholarships and financial aid. Students have access to credit or loans which they have to start repaying two years after graduation. Nevertheless, even considering these benefits, a high number of students do not get any support to study, especially the ones who study in private institutions, such as private universities, professional institutes or technical-training centres. These students need to invest a lot of money in their education and, unfortunately, higher education is very expensive in Chile. Benefits, such as scholarships and subsidies are more focused on students who study in traditional universities<sup>12</sup> and they are granted on the basis of students' previous academic performance (secondary education), their results in the university admission exam (PSU<sup>13</sup>) or their socio-economic status. Often, students from lower classes receive more support, but the cost of higher education in Chile is also high for the Chilean lower middle-class and middle-class and frequently students belonging to this social group receive fewer benefits and need to secure loans.

The neo-liberal laws promulgated in the 1980s in Chile under the military regime, and the continuation of this tradition by the democratic governments has done

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<sup>12</sup> Traditional universities include the 25 prestigious institutions that are members of the Chilean Council of Rectors. This group includes public institutions and others with private origins. They are autonomous, charge tuition fees to their students and receive public subsidies (OECD, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> PSU stands for 'Prueba de Selección Universitaria' (University Selection Test). In Chile students have to take this admission examination in order to gain access to most universities. This test is not necessary to gain access to professional institutes or technical training centres.



more harm than good to the educational system (see section 2.5). This is mainly because under these laws, it was made easier for private investors to create educational institutions and increase the education on offer. This could be regarded as a way to increase the number of people who have access to education. This has indeed happened. However, the problem is that these laws have affected the system because many of these new ‘for-profit institutions’ provide an unsatisfactory quality of education. In relation to this point, López (2011) indicates that a study developed by the research institute ‘Libertad y Desarrollo’ about the quality of universities in Chile, concluded that 81% of private universities are of low quality. In addition to this, a high number of students incur huge debts to pay for their education in these profit making institutions.

In order to tackle the problem of the quality of higher education, some measures have been taken. For example, in 1997, a programme to improve the quality and equity in higher education was introduced (MECESUP<sup>14</sup>). This programme has four components: quality assurance, institutional strengthening, competitive funds access, and advanced technical training programmes (OECD, 2004). Growing attention is being paid to the quality of teaching and research produced by universities in Chile and, in recent years, a formal process of accreditation of universities has begun as a way to evaluate the quality of higher educational institutions.

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<sup>14</sup> Mejoramiento de la Calidad y Equidad de la Educación Superior (Higher Education Quality and Equity Improvement Programme).

## **2.5 Previous reforms of the Chilean educational system and the problem of equity**

I have considered it necessary to explore some of the educational reforms that have taken place in Chile in the last decades because they are consistently related to the problem of equity which affects the Chilean educational system. In this research, I have addressed the problem of equity as it affects schools in challenging circumstances. Therefore, it is especially important to address this problem from a contextualised point of view, in order to establish relations between what is happening at the school level and what is taking place in the wider context.

The educational system in Chile has undergone some changes during recent decades. These innovations have been introduced as a response to the political agendas of the governments in power. It seems to be the case that education and politics can never be taken as independent matters, and when education is the concern, it is always necessary to consider the political scene during a specific period of time. In this section, I briefly outline the most recent history of Chilean education which I divide into the Pinochet Era and the Post-Pinochet Era (the Chilean military dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet lasted 17 years, from 1973 until 1990).

Under the military dictatorship of Pinochet, some educational reforms were introduced in order to establish a relationship between economic and educational policies. In the 1980s, the military government intervened in the educational system with the establishment of new policies that were generated as a result of a

more liberal economic system. In relation to this point, Hopkins (2006, p.3) argues, “Chile’s military government guided by a market driven philosophy intervened strongly in the educational system, introduced choice and decentralised school administration”.

Two specific educational policies were established during the 1980s, the first big change was ‘the decentralisation of education’. Under this measure, the management of schools was transferred to the municipal governments. During this time, three different types of schools were established: private-subsidised schools, municipal schools (both with public funding) and private-paid schools (see section 2.2). The decentralisation policy, however, produced problems for the educational system in that it was affected by a significant reduction in federal spending. The municipalities did not have sufficient economic resources to administer the local schools and for that reason they began to spend the provincial budgets on schools. This fact had important implications in terms of quality and equity in education because the wealthier municipalities could invest more in education in order to secure better material and human resources for education and, consequently, they were able to provide a better quality of education and more opportunities for students to access higher education. In contrast, the poorest municipalities did not have enough resources to assure high quality education and opportunities for their students. In relation to this point, Arango (2008) argues “this new funding procedure subsequently triggered a divide in the quality of education between wealthier municipalities, which could afford to extend a substantial part of their budget toward schools, and poorer municipalities, which suffered the consequences of a fast withdrawal of federal funding”.

The second educational policy was ‘the privatisation of the educational system’ through the introduction of a system of school vouchers. According to Arango (2008), “government-provided vouchers have encouraged private schools to enter the educational market place in order to compete for government funding alongside municipal educational institutions”. Under the voucher policy, both municipal schools and private-subsidised schools receive a subsidy for every student who attends the school. This measure encourages competition between schools for student enrolment and good attendance rates. However, the chances of fair competition for the municipal schools are reduced, because the students that attend these schools are more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds and in many cases the condition of social deprivation in which they live affects their attendance and, consequently, the attendance rates of their schools. Matear (2006) showed evidence of this problem, indicating that in 2000, 81% and 72% of the primary and secondary municipal school population respectively, were from the lowest five income deciles in the country. In contrast, the private schools subsidised by the government invest a lot more in pedagogical resources and infrastructure and this in turn allows them to attract more students. Pupils attending private subsidised institutions have to pay a school fee to study, but considerably less than in a private school. The fees these schools charge depend on the facilities and the educational results they have. Some private-subsidised schools charge very little, whilst others charge an amount not very far from private school fees (they are also obliged by law to provide a percentage of fee scholarships for students). Therefore, these schools have two main sources of funding, parents’ contributions and public subsidies. This situation has allowed

the creation of many 'for profit-schools', whose main interest is to obtain government subsidies.

A study conducted by Carnoy (1998) examines the national voucher plans in Chile and Sweden. According to this research, the voucher system neither improves quality in education nor has positive repercussions in terms of equity in education. As a result of the privatisation of schools under the voucher measures, there was a large movement of students from the private-paid system to the private-subsidised one, because school fees were cheaper and the resources and infrastructure of the new subsidised schools were similar to private schools. In addition, private- subsidised schools were allowed to select students and only the best students of the municipal sector were accepted and even funded by private-subsidised schools through the percentage of scholarships they have to provide by law. This situation produced a high concentration of underachieving students in municipal schools. As a consequence of the privatisation measures, less advantaged student populations with learning difficulties, social and economic problems, and who require more support and resources, were given less funding because their attendance levels and results were lower. This fact affected considerably the quality of public education in Chile and the opportunities for students attending municipal schools.

After the Pinochet Era and with the beginning of the democratic period or Post-Pinochet Era, new governments tried to introduce rapid change in the educational system as an element of their political agendas which, this time, were driven by an interest in social inclusion. Elements such as equity and opportunities are believed

to be given high importance by modern democracies. For that reason, it was necessary to give the educational system a more democratic character; show more concern about municipal education; improve the quality of education in the more deprived areas and provide more opportunities to poor students to receive a better quality of education and access to higher education. It was imperative to build a more equal society in which people from different social backgrounds could have the opportunity to have a position and a say in the leading spheres of the society. Therefore, in the 1990s, after the dictatorship period, an important educational reform was introduced by the first democratic government. According to Hopkins (2006, p.4), the new educational system included many structural changes, some of these were:

- Innovations and modernisations in the curriculum.
- Introduction of school computer networks (Enlaces).
- Move from double to single shift day in the schools.
- Networking among schools serving disadvantaged populations.
- More attention was given to school accountability, standard raising and competitiveness.
- The SIMCE test that was introduced in the 1980s was modernised.
- The system of vouchers to private subsidised schools, introduced by the military government, was preserved and the numbers of new schools operating under the system of private/public funding increased dramatically.

Nowadays, after two decades of the implementation of this reform, the original intentions to improve the quality and equality of the national educational system have only been partially realised. The standards of attainment measured by national and international examinations are still below those of developed countries, even though great effort has been spent in order to improve educational quality. In addition, the Chilean educational system still presents evident inequalities that are a consequence of the inequalities present in the Chilean society. For example, students attending municipal schools do not receive the same quality of education and do not have the same opportunities as students attending private- subsidised or private-paid schools. In relation to this point, Arango (2008) argues, “the obvious inequality in teacher supply and student resources differentiates public from private education and reveals a direct correlation with the level of student achievement”.

The results of the study conducted by Matear (2006) could be considered a clear example of the inequality of the system. This study found that the percentage of students who are accepted to universities and come from private schools is considerably higher than the percentage of those coming from municipal education. For example, some years ago, only 27% of the students admitted to the Universidad de Chile were educated in the municipal sector.

In 2006, the inequalities of the educational system in Chile, the consequence of the major policies introduced in the 1980s, which were addressed in this chapter (decentralisation or municipalisation of education and privatisation), generated a strong reaction from secondary school students. This movement was known as

‘The Penguins’ Revolution’. During that year there were massive protests and demonstrations in Santiago and other cities in Chile. Students demanded the derogation (partial revocation) of the LOCE (Organic Constitutional Law of Education); changes in the structure of the educational system; improvement in the educational quality and equity; an end to the discriminatory practices in the admission to private-subsidised schools; an end to the municipalisation of education (decentralisation policy); free student transport cards; free university admission tests; etc. The government of Michelle Bachelet heard the demands of students, offered some structural changes to the system and proposed a new educational law, known as LGE<sup>15</sup> (General Law of Education).

This new law attempted to eliminate discriminatory practices in the admission of the students to private subsidised education and established a National Educational Council and a Quality Assurance Agency to monitor schools and proposed a redistribution of government funds towards municipal education. Nevertheless, opponents argued that this law did not consider a change in the financial structural system of vouchers for private subsidised education. According to the students, the LGE preserved the inequalities of the educational system in Chile. These students demanded an education of quality for all and more opportunities for those coming from low income families who did not have the opportunity to attend a private institution, in order to receive a better education and future access to higher education. This law introduced some positive changes to the system, regulated and adapted the privatisation and decentralisation policies but did not eliminate them. It was finally approved in 2009.

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<sup>15</sup> LGE stands for ‘Ley General de Educación’ (General Law of Education).



Since 2006, there have been student demonstrations every year not only by secondary students but also university students. In 2011, there were a lot of demonstrations by secondary and university students. Many schools and universities were occupied for months. Chilean students demanded free education and the end of the 'educational business' of many for-profit education institutions. These demands were partially heard by the government of Sebastian Piñera, which increased the education budget, in order to provide more financial support for students from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Nevertheless, the government has systematically rejected moves towards a completely free education system. It is hoped that the greatest inequalities of Chilean society will not continue to be reproduced in the educational system. The most disadvantaged populations have the same right to receive quality education and equal opportunities as more privileged social groups. This is the challenge of the educational system.

## **2.6 Summary**

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the Chilean educational system by giving information about its structure and organisation. I have provided specific information about aspects such as: classification of schools by their type of administration and funding system; vocational education; the assessment system; higher education opportunities and the main educational policies that have impacted upon the educational quality, equity and opportunities in Chile. The inclusion of these elements has fulfilled my intention of providing a clear contextual reference framework to my research. Different countries organise their educational systems differently and they have different policies and heritages. Therefore, it is very important to provide references for the reader. In the following chapter I will provide a detailed review of the literature in the field of school effectiveness and I also include an overview of the research literature from Latin America and Chile.

# CHAPTER 3

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## 3. Literature Review

### 3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a review of the literature concerning school effectiveness research. I introduce the chapter with a general overview of the area (3.1) in which I explore the history of school effectiveness research (SER). After that, I provide the main definitions of SER (3.2); I describe the main stages of SER (3.3); I consider the literature addressing school effectiveness in contexts of deprivation (3.4) and I discuss the main methodologies used in SER (3.5). In the following section, I describe the different models of school effectiveness research (3.6), the key features of effective schools (3.7) and the links between school effectiveness and school improvement (3.8). Finally, in the last sections of the chapter, I consider the status of SER around the world, including Latin America and Chile (3.9). I conclude the chapter by discussing the main criticisms of SER (3.10).

### 3.1 Overview of school effectiveness research

School effectiveness research (SER) has been an area of interest in the last four decades in many countries, especially in the United Kingdom, the United States and the Netherlands. There are many reasons underlying this special interest in the

field, but it is important to indicate that the main “catalysts” (Sammons 1999, p.ix) that attracted the attention of educational researchers were the studies conducted by Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972). These studies concluded that the particular school attended by pupils was not influential in their academic achievement. They argued that contextual factors such as, family background, economic and cultural origins or socio-economic status (SES), race and IQ had a greater impact on students’ outcomes.

In addition to the Coleman and Jencks studies, in the 1970s Hauser et al. also demonstrated that the influence of the school characteristics upon the students’ outcomes was not as influential as the background determinants of a student. In relation to this point, Reynolds & Teddlie (2000, p.6) indicated that “the Hauser studies, conducted in high schools in the USA, concluded that the variance between schools was within the 15-30 per cent range and was due to mean of SES (socio-economic status) differences, not to characteristics associated with effective schooling.”

In 1967, *‘The Plowden Report’* was published in Britain. This report highlighted the importance of the problem of ‘social handicaps’ as determinants of the students’ school performance. This work established some links between social disadvantage and educational outcomes.

After the release of these controversial studies, which were heavily criticised on methodological and theoretical grounds, many educational researchers turned their attention to school effectiveness research (SER). It is well known that these

controversial findings motivated the early research into school effectiveness as a reaction to the pessimistic view which believed that the particular school attended by students had almost no influence on their academic performance in comparison to the impact of their background characteristics. Researchers wanted to validate the role of the school as a crucial determinant of students' achievement. For that reason, since the 1970s, many studies of school effectiveness have been conducted. Researchers' main interest has been to establish whether 'school matters', because they are not convinced by the pessimistic view that emphasises the idea that "schools make no difference" (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000, p.3).

Early school effectiveness research (SER) studies were focused on the promotion of equity in education. The main aim of SER was an education of quality for all. The specific aim was that children from deprived urban communities should attain a similar level of educational achievement to those from more privileged backgrounds. These first studies concluded that the school could play an important role in promoting or reducing students' educational success. It was found that there were some factors which were closely related to school effectiveness, such as: strong educational leadership, high expectations about the academic results of the students, emphasis on the basic skills, a safe and disciplined climate and frequent evaluations of student progress (factors proposed by Edmonds in 1979). Considering all this early work, it was possible for the researchers to affirm that both the school and teachers can have a significant influence on the academic performance of the students. The differences in effectiveness could be measured and the features associated with greater or lesser effectiveness identified.

Early SER also emphasised the role of the school intake and their social background as important contextual factors that have to be considered in SER. In relation to this point, Sammons (2007, p.3) indicated that “School effectiveness research has focused on exploring the role of educational experiences and influences but does not seek to ignore or marginalise the role of other factors”. In fact, social background has often been considered a key factor for the academic success of students and for their later occupational life. According to Sammons (1999, p.5) “classical educational sociology emphasised the impact of social class and inequality as determinants of students’ (‘usually males’) educational and later occupational outcomes, and was concerned with the reproduction of the social order”. It seems that the social context in which individuals have grown up can strongly impact upon their quality of life in the future. For example, their levels of educational achievement at school are closely related with higher education opportunities and consequently with better professional opportunities. SER has been significantly influenced by the social justice claims that demand that any student from a disadvantaged background has equal access to quality educational opportunities in line with those who belong to a more privileged social context. For that reason, since its early stages SER has often paid a lot of attention to disadvantaged school communities (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks et al., 1972; Hauser, 1971; Hauser et al., 1976).

During the last two decades, school effectiveness research (SER) has continued to be considered an important area of interest for many countries, since concepts such as “accountability” have become more influential in the educational arena. Market oriented policies have led to the publication of school league tables in

some countries, in order to raise educational standards and inform parents about the educational choices for their children. In the UK, more notably in England, school effectiveness research (SER) has influenced educational policy. SER has had important practical repercussions, since many school effectiveness studies have been commissioned by the government, with the objective of identifying the actions necessary to improve the quality of education and educational results.

### **3.2 Definitions of school effectiveness**

The school effectiveness movement has been strongly associated with students' outcomes and with the concept of "value added" (McPherson, 1992). Mortimore (1991) defined an effective school as "one in which students progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake". Sammons (1999, p.76) argues that "an effective school thus adds 'extra value' to its students' outcomes in comparison with other schools serving similar intakes". In the same publication, Sammons (p.xi) indicates that "school effectiveness is more appropriately seen and used as a method of increasing our understanding of school and classroom processes, and the way these can influence students' educational outcomes".

In my personal formulation and understanding of the concept of school effectiveness, I take elements from all the above definitions. In this particular study, I am using a definition that emphasises the concepts of 'school processes', 'value added', 'educational outcomes', and 'school intake'. By combining these elements, I elaborated the following definition:

“An effective school is one in which particular school processes add extra value to the educational outcomes of its students in comparison with schools serving similar student intakes”.

The concept of school effectiveness has been extensively criticised and characterised as ‘reductionist’ (Wrigley, 2004). One of the main sources of criticism is its tendency to use the level of academic attainment to categorize schools as effective or ineffective. In fact, ‘effective schools’ are considered to be the ones that do well in terms of academic results measured by standardised examinations. However, this ‘reductionist definition’ focused on pupil attainment probably characterized the early development of the field, although even some early studies included the analysis of a wide range of educational outcomes (Rutter et al., 1979; Mortimore et al., 1988). According to Muijs et al. (2011), during the last decade researchers have studied a wide range of issues, including well-being and capability (De Fraine et al., 2005; Kelly, 2007), self-concept (De Fraine et al., 2007), attitudes to school (Van de Gaer et al., 2009), mental health (Modin & Ostberg, 2009), physical health (West et al., 2004), and problem behaviour (Sellstrom & Bremberg, 2006), amongst others.

More recently,, the majority of school effectiveness studies include the analysis and reflection on other students’ educational outcomes and use varied methodologies, including case studies and mixed methodologies to focus on school educational processes rather than on the discovery of school key effectiveness characteristics through statistical correlations (Wrigley, 2004). However, it has to be acknowledged that academic outcomes are still the focus of a big number of school effectiveness studies. School effectiveness advocates argue that this tendency is completely justified because attainment is a key



outcome and one of the aims of schooling. Attainment has a relationship with pupils' future life chances and it is argued to be the outcome more susceptible to school effects (Muijs et al., 2011).

It has been argued that an 'effective school' is not necessarily a 'good school' which can be true in many cases. Nevertheless, I think that many of the so called 'effective schools' are also 'good schools', as it has been demonstrated by this research. Probably, the fact that a school prepares students for standardised examinations does not make it a good school, but I argue that many of the educational processes taking place in schools that are somehow associated with good student academic performance can make a school a good educational institution. These educational processes add extra value to students' personal and social educational outcomes and not only to the academic ones. For example, a school that promotes positive and peaceful relationships between students and between students and teachers in the classrooms is contributing to improve the academic achievement of their students through the creation of an appropriate environment for learning. In addition, it is also contributing to the development of better social outcomes for students who learn in an environment where they are valued and respected.

It is widely considered that a good school is one that provides students with skills that will make them capable of life learning. In other words, good schools give them the tools to become active, independent and critical learners able to solve problems in a creative way. I would argue that if a school has provided students with those learning tools, examinations that measure the knowledge in some

traditional curricular areas should not be a problem for them, especially considering that nowadays school based and external assessment in developed and developing societies use problems solving and critical thinking strategies to assess student knowledge. Considering this, it seems reasonable to argue that a good school should be also an effective school.

Based on the previous ideas, I argue that the unfairly criticised ‘effective schools’ are commonly good schools characterised by effective educational processes and not only by good student attainment levels.

### **3.3 Stages of school effectiveness research**

From the mid-1960s until the early 1970s, the majority of studies were designed upon a basis of input-output dynamics. These studies were economically driven and their main focus was the analysis of the influence of human and physical resources on students’ outcomes. Additionally, these studies also explored student background characteristics (student socio-economic status or SES) and the association between these and student achievement. Some of the most relevant studies conducted in this period, already mentioned in this chapter are: Coleman et al. (1966), Jencks et al. (1972), Hauser (1971), Hauser et al. (1976).

From the early to late 1970s, the focus of SER was the study of the specific characteristics of effective schools and the influence of these on the students’ outcomes. Many of these studies were a response to the studies conducted by Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972). Researchers started to study

schools that were successful in educating students from poor backgrounds. These studies intended to contribute to the understanding of the specific processes going on in these particular institutions. The classic samples of schools included urban, elementary, low SES schools. If the researchers could prove that these schools could be successful, this fact “would dispel the belief that schools made little or no difference” (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000, p.7). One of the classic studies of this type is the research of Weber (1971) who conducted case studies in four low-SES urban schools that were particularly interesting because they presented high achievement in one specific level. His research focused specifically on the inner processes of these schools in order to identify the main school features, such as strong leadership, high expectations and evaluations of the students’ progress.

Some studies conducted during this stage tried to assess the influence of other school actors on students’ achievement, especially the role of teachers. According to Reynolds & Teddlie (2000, p.7), “the research of Summers & Wolfe (1977), Murnane (1975), and others (e.g. Armor et al., 1976; Winkler, 1975) demonstrated that certain characteristics of classroom teachers were significantly related to the achievement of their students”. Some of these studies found a positive relationship between students’ achievement and some variables related to human resources, such as “student sense of control of their environment”, “principals’ evaluation of teachers,” “quality of teachers’ education”, and “teachers’ high expectations for students” (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000, p.8). Other studies stressed the significant influence of peers on students’ achievement (e.g. Brookover et al., 1979; Hanushedk, 1972; Henderson et al., 1978; Summers & Wolfe, 1977; Winkler, 1975).

The results of many studies conducted in this period were criticised for the inadequacy of the measures used to control the school-classroom processes. This situation contributed to the assumption that the variation of effectiveness between different schools was associated with family background rather than with educational processes. This criticism was addressed by the research of Brookover et al. (1978, 1979) who designed more sophisticated instruments to measure the perceptions of school stakeholders about school climate.

From the late 1970s until the mid-1980s the studies of school effectiveness were mainly focused on the creation of school improvement programmes. At this stage attention was not only focused on knowing the causes of the ineffectiveness of a particular school, but also in searching for solutions for this underachievement. In this period, research was highly focused on 'equity' and a researcher who was especially important at that time was Ron Edmonds. He conducted studies during the late 1970s into effective schools in deprived areas. According to Reynolds & Teddlie (2000, p.10), "Edmonds and his colleagues were no longer interested in just describing effective schools: they also wished to create effective schools, especially for the urban poor". The research conducted by Edmonds produced a model of five factors related to effective schooling:

1. Strong educational leadership.
2. High focus on instruction.
3. A safe and orderly school climate.
4. High expectations of students' achievement.

5. Frequent monitoring of student achievement to evaluate the school's effectiveness.

The main criticism of the SER studies produced during the “effective schools research era” in the USA focused on the fact that the equity orientation of these studies led to biased samples that included only low SES schools and did not consider schools from other contexts (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000, p.10).

In a paper that discusses the State of the Art of Educational Effectiveness Research (EER) presented at the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) in 2011, Reynolds et al. identified as just one extended stage of school effectiveness research the period that covered stages 1, 2 and 3 proposed by Teddlie & Reynolds (2000). Between the relevant studies that were undertaken during the period mid 1960s till mid 1980s this review highlighted the studies by Coleman et al. (1966), Jencks et al. (1972), Edmonds (1979), Rutter et al. (1979), Smith & Tomlinson (1989), Mortimore et al. (1988), Weber (1971) and Reynolds (1976).

According to Reynolds & Teddlie (2000), from the late 1980s to 2000, the year of the publication of “the International Handbook of School Effectiveness Research” the main focus has been on the introduction of context variables and the use of sophisticated methodologies in the study of school effects, effective schools and school improvement.

This period of SER, which mainly focused on school context characteristics, introduced many methodological advances. The methodologies were more sophisticated at this stage. Some of these studies were conducted by researchers such as: Hallinger & Murphy (1986); Teddlie et al. (1985, 1990). These studies focused on the exploration of the contextual factors that were producing higher or lower effectiveness in middle class schools, suburban schools and secondary schools. These studies were accompanied by a shift from the equity ideal to the efficiency ideal (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000, p.10).

The introduction of school context studies justified methodological changes. This period witnessed the development of multi-level mathematical models in order to measure the size of the effects of the contextual factors associated with schooling.

Reynolds et al. (2011) suggest that there have been 4 stages in SER since the mid-1980s. Firstly, a stage characterised by the introduction of sophisticated statistical approaches, such as multi-level methodologies. In this period, the study of the scientific properties of school effects was in relation to aspects such as, their stability; their consistency considering different outcome domains; the differential effects considering different students' background characteristics; the size of school effects and the long term school effects.

Secondly, the following stage began in the early to mid-1990s and the focus of many studies from this time was to analyse the reasons for the different effects between schools. Some of the influential publications from these years are the

Louisiana School Effectiveness Studies by Teddlie & Stringfield (1993) and the work of Sammons et al. (1997) about subject department effects.

Thirdly, the next phase began during the second half of the 1990s and extended for a decade, although it is still evident today. This stage is characterised by the internationalisation of school effectiveness research. Also in this phase, school effectiveness researchers started to move closer to both the ideas of their colleagues in the school improvement field and also to practitioners. This had an influence on the tradition of SE research that started to place more importance on cultural aspects of the school processes. There was recognition on the part of quantitative researchers that school research requires a more holistic approach. As it is the analysis of organisations that work with people. In consequence, many researchers started to introduce the use of qualitative methodologies in their research.

Finally, the last stage of SER started in the late 2000s. This is characterised by the establishment of dynamic relationships between the different levels of the educational systems (context-level, school-level, classroom-level and student-level). These interactions are not static and reciprocal. This new era has been mainly initiated by the work of Creemers & Kyriakides (2008) with their *“dynamic model of educational effectiveness”*. The new methodologies proposed integrate the use of ‘structural equation modelling’ (SEM).

### **3.4 School effectiveness in deprived contexts**

As was previously discussed in this chapter, many of the first school effectiveness studies in the United States and in the UK had a particular emphasis on disadvantaged communities (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks et al., 1972; Edmonds, 1979; Rutter et al., 1979). The early equity orientation of the field has been shared by many other more contemporary researchers who have studied effective, ineffective and improving schools in challenging contexts (Louis & Miles, 1990; Maden & Hillman, 1993; Maden, 2001; Henchey, 2001; Lupton, 2003; Harris et al., 2006). Almost all these studies have been conducted in the UK with the exception of the works by Louis & Miles (1990) and Henchey (2001) conducted in United States and Canada respectively.

All the studies previously mentioned share some similarities with my study. For example, the work by Louis & Miles (1990) employed in-depth case studies in the analysis of five improving secondary urban schools. The work by Henchey (2001) reports the analysis of twelve Canadian urban and public schools in BC, Alberta and Quebec. The purpose of the study was to examine the inner workings of secondary schools in low-income settings which produce high achievement for their students. This particular objective is quite similar to the one presented in this thesis. In addition to this, the schools in the Henchey study were selected on the basis of their achievement in provincial school leaving examinations and their socio-economic status based on parental income and education. The sample of schools included both high and low-achieving schools in order to identify the factors that appeared to contribute or inhibit student success. All these criteria



were also used to select my sample. Furthermore, the research methodology used in the Henchey study is qualitative and case studies were used to explore each school and illustrate the performance-related practices within the schools. In my particular study I use a mixed methodology, but I have also conducted case studies to analyse the schools selected for my sample.

The study by Harris et al. (2006) analysed eight schools (six secondary and two primary schools) from deprived areas in England that have improved their performances considerably within five years. All these institutions have been studied employing in depth case studies. The qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews which were conducted with headteachers, subject leaders, classroom teachers, support staff and groups of pupils in each school. This particular study has some similarities with my study, since I have also used case studies that include qualitative information from school stakeholders such as headteachers, teachers and pupils.

A third study that shares some similarities with my study is that reported by Lupton (2006). She conducted a qualitative study of four secondary schools located in poor neighbourhoods. The research objective was to explore the links between the contexts in which the schools were operating and the quality of education that these institutions were able to provide. My study also includes only secondary schools in disadvantaged areas. In addition, it also explores the links between some of the specific contextual characteristics of the schools and the quality of education delivered in these schools.

It is particularly relevant for the present research work to discuss some studies of school effectiveness in deprived contexts conducted in Chile. This will be done in a later section of this chapter (see section 3.9).

### **3.5 Methodology of school effectiveness studies**

School effectiveness methodological tradition has been defined by proponents as more quantitative than qualitative, as the following quotation by Sammons (1999) suggests:

“Although some studies have employed qualitative approaches, commonly via case studies of particular institutions, the more dominant mode is typified by large scale quantitative studies involving the longitudinal follow-up of fairly large numbers of students and schools and by a search for generalisations rather than particularities” (p.1)

Nevertheless, as this previous quotation also indicates, some researchers have used qualitative methodologies, especially by employing case studies in the research into schools. An example of an influential qualitative approach using case studies of successful schools in challenging contexts in England was “Success against the Odds - Five Years On” (Maden, 2001).

From the mid-1980s, the school effectiveness field started to show an increasing sophistication in the type of methods used to assess school effects. There was recognition of the importance of contextual factors to understand the extent of the impact of schools on student outcomes. In the assumption that an effective school “adds extra-value to its students outcomes” (Sammons 1999, p.76), researchers started to focus on measures to evaluate the value added effect of schools.

### ***Value added analyses***

The search for more reliable and fair ways to measure the accountability of school performance led educational researchers, local educational authorities and governments to consider the introduction of context factors in their measures of academic outcomes. Researchers began to use value added techniques for the evaluation of school success. For example, the information about students' academic results and attendance rates started to be analysed considering variables such as sex, year and ethnic background. In the following lines, Stoll & Mortimore (1997, p.10) provide a definition of the value added technique:

“Value added is a technique designed to make fair comparisons between schools. It yields estimates of average progress for each institution. To assess the ‘value’ added by the school, it is essential to adjust for various background factors and for prior attainment by the individual child”.

According to school effectiveness researchers the use of value added measures is necessary and completely justified. It is illogical to pretend a fair comparison of different schools without considering contextual factors as indicated by Stoll & Mortimore (1997, p.10):

“To assess effectiveness of different schools without taking such information into account is like comparing apples with oranges. Unless schools are compared on a ‘like with like’ basis, judgements are neither fair nor valid”.

### ***Methodological advances in the last 20 years***

Methodological advances in school effectiveness research during the 1990s, especially in the UK, include the consideration of the ‘stability of school effects’ over time. School effects’ measures are better judged when analysed over a period

of time, rather than on only one occasion. There are many studies exploring school effects over a period of the time. In relation to this aspect Reynolds (2010) highlighted the studies of Goldstein et al. (1993) and Gray et al. (1995).

Two other aspects that have been considered when school effects are measured are 'consistency of school effects upon different outcomes' and 'size of school effects'. In relation to the former aspect, Reynolds (2010) mentioned the studies of Goldstein et al. (1993) and Sammons et al. (1993) and concerning the latter, he highlighted Daly (1991) and Gray et al. (1990).

Finally, regarding 'school effects for different groups of pupils', there is agreement about the fact that different children do better than others depending on contextual factors, such as social class, ethnic origin and previous level of attainment. Here Reynolds (2010) mentioned the studies by Jensson & Gray (1991); Goldstein et al. (1993) and Sammons et al. (1993). This difference in performance can also be appreciated when the results in different subjects are analysed, which is known as 'subject department effects upon performance'. The variation of the effects can be explained by the capability of the different school departments to promote better results between their particular students. A study that analysed the differences in effectiveness of different school departments in secondary education is 'Forging Links' (Sammons et al., 1997).

In the previously mentioned educational effectiveness review presented in ICSEI (2011), Reynolds and colleagues discussed the methodological advances in school effectiveness research that have taken place over time, from the 1990s until today.

These advances are characterised by the use of ‘multi-level modelling’, ‘meta-analysis’, ‘structural equation modelling’ (SEM), ‘growth curve modelling’ and ‘mixed methods research’ (MM). All the statistical procedures mentioned represent advances on previous methods or complement their potential. For example, ‘meta-analysis’ technique represents a further development of traditional multi-level analysis.

The use of mixed methods research provides more flexibility to address different research questions and provide opportunities to complement findings of different research traditions to finally reach a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being addressed. Nowadays, the use of mixed method approaches is becoming increasingly popular in the school effectiveness field, as reported by Sammons (2010). In this particular work, the author explores the potential of mixed methodologies (MM) for educational effectiveness research and employs some recent studies to illustrate the use of this approach in the field of educational effectiveness. She also discusses the processes of analysis of mixed data, emphasising the processes of data integration and synergistic interpretation and understanding of findings. Finally she reflects upon issues related to the paradigmatic controversies that have arisen from the use of mixed methods. Since the present study has used a mixed method approach, I provide detailed information about this methodological tradition in Chapter 4.

Some examples of recent publications reporting the use of mixed methods in educational effectiveness are the studies by Sammons et al. (2005, 2007); Day et al. (2006, 2008); Kington et al. (2011); Ko (2010) and Jang et al. (2008). Some of

these studies are based on the same research project about teachers' lives, work and effectiveness (VITAE). Specifically, Sammons et al. (2007) report the key findings and implications of the project and Day et al. (2006, 2008) deal with the use of a mixed method design, the integration of findings and the synergetic approaches to the understanding of findings. The study, of Kington et al. (2011) focuses on the analysis of effective classroom practices that contribute to effective teaching. This is an independent project which builds on and extends the previously mentioned project (VITAE). The study, Sammons et al. (2005) deals with the investigation of the effects of pre-school provision. The work by Ko (2010) reports a PhD investigation on teachers' practices and finally the study by Jang et al. (2008) discusses the use of an integrative mixed method approach in a study focusing on the improvement of urban schools facing challenging circumstances.

### **3.6 Models of school effectiveness**

School effectiveness is an area that has sometimes been criticised for the lack of theoretical models that can help researchers to provide a framework to their work. The research in the area is frequently concerned with the definitions of factors associated with effectiveness through the study of the statistical relationships between different variables, or the study of school processes through case studies. It is not very common to find research in the area whose main aim is the generation and testing of theories that could explain the relationships between variables associated with effectiveness (Creemers, 2002). According to Creemers & Kyriakides (2008), "there is a shortage of well-developed theoretical models

from which researchers in the area of effectiveness can build theory”. Nevertheless some progress in relation to this aspect has been made since the 1990s.

During the 1990s, prominent researchers proposed models of educational effectiveness. According to Creemers & Kyriakides (2008, p.6), “researchers in the 1990s attempted to develop models of educational effectiveness by integrating the findings of school effectiveness research (SER), teacher effectiveness research (TER) and early input-output studies” (e.g. Creemers, 1994; Scheerens, 1990; Stringfield & Slavin, 1992). According to Scheerens & Bosker (1997, p.45), the main characteristics of the models developed in the 1990s are as follows:

- Antecedent conditions are classified in terms of inputs, processes and context of schooling, in other words according to a basic systems model of an organisationally and contextually embedded production process.
- The model has a multi-level structure, where schools are nested in contexts, classrooms are nested in schools and pupils are nested in classrooms or teachers.
- In recent formulations complex causal structure, multi-level nature, dynamic aspects and non-recursiveness are present as further elaborations.

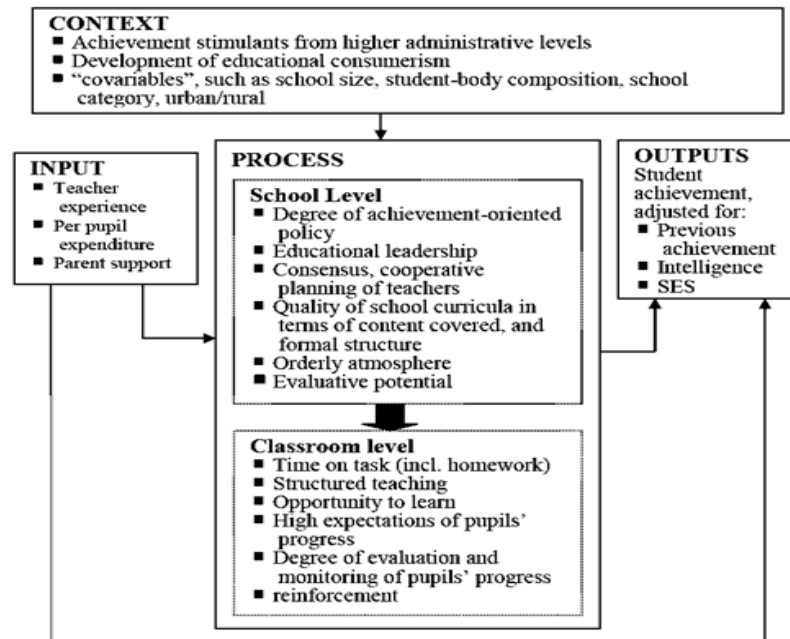
Recently, in 2008, a new model of educational effectiveness was developed by Creemers & Kyriakides. These researchers have tested the validity of the previous model proposed by Creemers (1994) which was the point of departure for the development of this recent attempt to provide a more accurate theoretical model for the educational effectiveness field. In the following lines, I present four models of educational effectiveness in chronological order.

### ***The Scheerens Model (1990)***

This model is based on the exploration of the research findings and literature produced in the field. According to Mortimore (1998, p.243) “in his model Scheerens endeavours to link *inputs* to the school and *outputs* from it with *processes* drawn from both classroom and school levels within a specific *context*”. An example of an *input* proposed by Scheerens is ‘teacher experience’ and an *output* is ‘student achievement’. A *process* defined by Scheerens at the school level is ‘orderly atmosphere’ and one at the classroom level is ‘time on task’. An example of a *context* element of this model is ‘achievement stimulants’ from higher administrative levels. This model suggests that macro level conditions, for example, contextual variables such as ‘achievement stimulants from higher administrative levels’, impact lower level school variables. At the same time, school level variables also impact classroom level variables. Scheerens (1990, p.72) summarises the characteristics of his model depicted in figure 3.1, as follows:

- an analytic systems model recognising context, input, process and output variables;
- a multi-level framework discerning pupil, classroom, school and environmental characteristics;
- perspectives to view the inter-relationships between variables defined at different levels, most notably contingency theory and organisational conditions that facilitate the schools’ primary processes;
- substantive findings from different types of educational effectiveness research.



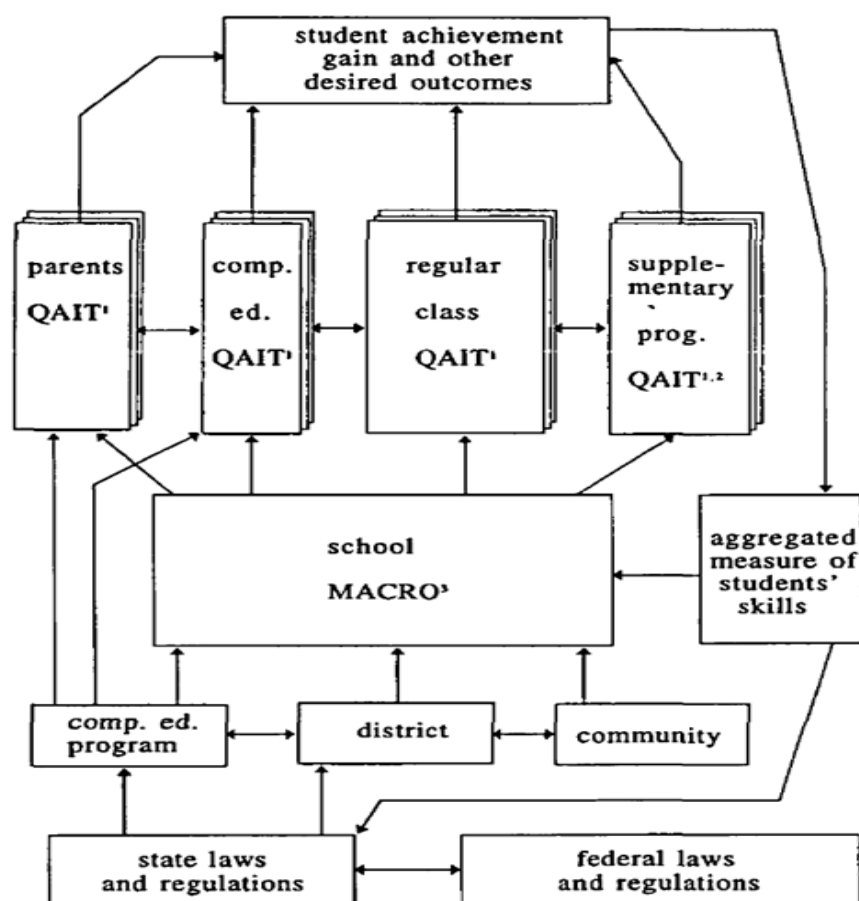


**Figure 3.6.1: The Scheerens Model (1990), (from Scheerens, 1990)**

### *The Slavin/Stringfield Model (1992)*

This model is known as the QAIT/MACRO model. QAIT is the acronym of quality, appropriateness, incentive and time. MACRO stands for **m**eaningful goals, **a**ttention to academic focus, **c**oordination, **r**ecruitment and training and **o**rganisation. This operates at four levels: student level, classroom level, school level and the above-school level, which includes community, school district and state. In this model the four levels have a one-way interaction, but the elements of each individual level inform and influence each other in a two-way process. In addition to this, the above-school level receives feedback from lower levels and this interaction encourages improvement actions targeted at the lower levels, specifically where teaching takes place (Stringfield & Slavin, 1992). Scheerens & Bosker (1997, p.50), emphasised an additional characteristic of this model, “another interesting feature is the idea that there are several sources or bearers of

effective tuition (teachers, parents and programmes)”. The model is depicted in figure 3.2.



<sup>1</sup> QAIT = Quality, Appropriateness, Incentive, Time of Instruction

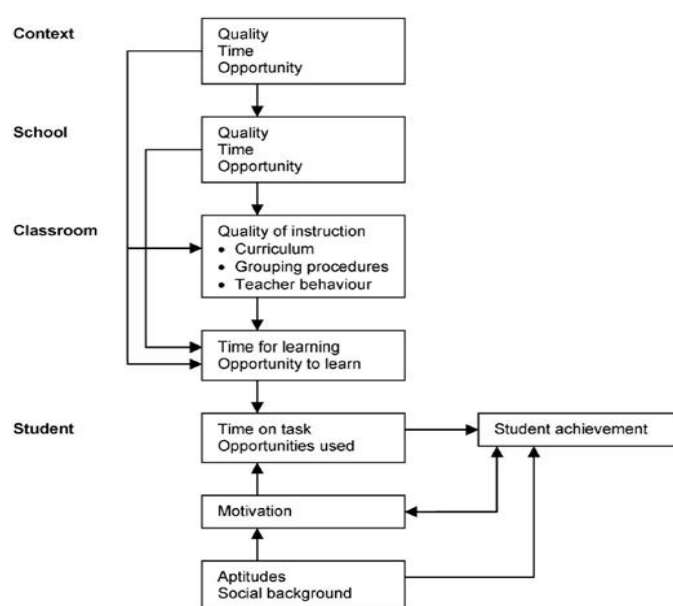
<sup>2</sup> Special Education, Bilingual Education, etc.

<sup>3</sup> MACRO = Meaningful Goals, Attention to Academic Functions, Coordination, Recruitment and Training, Organization

**Figure 3.6.2: The Slavin/Stringfield Model (1992), (from Stringfield & Slavin, 1992)**

### ***The Comprehensive Model of Educational Effectiveness by Creemers (1994)***

This model recognises four levels of interaction in the school system, the context level, the school level, the classroom level and the student level. In this model the higher contextual levels support the lower levels. The context level includes elements such as, national policies and financing system. The school level includes factors related to the general planning and organisation of the school that facilitate the learning in the classroom. The student level encompasses factors that characterise students, including socio-economic status (SES) and motivation. Finally, the classroom level includes factors such as method, grouping patterns and teacher behaviour. Creemers concluded that the classroom level is the most important because teaching and learning takes place in the classroom and ‘teachers’ have the most important role in instruction. In his attempt to create a comprehensive model of educational effectiveness, Creemers produced a preliminary or basic model, which is depicted in figure 3.3.



**Figure 3.6.3: The Creemers Preliminary Model (1994), (from Creemers, 1994)**

Creemers produced a more complex elaboration of his preliminary model in which he included the description of the components and characteristics of the concepts 'quality', 'time' and 'opportunity'. He also specified the components of the elements associated with the effectiveness of the classroom processes. In his elaboration of this comprehensive model of educational effectiveness, Creemers paid special attention to classroom factors, because ultimately the classroom is the place where the teaching and learning processes take place. This model is depicted in figure 3.4.

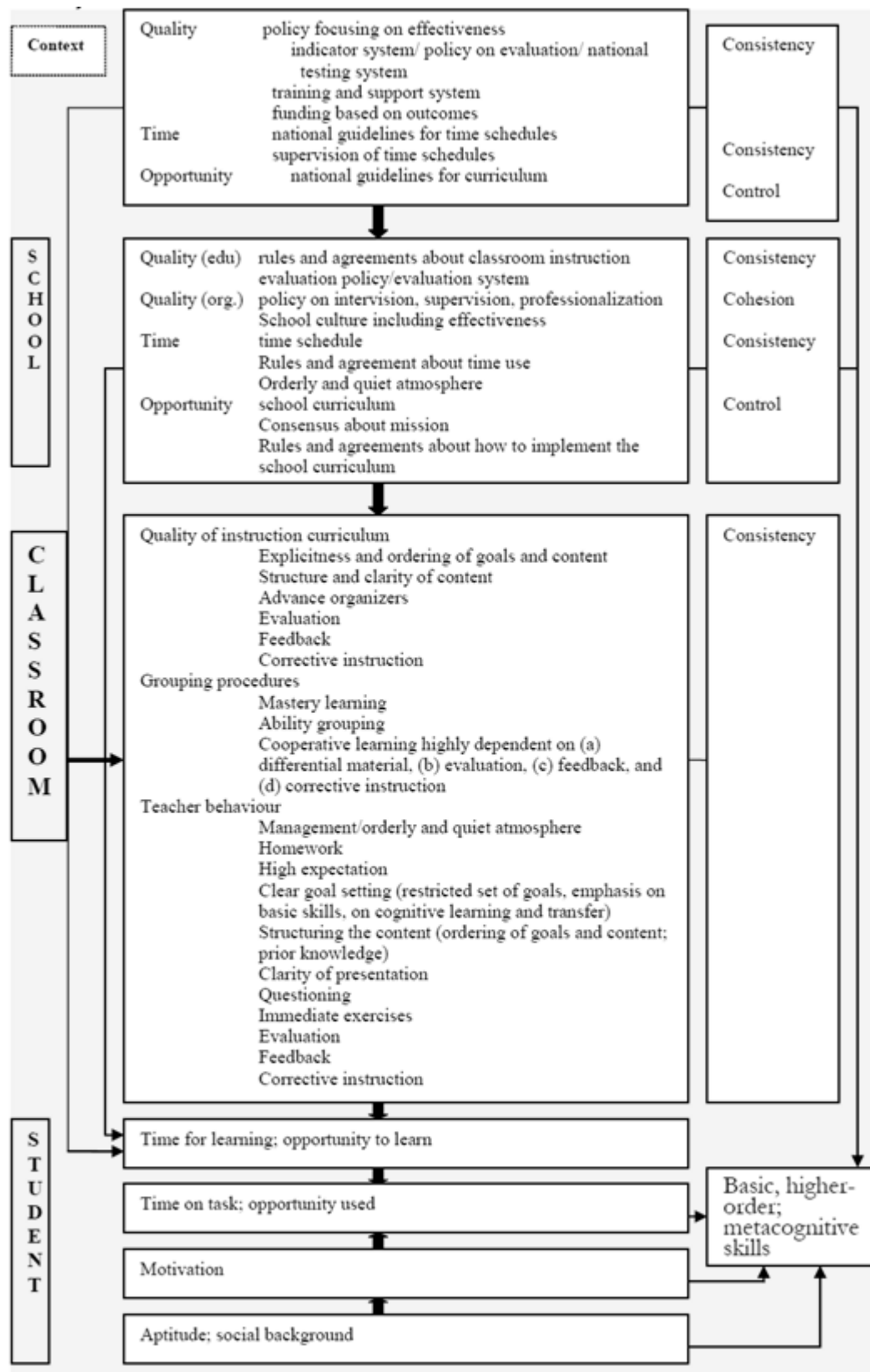
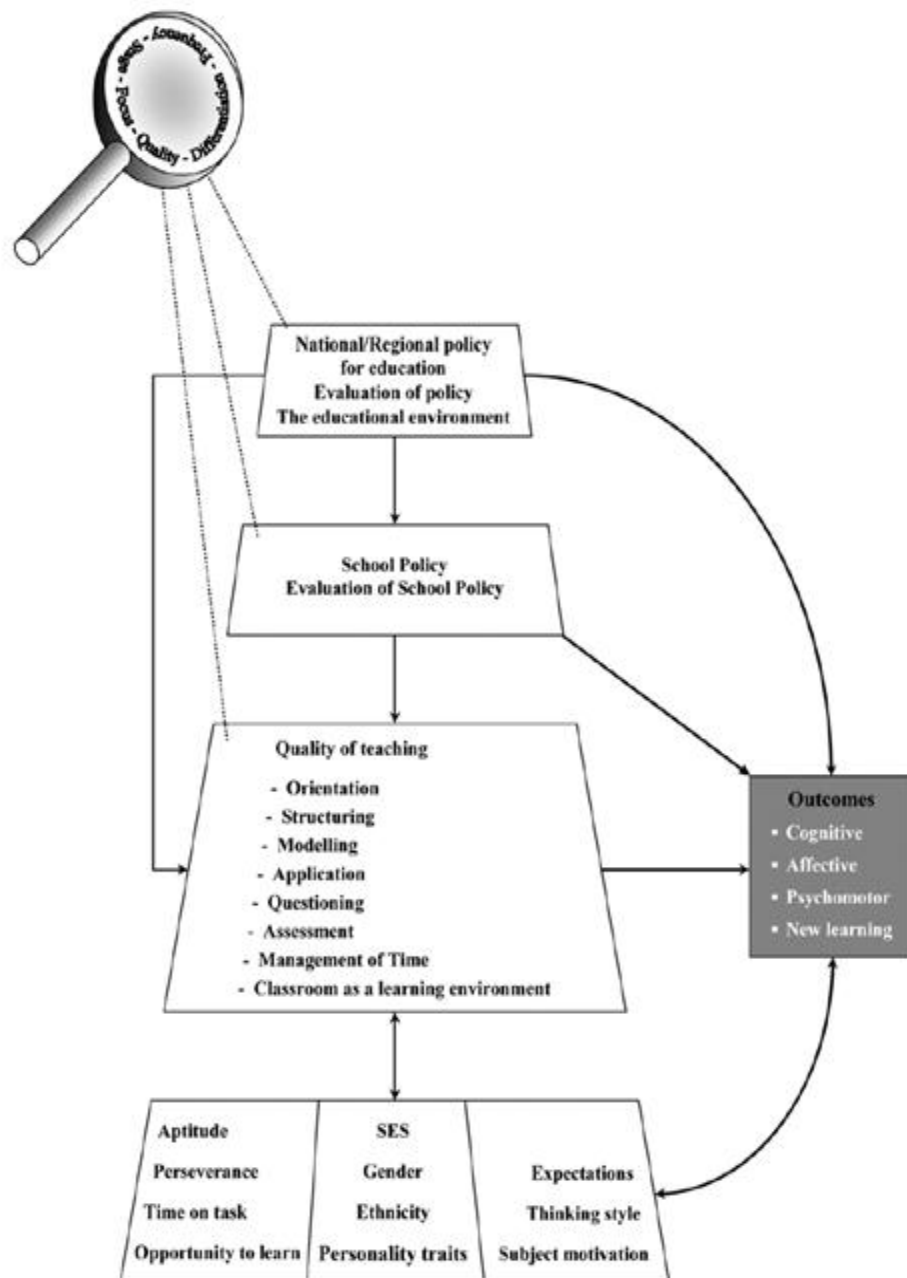


Figure 3.6.4: The Creemers Model (1994), (from Creemers, 1994)

***The Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness by Creemers & Kyriakides (2008)***

This model, as the previous ones, considers four levels of schooling, the student, the classroom, the school and the context. This model is based on the assumption that “the relationship between factors at different levels might be more complex than is assumed in the integrated models of educational effectiveness” (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008, p.6). In this approach, the relationships between the different levels of schooling are dynamic and interact with each other in a reciprocal way. In addition to this, Creemers & Kyriakides (2008, p.149) indicated that this model:

- takes into account the new goals of education and their implications for teaching;
- searches for interactions among factors operating at the same level;
- investigates the extent to which non-linear relations among some factors and student achievement may exist;
- uses different measurement dimensions to define the functioning of each effectiveness factor;
- describes the complex nature of educational effectiveness.



**Figure 3.6.5: The Creemers & Kyriakides Dynamic Model (2008), (from Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008)**

All the models previously presented have some common characteristics. For example, all of them emphasise the multi-level nature of schooling and all of them have taken some elements of the learning model developed by Carrol (1963). The nature of interaction and communication between the different factors and levels represent the main differences between them.

In this research, I do not test any of these models as my focus is the understanding of school processes enhancing the educational effectiveness of a small group of schools. I have not focused on the production of large sets of quantitative data from a representative number of schools that allow me to test the validity of a multi-level model. Moreover, my research does not explore the number of factors at the different levels included in these models. For example, my research concentrates more on the school level processes, rather than on the classroom or context levels. However, in my analysis, I also include the analysis of what I have called 'contextual elements', which include factors from the context and student level (e.g. students' social background, community vulnerability, student expectations and motivation, educational policies, support systems and funding system from higher administrative educational levels, etc.). To summarise: my research focus is the exploration and understanding of factors contributing to the effectiveness of a reduced number of school within a specific context, rather than the establishment of hierarchical statistical relationships between a high number of factors at different school levels. In this study, I do not aim to make generalisations through validity claims coming from theoretical model testing attempts. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the importance of the exploration of and reflection on some of the elements highlighted in these models.



Furthermore, I also needed to include the exploration and reflection on the main traditional school effectiveness factors that have been found by researchers during the years of the history of school effectiveness research. In fact, the factors that I have identified in this research have been found in previous studies, which in certain ways validate what has been said about effective schools. In the following section, I explore these factors or main features of effective schools.

### **3.7 Key features of effective schools**

SER has produced a lot of studies that have attempted to define the key features that make a school effective. During the history of SER, especially the first three decades (1970s-1990s), many researchers have proposed some lists of factors that they consider to be significantly associated with the effectiveness demonstrated by schools. Some of the lists of factors have received a lot of criticism and consequently, new ones have emerged in response to previous ones.

According to the literature on school effectiveness, the early studies in the field produced a model of five factors that characterise effective educational institutions. Based on the findings of his own studies and those of other studies, Edmonds developed a list of five factors (see table 3.1).

**Table 3.7.1: Edmonds' five school effectiveness factors list**

| Edmonds (1979)  |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strong educational leadership.</li></ul>            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High expectations of student achievement.</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasis on acquiring basic skills.</li></ul>       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safe and orderly climate.</li></ul>                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frequent evaluation of pupil progress.</li></ul>    |

Edmond focused his research on disadvantaged schools in urban areas and particularly addressed educational practitioners. He was interested in using the findings of school effectiveness research in school improvement projects, especially targeting disadvantaged school populations.

In the process of developing process indicators of school functioning, Scheerens (1990) proposed the integrated model of school effectiveness that was previously presented. In this model Scheerens proposed a list of process indicators that was produced as a result of the exploration and analysis of the research literature on school and teaching effectiveness, mainly produced during the 1980s. In tables 3.2 and 3.3, I present the characteristics or factors considered by Scheerens.

**Table 3.7.2: Lists of effectiveness factors considered by Scheerens, (from Scheerens, 1990) (Part A)**

| Scheerens (1989)   | Benveniste (1987)   | Selden (1990)   |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Achievement stimulants.</li> <li>-Achievement oriented policy.</li> <li>-Educational leadership.</li> <li>-Teachers cooperative planning.</li> <li>-Quality of curriculum.</li> <li>-Evaluative potential.</li> <li>-Orderly climate.</li> <li>-Time on task.</li> <li>-Structured teaching.</li> <li>-Opportunity to learn.</li> <li>-High expectations.</li> <li>-Monitoring progress.</li> <li>-Reinforcement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Teacher time (teaching/non-teaching).</li> <li>-Student learning time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Course enrolment.</li> <li>b) Turnover rates.</li> <li>c) Pupil/teacher ratios.</li> <li>d) School day activities.</li> <li>e) Length of school year.</li> <li>f) Out of school learning time</li> </ul> </li> <li>-Order and consistency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Truancy, absenteeism, vandalism, disruption.</li> <li>b) Student turnover.</li> <li>c) Student co-operative behaviour.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Time allocated to instruction.</li> <li>-Content of instruction.</li> <li>-Indices of effective schooling.</li> <li>-Quality of teacher preparation.</li> <li>-Characteristics of teacher workforce.</li> <li>-Quality of teaching.</li> <li>-Participation.</li> </ul> |

**Table 3.7.3: Lists of effectiveness factors considered by Scheerens, (from Scheerens, 1990) (Part B)**

| <b>Windham (1988)</b>   | <b>Unesco (1976)</b>  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Instructional organisation.</li> <li>-Alternative technologies.</li> <li>-Use of teacher and student time.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Allocation of resources.</li> <li>-Retention and progression rates.</li> <li>-Teacher/hours per pupil per year.</li> <li>-Cost and management.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Taeuber (1987)</b>   | <b>Oakes (1987)</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Instructional leadership.</li> <li>-Curriculum.</li> <li>-Types of instruction (whole class, small group, etc.)</li> <li>-Time on task.</li> <li>-School climate.</li> <li>-Influence of peer group.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Access to knowledge (e.g. instructional time).</li> <li>-Press for achievement (e.g. graduation requirements).</li> <li>-Professional conditions for teaching (e.g. time spent on collaborative planning).</li> </ul> |

Scheerens (1990) compared his list of indicators (Scheerens 1989), which are presented in his integrative model of educational effectiveness, with the rest of the proposals presented in the previous tables. In his analysis, the lists of indicators that were proposed by Taeuber, Oakes, Benveniste and Selden have many elements in common with his own proposal. The set of factors proposed by Unesco and Windham are more general (Scheerens, 1990).

Other attempts to summarise the findings of school effectiveness research by proposing lists of factors associated with effective schooling are the ones by Levine & Lezotte (1990), Sammons et al. (1995) and Cotton (1995).

**Table 3.7.4: Lists of effectiveness factors considered by Scheerens & Bosker (from Scheerens & Bosker, 1997)** (Italics in Cotton column refers to subcategories)

| Levine & Lezotte (1990)  | Sammons et al. (1995)  | Cotton (1995)   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Productive climate and culture.</li> <li>-Focus on central learning skills.</li> <li>-Appropriate monitoring.</li> <li>-Practice-oriented staff development.</li> <li>-Outstanding leadership.</li> <li>-Salient parent involvement.</li> <li>-Effective instructional arrangements.</li> <li>-High expectations.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Shared vision and goals.</li> <li>-A learning environment.</li> <li>-Positive reinforcement.</li> <li>-Concentration on teaching and learning.</li> <li>-Monitoring progress.</li> <li>-A learning organisation.</li> <li>-Professional leadership.</li> <li>-Home-school partnership.</li> <li>-Purposeful teaching.</li> <li>-High expectations.</li> <li>-Pupil rights and responsibilities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Planning and learning goals.</li> <li>-Curriculum planning and development.</li> <li>-School-wide emphasis on learning.</li> <li>-Assessment (district, school, classroom level).</li> <li>-<i>Professional development.</i></li> <li>-Collegial learning.</li> <li>-School management and organisation.</li> <li>-Leadership and school improvement.</li> <li>-Leadership and planning.</li> <li>-Parent-community involvement.</li> <li>-Classroom management and organisation.</li> <li>-Instruction.</li> <li>-Teacher-student interactions.</li> <li>-District-school interactions.</li> <li>-Equity.</li> <li>-Special programmes.</li> </ul> |

Levine & Lezotte (1990) developed their proposal considering the study of unusually effective schools and ineffective schools. They compared groups of very successful schools with very ineffective ones and found that a particular factor can be unimportant in itself for the effectiveness of a school, but it could be significant in combination with other factors. Sammons et al. (1995) produced their eleven factor list taking into consideration previous research on effectiveness factors, such as the studies conducted by Mortimore et al. (1988), Levine & Lezotte (1990) and Scheerens (1992). The list proposed by Cotton (1995) covers three levels of the school system: district, school and classroom. The other two lists concentrate on the other two levels: classroom and school. Considering this, one can indicate that the list proposed by Cotton is more comprehensive.

Finally, a more recent categorisation of nine factors associated with effective schooling was proposed by Reynolds & Teddlie (2000). They have replaced the usual 'factors' by 'processes' and they have described in detail the components of each 'process'. It is important to mention that these researchers have developed this list, considering a review of the factors previously proposed by Levine & Lezotte (1990) and Sammons et al. (1995).

**Table 3.7.5: List of effectiveness factors proposed by Reynolds & Teddlie (from Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000)**

| Process   | Components of the process   |
|---|---|
| <b>-The processes of effective leadership.</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Being firm and purposeful.</li> <li>b. Involving others in the process.</li> <li>c. Exhibiting instructional leadership.</li> <li>d. Frequent, personal monitoring.</li> <li>e. Selecting and replacing staff.</li> </ul> |
| <b>-The process of effective teaching.</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Maximising class time.</li> <li>b. Successful grouping and organisation.</li> <li>c. Exhibiting best teaching practices.</li> <li>d. Adapting practice to particulars of classroom.</li> </ul>                            |
| <b>-Developing and maintaining a pervasive focus on learning.</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Focusing on academics.</li> <li>b. Maximising school learning time.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>-Producing a positive school culture.</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Creating a shared vision.</li> <li>b. Creating an orderly environment.</li> <li>c. Emphasising positive reinforcement.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>-Creating high (and appropriate) expectations for all.</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. For students.</li> <li>b. For staff.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>-Emphasizing student responsibilities and rights.</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Responsibilities.</li> <li>b. Rights.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>-Monitoring progress at all levels.</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. At the school level.</li> <li>b. At the classroom level.</li> <li>c. At the student level.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>-Developing staff skills at the school site.</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Site based.</li> <li>b. Integrated with on-going professional development.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>-Involving parents in productive and appropriate ways.</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Buffering negative influences.</li> <li>b. Encouraging productive interactions with parents.</li> </ul>   |

### **3.8 Linking school effectiveness and school improvement**

During the last decades, the research on school effectiveness and school improvement has been of special interest for politicians, policy makers and practitioners. According to Stoll & Mortimore (1997), the stimulus of this special interest has been the desire to raise standards for reasons of accountability. In addition to this, many school leaders, practitioners and educational researchers have created their own agendas of improvement, driven by the necessity of restructuring and reforming schools in order to make them better places that provide quality education for pupils.

One common definition of school improvement is presented in the OECD International School Improvement Project (ISIP):

“A systematic sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools with the ultimate aim to accomplish educational goals more effectively” (van Velzen et al., 1985, p.48).

Another definition that highlights the process of change is the following:

“A distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school’s capacity for managing change” (Hopkins et al., 1994, p.26).

Both definitions emphasised the process of change and reconstruction, which also implies careful planning. However, change does not always lead to improvement, thus it is important that the steps for change are carefully planned and implemented.



According to Stoll & Mortimore (1997), during the 1960s, school improvement programmes were introduced into schools, especially in a top-down manner. This means that they were imposed from the outside and were focused on the organisation and curriculum of the school as essential elements to improve the students' outcomes. In the 1980s, the orientation of the school improvement programmes changed to a bottom-up model, which essentially means that the knowledge of the practitioners was being used, in order to improve the processes within the schools. Nevertheless, by the end of 1980s, there was a return to the top-down orientation because the bottom-up strategies were not giving the expected results. However, the importance of the practitioner knowledge for the implementation of school improvement programmes was also acknowledged and the improvement strategies continued with a combination of the knowledge of the researchers and practitioners. According to Harris (2001, p.12), "within school improvement research the school is regarded as the centre of change and teachers are an inherent part of the change process". This idea emphasises the role of educational actors in school change. Hopkins et al. (1996) stressed the role of the school in the process of improvement and change, in his view the self-renewing effort has to be owned by the school rather than imposed from outside. Harris (2001, p.13) indicates that school improvement research has developed a set of beliefs which include some of the following ideas: "that schools have the capacity to improve themselves, that school improvement involves cultural change and that this is best achieved by working on the internal conditions within each individual school".

In his work “*The doors to school improvement*”, Joyce (1991) described five ‘doors’ to school improvement. Stoll & Mortimore (1997) adapted Joyce’s ideas to the English context by describing the improvement ‘doors’ that have been opened in Britain. The following are the ones that have been opened from inside: collegiality, research, self-evaluation, curriculum, teaching and learning, partnerships and school development planning. The ones opened from outside are: inspection, provision of ‘value added’ data, external projects, quality approaches, national curriculum and associated assessment. It is important to indicate that the opening of these doors has to take into account the inner culture and organisation of the particular school.

The educational researchers Miles (1986) and Fullan (1991) indicated that the process of change of an educational institution involves three main phases: ***Initiation***, process of decision making about the necessary change; ***Implementation***, period of time in which the first innovations are put into practice; ***Institutionalisation***, time of consolidation of the innovations or changes. Finally, the ***Outcome*** is the product of the previous phases and refers to the results of the changes and their impact on the school and educational stakeholders.

In a recent review of the State of Art of the SI field, Hopkins et al. (2011) have described five phases of school improvement:

**Phase one:** the focus is on understanding the organisational culture of the school and the problem of change.

**Phase two:** The focus is the implementation of action research and the consideration of individual initiatives, as well as the school self-review.

**Phase three:** The focus is on comprehensive approaches to school reform and the recognition of the importance of school leadership for school change.

**Phase four:** The focus is on building capacity for learning at the local level establishing learning communities and networks.

**Phase five:** The focus is on systemic improvement considering the influence of the knowledge base and the impact of international benchmarking studies.

In the British context, the partnership of school effectiveness and school improvement has been stressed and these two fields have joined forces for the creation of action research projects, networks and centres in the British context. Some of these initiatives are: The Improving School Effectiveness Project funded by the Scottish Office Education Department (MacBeath & Mortimore, 1994, 2001); the School Improvement Network at the Institute of Education; the Centre for School Improvement which has been established in Bath University and the International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre (ISEIC), based at the Institute of Education in London.

As suggested in the previous paragraph, the study of effective school processes has led to the logical next stage of action which is putting into practice the knowledge that has been gained by using it to design improvement plans. Nevertheless, even if these two traditions have many things in common, “school improvement (SI) research and practice has taken a related but different evolutionary pathway to school effectiveness (SE) research” (Chapman, 2012,

p.28). Probably the main difference lies in the fact that school effectiveness research has focused on the mainly quantitative measurement of factors associated with educational performance, school effects, differential effects of school departments and teacher effects. In contrast, school improvement research has focused on the study of school processes and it has considered schools as social organisations in the study of processes related to school improvement (Chapman, 2012).

It is interesting to note that in this particular school effectiveness study, the approach that I have taken to the analysis of the six included in my sample has been based on the consideration of the school as a social organisation. I have focused my research on the analysis of the school processes that contribute to school effectiveness. Considering this fact, I can argue that my research is not a typical school effectiveness study. In fact it has taken many elements that characterise school improvement studies.

### **3.9 School effectiveness research around the world**

#### ***SER in the developed world***

Following a chronological order, it is important to mention that school effectiveness research produced in the USA was very important for the early development of the field. The seminal studies by Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972), already mentioned in this chapter, attracted the interest of the educational research community who started researching into this area as a

reaction to these studies that minimise the importance of schooling for student achievement. Another highly influential study for the development of the field was that conducted by Edmonds (1979), which has also been previously referred to in this chapter.

During the mid-1980s, SER decreased in USA in comparison with other countries, such as the UK and Netherlands, where the research undertaken into schools increased significantly during the 1980s and 1990s. There are many reasons for this, for example:

1. Many researchers moved from the area of school's effects to more specific areas related to school improvement, such as: school restructuring and school indicator systems.
2. The serious criticism that school effectiveness research received before the mid-1980s discouraged many researchers from continuing in the area.
3. Some studies that failed to find relationships between financial input and student achievement discouraged some researchers (e.g. Geske & Teddlie; 1990; Hanushek, 1981; 1986).

In the UK, before the emergence of school effectiveness research, the tradition of educational research was more focused on the study of individual psychological factors and family determinants to explain educational outcomes. For that reason, when the first school effectiveness studies were conducted in Britain in the 1970s,

they were greeted with a lot of criticism and scepticism (e.g. '*Fifteen Thousand Hours*' was criticised by Goldstein, 1980). Other problems that SER faced in its early stages were gaining access to schools in order to undertake educational research, and the absence of reliable measures of the school climate.

Early work on school effectiveness in Britain includes the studies undertaken by Reynolds & associates (1976a, 1976b, 1982), on the characteristics of the learning environments of different secondary schools, and by Rutter et al. (1979) on differences between the school measures of academic achievement, delinquency, attendance and behavioural problems.

According to Reynolds & Teddlie (2000), during the 1980s SER production in the UK included the following areas:

1. Value added comparisons of different educational authorities on their specific academic achievements (Department of Education and Science, 1983, 1984; Gray & Jesson, 1987; Gray et al., 1984; Woodhouse & Goldstein, 1988; Willms, 1987).
2. Comparisons of selective school systems with comprehensive school systems (Gray et al., 1983; Reynolds et al., 1987; Steedman, 1980, 1983).
3. Study of the scientific properties of school effects, such as size (Gray, 1981, 1982; Gray et al., 1986). Differential effectiveness of school academic units and departments (Fitz-Gibbon, 1985; Fitz-Gibbon et al.,

1989; Willms & Cuttance, 1985). Contextual effects (Willms, 1985, 1986, 1987). Differential effectiveness of schools and the influence of this on students with different characteristics (Aitkin & Longford, 1986; Nuttal et al., 1989).

4. Small scale studies that usually focused on one outcome and attempted to relate it to various inner school processes. Some examples are the studies on disruptive behaviour (Galloway, 1983) and disciplinary problems (Maxwell, 1987; McLean, 1987; MacManus, 1987).

In the late 1980s, two important studies of SER were published in the UK. One of them focused on primary education (Mortimore et al., 1988) and the other one on secondary education (Smith & Tomlinson, 1989). In the first study academic and attitudinal outcomes were measured and classroom processes were addressed for the first time in Britain. The second study was particularly interesting because it showed large differences in academic effectiveness between different schools.

According to Reynolds & Teddlie (2000), in the 1990s, the SER production in the UK mainly focused on:

1. Stability of the school effects (see Goldstein et al, 1993; Gray et al., 1995; Thomas et al., 1997)

2. Consistency of school effects (see Goldstein et al. 1993; Sammons et al.,1993; Thomas et al.,1994)
3. Differential effects of schools for different students (see Goldstein et al., 1993; Jesson & Gray, 1991; Sammons et al., 1993).
4. The relative continuity of the school effects (see Goldstein, 1995a; Sammons et al., 1995a).
5. The size of school effects (see Daly, 1991; Gray et al., 1990; Thomas et al., 1997).
6. Departmental differences in educational effectiveness (Fitz-Gibbon, 1991, 1992).
7. Work at the effectiveness/special education needs interface (Brown et al., 1996).
8. Work on the potential context ‘specificity’ of ‘effective schools’ characteristics internationally, as the International School Effectiveness Research Project (ISERP).
9. The study of ineffective schools (Barber, 1995; Reynolds, 1996; Stoll & Myers, 1997).



10. The assessment of the “value added” effect of some schools, using already available data that the specific institution can provide (Fitz-Gibbon & Tymms, 1996).
11. The characteristics of improving schools (Gray et al., 1999).
12. The study of effective departments (Harris et al., 1995; Sammons et al., 1997).
13. The application of school effectiveness techniques to sectors of education where there is no information about intake and outcome measures, making research difficult (Tymms et al. 1997).

From the mid-1990s until the present, the research on school effectiveness has experienced some change. For example, it has gradually merged with the school improvement field, which has resulted in interesting publications that have brought together the strengths of both traditions of research (Reynolds et al., 1993; Stoll, 1996; White & Barber, 1997; Harris & Bennet, 2001; MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001). In addition to this, there has been a more significant focus on different and more specific aspects of effective schooling, such as leadership; teaching and learning; external involvement and capacity building.

Concerning methodological advances in the field during recent years in the UK, there has been work in collaboration with international researchers, especially from the Netherlands. The methodological area that has been significantly

explored in recent years by British researchers is the ‘mixed methods’, as has already been discussed in this chapter (see section 3.6). Finally, it is important to mention that some reviews of SER in British literature can be found in: Teddlie & Reynolds (2000), Townsend (2007) and Chapman et al. (2012).

Research on school effectiveness and school improvement has also been important in other countries such as the Netherlands and Australia. The contributions to the field, especially from Dutch researchers, who have been working in the area from the 1980s until the present day, are highly significant. Some important Dutch studies have addressed issues such as: consistency of effectiveness across organisational sub-units and across time (stability); development and testing of instruments for the measurement of opportunity to learn; study of the effects of school characteristics on the secondary school careers of low and high SES pupils; study of specific factors associated with effectiveness, including the classroom level; study of the relationship between curriculum planning and student examination results; development of instruments for measuring the instructional climate in educational leadership; relationships between variables and factors of effectiveness at the school, classroom and contextual level in relation to student outcomes; study of the school level and classroom level determinants of achievement in mathematics in secondary education; etc. The Dutch research has been mainly quantitative and it has been characterised by its increasing sophistication. It has also focused on providing a substantial theoretical framework to the field. Some important researchers who have significantly contributed to the development of the field are Bert Creemers, Jaap Scheerens and Roel Bosker. In fact, Scheerens has developed one model of

educational effectiveness (Scheerens, 1990) and Creemers two of them (Creemers, 1994; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008).

In Australia, SER has mainly focused on the establishment of close links between school effectiveness and school improvement; the production of a conceptual basis for school effectiveness and school quality and the connections between school effectiveness and improvement and educational policies. A prominent Australian researcher in the field is Tony Townsend, who is the editor of the *International Handbook of School Effectiveness and Improvement* (2007).

### ***SER in Latin America***

There have been a number of school effectiveness studies produced in Latin America during the last decades, but only in recent years has there been an improvement in the quality of the research work in this field. This could be a consequence of the influence of a research community that has encouraged the interest and collaboration of educational researchers in the area of school effectiveness. This scientific community, known as “The Iberoamerican School Effectiveness and Improvement Research Network” (RINACE), is a collaborative network linking Latin America, Spain and Portugal. In developed countries, where the tradition of SER has a long history and vast research production, the research being produced in Latin America is almost unknown. According to Murillo (2007 p.75), this is probably a consequence of the fact that Latin American studies are mainly reported in Spanish and “it may derive also from a belief in the universal validity of school effectiveness results”. He added “the

education system of the developed countries shared common characteristics that are not necessarily present in other regions”. Latin American social reality is very different from that of the developed world, and for that reason, the results of research being done in developed countries will probably have limited validity in the context of Latin America. In their exploration of the *School Management and Effectiveness in Developing Countries*, Haber & Davies (1998, p. 10) highlighted the fact that even when “most of the literature on school management and school effectiveness has been located in developing and industrialized countries and described educational conditions and realities as they exist in those countries it would be very mistaken to assume automatically that these conditions prevail in developing countries.”

Murillo (2007, p.76) points out that school effectiveness research in Latin America is characterised by four main features: “an undeniably applied character, a considerable emphasis on equity, a big influence from diverse and even contradictory theoretical positions, and a manifest dependence on the state of development of education and research in each country”.

Firstly, the “applied character” of the research being produced in Latin America can be better understood considering the social contexts of Latin American countries. Researchers are mostly interested in educational quality and equity and the objectives of their studies are focused on finding pragmatic solutions that can help to improve the “ills” of their educational systems. In this way, research is more pragmatic and its main objective is to reduce inequality and improve quality and only secondly to produce theory and knowledge in the school effectiveness

field. Murillo (2007, p.76) indicates that in Latin America “researchers endeavour mainly to impact those groups directly involved in change processes such as teachers, administrators and policy makers rather than communicate to a wider academic audience”.

Secondly, Latin American studies are also characterised by an “emphasis on equity”, which could be considered a response to the serious social inequalities that affect the Latin American context. For example, a study by Raczynski & Muñoz (2005) analyses two Chilean studies of effective schools in disadvantaged contexts that were conducted between 2002 and 2004.

Thirdly, Latin American studies are characterised by having “multiple theoretical influences”. According to Murillo (2007, p.77), “not only are there multiple theoretical influences underlying Latin American studies on school effectiveness, but these influences often are also contradictory”. It is common for researchers to combine different theoretical perspectives in the same study to focus their research. For example, it is possible to find studies which combine production function and effectiveness approaches. These two traditions of school effectiveness research are very different. The first is led by economists whose objective is the improvement of the efficacy and efficiency of schools for policy making purposes. The second is associated with the research undertaken by educational researchers who are focused on the production of new knowledge about schools that will contribute to the development of school improvement initiatives.

School effectiveness research in Latin America is closely related to the development of education and educational research of a country. In relation to this point, Murillo (2007, p.78) states that “there is a clear relationship among the number and quality of school effectiveness studies carried out in each country, the extent of the country’s educational development, and the country’s levels of educational research”. The evidence demonstrates that the countries that have a higher index of human development produce more educational research and consequently more school effectiveness research. Chile, México, Colombia, Argentina and Brazil are the countries where it is possible to find more research in this field.

### ***Research production and findings in the Latin American context***

In Latin America the production of studies on school effectiveness started in the 1970s and since then the number of studies, and their quality, has increased gradually. According to Murillo (2007, pp.79-84) the research production in Latin America has concentrated in six main areas:

1. *Studies specifically designed to identify school and classroom factors associated with school achievement.* In this category there are studies undertaken in Venezuela (CICE<sup>16</sup>, Herrera & López, 1996), México (Ruíz, 1999 and Lastra, 2001), Chile (Concha, 1996 and Bellei et al., 2004), Brazil (Soares, 2002) and Uruguay (Ravela et al., 1999).

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<sup>16</sup> (CICE) stands for ‘Centro de Investigaciones Culturales y Educativas’ (Cultural and Educational Research Centre Team).

2. *Work on school effectiveness using national and international evaluations.*

Here it is relevant to mention the “Latin American Laboratory for the Quality of Education Evaluation by UNESCO” (LLECE<sup>17</sup>, 2001) and “Use of data from the System of Measurement of Education Quality, SIMCE” (Mizala & Romaguera, 2000; Mizala et al., 2004; Redondo & Descouvieres, 2001 and Redondo et al., 2005)

3. *Estimates of school factors.* Almost the totality of studies evaluating the influence of school effects have been carried out after the year 2000 in Brazil (Barbosa & Fernandes, 2001 and Ferrao et al., 2003) and México (Lastra, 2001 and Fernández & Blanco, 2004).

4. *Assessment and analysis of school improvement programmes.* Some studies analysing innovations and improvement projects in Latin America have been undertaken in Chile (analyses of the Quality Improvement of Primary Schools in Poor Areas Program, P-900 by Carlson, 2000a and Vaccaro & Fabiane, 1994), Ecuador (account of a project focused on the improvement of primary education in five rural areas, UNICEF, 1997) and México (evaluation of the Programme to Lower School Drop-Out, PARE by Ezpeleta & Weiss, 2000).

5. *Studies that seek to find the relationship between specific school factors and students' achievement.* Some examples of this type of research are the studies by Arancibia & Álvarez (1991), which analyse teacher factors that

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<sup>17</sup> (LLECE) stands for Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación (Latin American Laboratory for the Quality of Education Evaluation)

directly or indirectly affect students' achievement; Soares (2003) analyses the impact of teachers and school climate on students' achievement and Maureira (2004), who has worked on the analysis of school leadership on students' achievement.

6. *Ethnographic studies about school.* Finally, some examples concerning the use of ethnographic approaches to study schools are the studies by Rodríguez (2001), who analysed the management, autonomy and leadership of five Venezuelan schools and Edwards et al. (1994) who studied school management and teaching in secondary schools in Chile.

According to Murillo (2007, p.84), the factors highlighted by Latin American studies on school effectiveness share many characteristics with classic reviews such as Sammons et al. (1995). For example, high expectations, effective leadership, shared goals and methodology or team work. Nevertheless, these studies have also stressed important differences between their research findings and those of studies conducted in developed countries, especially in relation to factors such as the availability of sufficient resources and facilities to teach, level of teachers' qualifications and teachers' working conditions. All these elements have been found to be significantly associated with students' achievement in studies undertaken in Latin America.

The findings of Latin American research can be better understood if the big social inequalities that affect Latin American countries are taken into account. For example, there is a marked difference between the achievement level of students from public schools and those from private institutions which is not only related



to background characteristics of students but also to the quality of material and human resources that these schools possess. The opportunities for professional development for teachers are more reduced than in developed countries and the working conditions (number of pupils per class, time to prepare lessons or learning material and teachers' salaries) are significantly worse than in developed countries. Levin & Lockheed, (1991, cited in Murillo, 2007, p.84) indicated that the characterisation of schools in developing contexts demands the inclusion of factors such as 'infrastructure', 'resources' and 'equipment'. After his review of the Latin American status of school effectiveness research, Murillo (2007, p.84) added three other factors to take into account which are 'quality of teacher initial and continuing preparation', 'higher salaries' and 'full time commitment to teaching'.

### ***What is the future of Latin American research on school effectiveness?***

A high quality education system is essential for the development of a country. Therefore, for developing countries school effectiveness research is increasingly becoming an area of great interest. Following this logic, it is not too adventurous to predict a promising future for this field. This is supported by the number of researchers who are starting to undertake research projects in the area, especially new researchers who are specialising in the field. In addition to this, there is a prominent research community that is gradually increasing the production and quality of school effectiveness research. For example, the previously mentioned, 'Iberoamerican School Effectiveness and Improvement Research Network' (RINACE). Furthermore, there is a specialised journal in the area, 'The

Iberoamerican School Effectiveness E-journal of Research on Quality, Effectiveness and Change in Education' (REICE). These two academic initiatives encourage, promote and disseminate school effectiveness research and they search to improve the number and quality of studies produced in this region.

According to Ávalos (2007, p.200), "Latin America still has enormous challenges in being able to fulfil the Millennium Goals and provide a good education for all, especially for the poorest groups, but it is on its way and will move faster as it learns from research and experience". Considering these challenges, it is expected that new studies will bring more substantial and new insights for the development of a better understanding of the features associated with school effectiveness. An example of an ambitious study that included Latin American countries is the Iberoamerican School Effectiveness Study (IIEE), which looked at the effectiveness of 90 schools in 9 different countries.

### ***SER in Chile***

In Chile, the production of school effectiveness research is not vast, but during the last decades some interesting studies in the area have been published. Many of these studies are characterised by the inclusion of schools with a predominantly disadvantaged student intake. In addition to this, the focus of these studies is on primary education. I present these studies below in chronological order and I summarise the main points of each:

1. Himmel et al. (1984): In this study the authors seek to assess the influence of a number of variables on student achievement, in order to

determine the most significant ones. Specifically, it looks at the school factors and the students' background factors that have a significant impact on school achievement. This study focused on primary education (9 and 13 years old) and aimed to produce knowledge for the design of educational policies at government and school levels (Martinic & Pardo, 2003).

2. Zárate (1992): This study aims to identify the factors related to successful school practices through the testimonies of headteachers of effective schools (Martinic & Pardo, 2003).
3. Concha (1996): This research deals with the identification of effectiveness factors, through the description of the main features that characterise a group of high achieving schools located in areas with high levels of social vulnerability (Martinic & Pardo, 2003).
4. Arancibia et al. (2000): Through the use of questionnaires, this study aims to validate some indicators used to assess the variation between the educational results of different schools and differentiate between effective schools and non-effective schools (Martinic & Pardo, 2003).
5. Bellei et al. (2004): This study analyses 14 effective primary schools that serve students from a deprived socio-economic background. Some of these institutions (8 schools) had a low level of achievement at the beginning of the 1990s and demonstrated a significant improvement in

their results in the second half of the decade. The main aim of this study was to identify the factors associated with the greater effectiveness of these institutions. This research focused on the effective practices at school and classroom level.

6. Raczynski & Muñoz (2004): This research addresses the analysis of a group of 8 primary schools in challenging circumstances. All these schools had good academic results in the mid-1990s but their results dropped by the beginning of the 2000s. The main objective of this study is to understand the factors that negatively impacted upon students' outcomes. This study found that most of the factors impeding the success in these schools are the ones that have a positive contribution to the success of effective schools.
7. Henríquez et al. (2009): This research analyses a network of Chilean schools financed by way of private vouchers called Sociedad de Instrucción Primaria (SIP). These schools serve students from low income families and are characterised by having better academic results than similar schools. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, this study revealed some key factors that make these schools more successful, such as methods of selecting the headteacher and teachers, students' learning focus, systematic evaluation of teachers and students and actions taken based on the information gathered, economic incentives based on teachers' professional performance, etc.

In relation to the first four studies previously described, Martinic & Pardo (2003) argue that although these studies contributed to the development of school effectiveness research in Chile, their results have not had an impact on actual educational practices or policies (with the exception of the study conducted by Himmel et al., 1984).

In the Chilean context, there are many studies that address other educational areas, such as students' learning, educational results and educational quality (Cardemil et al., 1994; Filp, 1994; Vaccaro & Fabiane, 1994; Espínola et al., 1994; Espínola & Martínez, 1996; Carlson, 2000a, 2000b). All these areas can be considered complementary to the study of school effectiveness, since the understanding of this field usually incorporates reflection on these topics. Some of these studies were referred to as school effectiveness studies by Murillo (2007) in his review of school effectiveness in Latin America. However, Martinic & Pardo (2003) have included them in educational areas that can be complementary to school effectiveness.

Concerning the methodology of the school effectiveness studies conducted in Chile, it is possible to identify studies using quantitative, qualitative or mixed methodologies. In relation to this point, it is important to point out that the quantitative studies have not incorporated the use of sophisticated statistical techniques, as is done in developed countries, such as the United States, Netherlands or the UK, where the quantitative tradition of school effectiveness employs advanced statistical measures. Nevertheless, only recently, a pilot research study has been conducted using a value-added approach to complement

the results of the school accountability system (SIMCE) (Muñoz -Chereau, 2010). The results of a group of students in SIMCE examinations (mathematics and language) were compared with previous attainment data and adjusted for contextual variables. This pilot study is the initial phase of a larger forthcoming study that will be innovative in the context of Chilean educational research which has not previously used value-added approaches in its studies. In addition to this, the use of mixed methodologies in Chilean studies has not employed data merging and integration strategies. Therefore, this approach has been used at a very basic level so far and the present study could be a contribution in this aspect.

Finally, as to the main findings highlighted in Chilean school effectiveness research, it can be indicated that they are similar to the ones found in research undertaken in developed countries and reported in school effectiveness literature. These findings have been categorised by Martinic & Pardo (2003) in three main macro aspects: The school level, the headteacher level and the teacher level. In relation to the first aspect, research results have emphasised the importance of factors such as a positive school climate, clear school rules, clear and shared mission, structured school system in terms of pedagogical and administration issues, teachers' professional commitment and stability, etc. Regarding the second aspect, it has been found that good leaders are characterised by a positive and proactive leadership, a clear focus on academic success, high expectations of students and high professional competences. Finally, in relation to teacher level, there are some main insights, such as high expectations of students, use of good teaching methodologies, positive interaction with students, positive reinforcement

of students in the classroom and the involvement in non-academic aspects of schooling.

### **3.10 Criticism of the field of school effectiveness**

SER has received a lot of criticism (White & Barber, 1997; Slee et al., 1998; Elliot, 1996; Hamilton, 1996; Pring, 1995; Brown et al., 1995; Thrupp, 2001; Wrigley, 2004 and Gorard, 2010). This criticism has focused on some specific areas of SER, such as methodological, political and theoretical aspects. Concerning the methodological aspect, the criticism has concentrated on the specific research methods used in many studies that have been judged as inappropriate. Elliot (1996, p.200), for example, indicated that the field has a “mechanistic methodology and instrumentalist view of educational processes”. Responses to this criticism (Sammons & Reynolds, 1997) have stressed the fact that school effectiveness research was initially encouraged by the promotion of educational equity and it has strong connection with practitioners, especially the improvement tradition. As for the political aspects, the criticism has been focused on the connections that have been established between SER and certain political sectors. SER has been associated with a generally conservative stance which has been strongly refuted by researchers (Sammons & Reynolds, 1997). In relation to theoretical grounds, school effectiveness has been criticised for its lack of theorisation (Thrupp, 2001). In addition, there has been a lot of criticism of the stance of school effectiveness, which argues that the bad results in education can be attributed to poor schooling practices rather than to the effects of contextual factors related to social and economic inequalities. In relation to this point, Teddlie & Reynolds (2001) have argued that school effectiveness has acknowledged the influence of social and contextual variables on educational achievement. However, the field has highlighted the school’s role in improving



results and reducing the effects of the social inequalities. Other responses to the recent criticism that the field has received, especially by Gorard (2010) in his publication “*serious doubts about school effectiveness*” can be found in Muijs et al. (2011) and Reynolds et al. (2012). While both of the articles address recent criticism to the field, the last one also provides a comprehensive summary of the historical development of the school effectiveness field and summarises the main critiques and defences of the area in the last 30 years. The main objective of this article is the defence of the Educational Effectiveness field from a fierce criticism that focused its attack on statistical errors and irrationally rejects the existence of any educational effect at all (Reynolds et al., 2012). Moreover, the criticism by Gorard has portrayed educational effectiveness researchers as government tools. For Reynolds and colleagues (2012), some of this criticism can only be called “personal abuse” (p.123).

### **3.11 Summary**

In this chapter I have presented an overview of the main school effectiveness literature in order to give a substantial reference framework to my research. I have explored the history of SER, since its origins, which are situated in the period of the publication of the famous work by Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972). After that, I have presented the stages of SER up to the present day and some literature on school effectiveness in deprived contexts. In addition to this, I have reflected on the main methodological approaches employed in an area with which quantitative approaches have traditionally been linked. However, some important studies have also used qualitative approaches, especially case studies, and in recent years, the area has started to introduce the use of mixed method approaches. Furthermore, I have also presented the theoretical models developed in the field and the main characteristics of effective schools. In another section of the chapter, I have reflected upon the connections between schools effectiveness and the area of school improvement. It is important to mention that in this literature review, I have given a high importance to the school effectiveness research conducted in Latin America and specifically in Chile. I believe that it is very important to provide a wide spectrum of references for the specific context of the research. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I have reflected about some of the criticism that the field has received. In the next chapter, I will address my methodological choices, research design and data analysis processes, detailing all the elements and considerations related to these aspects.

# CHAPTER 4

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## 4. Research Methodology

### 4.0 Introduction

In doing research it is fundamental to have a clear idea about the processes that have to be undertaken in order to address the research problem. These particular processes are related to the selection of a particular methodology for the research plan. Any person who decides to undertake a research project has to go through an extensive process of reflection. Firstly, this process is characterised by a reflection about the nature of the phenomenon that is being studied. Secondly, researchers have to find a way to know about the particular phenomenon, and finally they have to elaborate a methodological plan to undertake the study. Success in addressing the research questions will depend on a number of factors, but one of the most important is the appropriateness and quality of the research methodology. In the following pages I explore the different processes that I have undertaken in order to define an appropriate methodological plan to address my research questions. Firstly, I start with a reflection about the links between my educational interests and motivations, philosophical assumptions and methodological choices (4.1). I expand this reflection in section (4.2), where I consider ontological and epistemological issues to finally define myself as having an interpretative stance to approach the knowledge. In section (4.3), I present the particular research methodology adopted in this thesis, which is a mixed methods (MM) approach. Within this methodology, I have given a greater emphasis to the

qualitative strand. In section (4.4), I address my research design which is the case study. I believe that this particular design is appropriate for the use of different methods of data collection and analysis in the study of a single case, such as a school. In this thesis, I have used a multiple case design and have analysed six schools. In sections (4.5) and (4.6), I present detailed information about my sampling processes, participants, instruments and techniques of data collection. In section (4.7), I report the pilot study and in section (4.8) my data analysis procedures which include information about the different phases of analysis of my qualitative and quantitative methods and the integration of findings. In section (4.9) I reflect on the ethical considerations that I had to make as an educational researcher doing this study. Finally, in section (4.10), I reflect about the particular criteria used to evaluate the quality of my research design and methodology and the consistency of my research inferences.

#### **4.1 Linking my educational interests, philosophical assumptions and methodological choices**

Before addressing the methodology employed in this study, I would like to reflect on the personal reasons that I had to undertake a study about educational effectiveness. My interest in researching schools was influenced by my personal experience as a teacher and educational counsellor. I worked in schools for 5 years before starting my PhD and most of these schools were secondary institutions. My focus on school effectiveness in deprived areas started during these years in which, as a practitioner also doing a Master's in Education, I noticed the marked differences in terms of educational outcomes between the

different types of institutions. Three of the schools where I worked were private and two had state funding. I was particularly impacted by the experience of working in the state-funded schools because I realised how students' disadvantaged social backgrounds influenced their educational outcomes and their expectations for the future. This experience made me aware of the serious inequalities of the Chilean educational system that are a reproduction of the inequalities of Chilean society. In this context I decided to focus my attention on issues related to school effectiveness but with a particular emphasis on deprived contexts. I concluded that an investigation of educational effectiveness in deprived areas would be a suitable initiative to gain greater understanding of the particular characteristics of schools that make a difference in areas of social deprivation, and the influences of these particular features on the students' personal, social and academic outcomes. Having this objective in mind, I tried to reflect on the most suitable methodology to address my research problem by considering the following questions: How can the concept of school effectiveness in deprived contexts be better understood?; What are the best methods that I can use to find the information that I aim to find?; To which tradition of research do the methods that I intend to use belong? The process of answering these crucial questions took me on an extensive exploration of the philosophical foundations underpinning my study. It was very important to me to link my methodological choices with my own assumptions about reality and knowledge because I believe that a researcher's set of beliefs and views about the world continuously influence the way they approach knowledge and truth. According to Usher (1996, p.17) the failure to examine these assumptions leads to research being understood as 'a

technology', simply a set of methods, skills and procedures applied to a defined research problem.

#### **4.2 Philosophical assumptions underpinning my research**

Social researchers' philosophical assumptions are ontological and epistemological and they have to do with the nature of reality and the nature of knowledge. I will address ontological issues first as a way to organise my choices in a coherent way, but this fact does not mean that my reflections about ontology came first in this inquiry process. I would rather say that all these questions emerged simultaneously, since all of them are interrelated. According to Crotty (1998, p.10) "Ontology is the study of the being. It is concerned with 'what is', with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such". Schwandt (2000, p.157) indicates that ontology is frequently considered to be the same as Metaphysics (although some theorists consider it only a branch of Metaphysics) which he defines as the "study of reality, of being, of the real nature of whatever is, and of first principles". It is concerned with understanding the kinds of things that constitute the world. The personal conception or beliefs of researchers about the nature of the phenomenon they are studying are commonly referred to as ontological assumptions. In my particular case, I am analysing the effectiveness of a group of secondary schools in deprived areas. My ontological assumptions about the nature of school effectiveness in disadvantaged contexts are related to the notion that the concept of effectiveness can be better understood as a construction of individuals' perceptions. I believe that 'reality' is socially constructed by individuals who negotiate their particular views to reach a consensus, so there is

no such thing as absolute truth or objective reality. In consequence, the nature of the phenomenon that I am addressing with my research can be better understood considering the socially constructed realities of stakeholders about the concept of school effectiveness in deprived contexts.

According to Crotty (1998, p.10) “ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together”. Assumptions about the nature of reality will lead to assumptions about the best way to know about this reality. The process of inquiry about the approach to knowledge that best suits the notion of the reality of the researcher will give rise to epistemological claims. Epistemology can be defined as a theory of knowledge or the approximation to knowledge that an individual has or adopts. Some essential epistemological questions are: What can we know? How can we know? What is knowledge? What is the scope of knowledge? With respect to this matter, Hitchcock & Hughes (1995, p.19) argue “epistemological questions surround the questions of knowing and the nature of knowledge”. Historically, epistemological questions about the nature of knowledge have led to the generation of different paradigms to understand the world. A paradigm is a set of beliefs, a conception of the world, a perspective that intends to give answers to the questions or inquiries about the complexities of the world. Pring (2000, p.49) describes two different traditions: the ‘scientific’ paradigm and the ‘constructivist’ paradigm. In relation to the scientific paradigm he indicates “there is a world which exists independently of me which is made of ‘objects’ interacting causally with each other”. This idea refers to the fact that there is an external world where different objects interact in a cause-effect dynamic.

The constructivist paradigm described by Pring (2000) is related to the notion that the world is constructed by individuals' ideas and perceptions. Each person constructs, perceives and interprets the world in a different way. Human beings live in a world of ideas, and there is not a reality outside which is not influenced by this world of ideas. For constructivism the term 'objectivity', which has been frequently associated with positivist positions, is very controversial. According to Pring (2000, p.51), "the distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' needs to be redefined since there can be nothing 'objective' in the sense of that it exists independently of the world of ideas which either privately or in consensus with others has been constructed". The 'scientific' and 'constructivist' paradigms described by Pring are also referred to as 'positivist' and 'anti-positivist' philosophical stances. Positivists believe that every contribution to knowledge has to be tested using empirical methods and it has to be capable of replication. Some positivist theorists argue that the social world can also be completely understood using positivist methods. They indicate that there is not a substantial difference between the natural world and the social world. Positivism started to face some criticism in the second half of the nineteenth century. The main target of this attack was "science's mechanistic and reductionist view of nature which, by definition, excluded notions of choice, freedom, individuality, and moral responsibility" (Cohen et al., 2000, p.17).

Anti-positivism emerged as a response to the criticism of positivism. Researchers who advocate anti-positivist positions indicate that human beings are able to exercise choice and this characteristic differentiates them from other beings. Human beings have agency and can express their individualities in every action



they undertake: “Human beings are special” as Malik (2000) indicates in an article. For that reason, he argues, “we require special tools to understand ourselves”. Anti-positivist practitioners believe that the social world is essentially different from the physical world; therefore the approaches to understand this social world have to be different. “These researchers argued for the importance of discovering the meanings and interpretations of events actors themselves have” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989, p.12). The anti-positivist stance emphasises that the individuals involved in certain contexts interpret and make sense of their own circumstances. The interpretations of the world in natural and everyday situations and the reflections of the main actors about what is happening around them is, for anti-positivist researchers, a way to understand the world better; it is an authentic way to know.

Previously in this chapter, I have argued that my ontological assumptions about the nature of school effectiveness in deprived contexts belong to a constructivist stance which regards ‘reality’ as a social construct. Based on these assumptions, I can position myself as having an anti-positivist paradigmatic approach to knowledge. Within the anti-positivist epistemologies, I have adopted an interpretative stance to approach my research. Firstly, considering that the objective of my study aims at ‘understanding’ through a process of reflection and interpretation of participants’ ideas about schools’ histories, contexts, internal processes and interactions, an interpretative stance seems the most appropriate option to approach my study. Wellington (2000) reflects about the role of the interpretative researcher:

“The interpretative researcher, however, accepts that the observer makes a difference to the observed and that reality is a human

construct. The researcher's aim is to explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop insights into situations, e.g. schools, classrooms" (p.16).

Secondly, having some years of experience as an educational practitioner, and an early career in research, has given me elements to start developing my own understanding of the best ways to approach research in the social world. I am convinced that the most appropriate way to address research in schools and specifically in the schools that I have selected for my study is to consider the voices of the individuals involved in these institutions. As an interpretative researcher, I need to undertake a process of analysis that includes participants' own reflection and interpretations about what is happening in their institutions and my own reflection and interpretations of their accounts and insights. After this process, it should be possible to generate illuminating findings to answer my research questions and contribute to school effectiveness theory generation, educational policy and practice.

#### **4.3 Research methodology**

After an extensive process of reflection about the most suitable methodology with which to approach my research, I selected a mixed method approach (MM) which combines both quantitative and qualitative research traditions. The combination of methods in research emerged as a result of the recognition that every method has limitations which can be minimised with the use of other methods. In relation to this idea, Creswell (2009, p.14) indicates "recognising that all methods have limitations, researchers felt that biases inherent to any single method could neutralise or cancel the biases of other methods". I estimate that for my particular

type of study which aims to generate illuminating findings about the internal processes taking place in schools that contribute to a greater effectiveness, an MM approach is more appropriate than the use of a single research methodology. Quantitative and qualitative research traditions can be complementary and the combination of both approaches might add more credibility to the findings. According to Denscombe (2010, p.141) “The use of more than one method can enhance the findings of research by providing a fuller and more complete picture of the phenomenon being studied”. Sometimes the use of a single methodology does not ensure substantial findings. For example, in the case of this particular study, if I use only a quantitative strategy such as a questionnaire-survey to resolve all my research questions, the possibilities of getting poor and insufficient research results are very high.

Frequently, researchers who employ a quantitative research methodology aim to confirm hypotheses through the verification of an existing theory. In contrast, qualitative research often aims to generate new theories through an exploratory process. A mixed methods approach, for example, provides the researcher with the possibility of doing both things in the same study. The combination of methods gives researchers the possibility of getting more complete and valuable insights. They may decide to work with different methods of data collection, as a way of getting more consistent results. Gorard & Taylor (2004) indicate that both qualitative and quantitative approaches have different strengths but the combination of the two can add even more strength to the findings of a study.

Qualitative methods allow more flexibility in the interaction with the participants and provide more details about their opinions and a more in-depth exploration of their perceptions. An important criterion to evaluate qualitative research is the level of trustworthiness of the findings. In contrast, the use of quantitative methods is considered to provide more reliability, validity, objectivity and generalisability to the findings, but it will depend on many factors such as the validity of the instruments, the size of the sample and the degree of reliability of the participants' responses. According to Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003), MM can provide better and stronger inferences than a single methodology. For example, a researcher might want to use surveys and cases studies in her study because one of the methods can provide greater breadth and the other greater depth to the findings. A study in which an MM approach has been used can provide a vast diversity of findings that can help to understand in-depth the phenomenon that is being studied. Bryman (2004, p.464) supports this idea indicating that the use of different research strategies "may provide a better understanding of a phenomenon than if just one method had been used".

In my case, I justify the use of an MM approach as a more effective manner to provide answers to my research questions. I argue that any method that can help me to resolve my research questions is valid for my research, no matter if it belongs to a qualitative or quantitative tradition. With my research I intend to produce findings that can generate a holistic view of the processes taking place in this group of schools. For that reason, I am using different resources available for this purpose. My qualitative instruments aim at in-depth exploration of

stakeholders' views and the quantitative one aims to complement and give more strength to my findings.

In MM research, there are different designs that aim to organise the different phases of a study and also clarify the relevance of one methodological approach over the other. These are 'parallel mixed designs' and the 'sequential mixed designs'. According to Teddlie & Tashakkori (2009, p.143), "parallel mixed designs refer to MM projects where the phases of the study (QUAN, QUAL) occur in a parallel manner, either simultaneously or with some time lapse". In the case of sequential mixed designs "the phases of the study occur in a chronological order, with one strand emerging from or following the other (QUAN followed by QUAL, or vice versa)". The parallel designs are also known as concurrent (e.g. Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Creswell, 2009) or simultaneous (Morse, 1991, 2003) designs but there is an essential difference between these terms. According to Teddlie & Tashakkori (2009) the terms simultaneous or concurrent refer to a design in which the QUAN and QUAL phases occur exactly at the same time, but in the case of parallel designs the occurrence of these phases can have a brief lapse between each other, although this does not mean that the phases are sequential. In the case of this study, I am using a parallel MM design, which means that the QUAN and QUAL phases have occurred in a parallel manner but with a very brief lapse between them. The main criteria that I had to use this design are the suitability of this model to answer my research questions and the time that I had to undertake the data collection process.

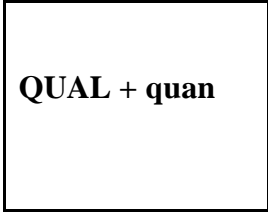
Firstly, in a parallel mixed design the QUAN and QUAL strands address the same main research questions. Although, it is possible that some of the more specific questions can be related to a specific QUAN or QUAL approach. In contrast, in the case of a sequential mixed design, the research questions of one phase will depend on the previous phase. In the case of my study, a parallel mixed design is appropriate because I am addressing all my research questions with both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Secondly, in terms of the time that I had to collect my data, a parallel mixed design was more appropriate for me. Creswell (2009) has called this criterion “timing” which, according to him, needs to be considered in a mixed methods study. As an international student conducting research about the educational system of my own country, I had to travel home in order to undertake my fieldwork. For funding reasons, I could not travel more than once to collect data. Additionally, my scholarship regulations do not allow me to stay in my country for a very long period, during my studies abroad. This means that I had no possibility of collecting data during different phases as the sequential mixed design requires. In relation to this point Creswell (2009) indicates:

“In many projects it may be unworkable to collect data over an expanded time period... In this case, it is more manageable to collect both quantitative and qualitative data at roughly the same time, when the researcher(s) is in the field collecting data, rather than to revisit the field multiple times for data collection” (p.206).

In terms of the prioritisation of a QUAN or QUAL methodological approach, my study has a greater focus on the QUAL strand. Creswell (2009, p.207) has called the criterion of giving more value to one strand over the other “weighting”. According to him “a priority for one type depends on the interest of the

researcher, the audience for the study (e.g., faculty committee, professional association), and what the investigator seeks to emphasise in the study”. In my personal case, I was more interested in getting insights from participants during my interaction with them. As an interpretative researcher I was more focused on participants’ impressions and perceptions given in a verbal way rather than through the questionnaires surveys. On the other hand, my quantitative data allowed me to support my findings and add more credibility and validity to them. In addition to this, the sophistication of my quantitative analysis was not sufficient to claim substantial findings supported by a quantitative strand. My MM parallel design and my prioritisation of a QUAL methodological perspective can be illustrated in the following way:



**QUAL + quan**

**QUAL** in capital letters indicates that my design is qualitatively driven; + indicates that the two phases are parallel and **quan** in small letters indicates the lesser relevance of the **QUAN** approach (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.143, citing Morse, 2003, p.198).

In using an MM approach, researchers’ intentions have to do with triangulation purposes. “Triangulation refers to the combinations and comparisons of multiple data sources, data collection and analysis procedures, research methods, investigators, and inferences that occur at the end of the study” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.27). In this study, I have used methodological triangulation

and data triangulation. Methodological triangulation is related to the use of multiple methods to collect data, and in this study I have used questionnaires surveys, interviews and focus groups. Data triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources and, in this case, I have collected data from headteachers, teachers, students and parents.

Finally, it is important to mention that since its emergence, the use of MM in research has been criticised and considered controversial. One of the major critiques made of the use of MM is related to epistemological issues. Some scholars argue that the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in research is inconsistent and there is no possible compatibility between these two approaches (e.g., Guba, 1987; Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002; Smith, 1983; Smith & Heshusius, 1986). According to Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003) the main argument of MM detractors is that the philosophical paradigms underlying the different methods are essentially in opposition. Nevertheless for other scholars this view is not appropriate and they propose an eclectic methodological stance based on 'paradigmatic pluralism,' which acknowledges that a variety of paradigms may serve as underlying philosophy for the use of mixed methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 9). The most common paradigmatic approaches associated to the use of mixed methods are pragmatism, scientific realism or transformation emancipation. Nevertheless, any paradigmatic approach could support the use of mixed methods. The use of quantitative methods should not be necessarily associated to a traditional positivist or post-positivist approach and the use of qualitative methods to an anti-positivist epistemology. Gorard & Taylor



(2004) refer to this matter on a reflection about the epistemological and methodological confusions that less experienced researchers may have:

“Unfortunately novice research students can quickly become imprisoned within one of these purported ‘paradigms.’ They learn because they are taught, that if they use any numbers in their research then they must be positivist or realist in philosophy, and they must be hypothetico-deductive or traditional in style...If, on the other hand, students disavow the use of numbers in research then they must be interpretivist, holistic and alternative, believing in multiple perspectives rather than the truth, and so on” (p.149).

In the case of this research, I consider that my interpretative epistemology is not in opposition with the selection of an MM approach. In my view, the selection of methods and the paradigms or epistemologies are independent. In this study, my main objective is to make sense of the data that I obtain from participants and interpret their views in order to reach a complete ‘understanding’ of my research questions. For me it is not particularly relevant if my methods belong to a quantitative or qualitative tradition. I justified the selection of any method that can help me to answer my research questions. Other sources of criticism of the use of mixed methods described by Denscombe (2010) include: The increased time and cost of a mixed method study, the necessity of having researchers with both qualitative and quantitative skills and the fact that the findings from different methods might not corroborate one another. In my research none of these three critiques have represented problems. In Chapter 3 (see Section 3.6), I present some examples of recent educational studies that have used mixed methods.

#### **4.4 Research design**

The research design that combines many cases in the same study is known as multiple-case design. In my study, I have undertaken six different case studies that combine quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. I will start this section by providing a characterisation of a case study. Yin (2009, p.18) indicates that a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context”. Wellington (2000, p.90), citing Bogdan & Biklen (1982, p.58), suggests that “a case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or one single subject, or one single depository of documents, or one particular event”. Bassey (2003, p.115), reflecting about the work of Gomm et al. (2000), indicates that for these authors, “the term ‘case study’ is ill defined; they see it not as experiment, not as survey, but essentially as investigation in considerable depth into one or a few cases in naturally occurring social situations”. Finally Bryman (2004, p.48) argues that “the basic case study entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case”. Summarising all these previous views, I can conclude that a case study is an in depth exploration of a single unit, for example, a person, school, hospital, which considers the analysis of situations occurring in a naturalistic way and within a particular context.

A case study is often a place for the use of different methods of data collection. According to Wellington (2000) the data collection in a case study may commonly use some or one of the following techniques: observation, interviews, use of documents and records and a wide range of other techniques (questionnaires, standardised tests, scales, etc.). In the case of this study, the main

techniques selected are questionnaires-surveys, interviews and focus groups. In addition to this, I have used students' attainment data, schools' documents and school web sites to complement the information that I obtained with the main collection techniques.

For some authors, a case study is a qualitative method of data collection that can be complemented with other methods. For example, in studies that use multi-methods, some researchers use surveys as a quantitative technique and case study as a qualitative one. Other authors consider that a case study is a research design related to a qualitative or MM tradition. In relation to this point, Yin (2009, p.19) suggests that "some case study research goes beyond being a type of qualitative research, by using a mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence". Nowadays it is becoming more and more frequent to find case studies in which an MM approach of data collection is used. Bryman (2004, p.49) emphasises that "case studies are frequently sites for the employment of both quantitative and qualitative research". He suggests that there is a tendency to link the use of case studies with qualitative research but this view is not appropriate. Case studies often make use of qualitative methods such as interviewing and observation, but it is also common to find case studies that employ both qualitative and quantitative methods.

A case study can be considered a naturalistic methodology, since it is concerned with events occurring in a natural way. The researcher does not have an interventionist approach to the situation, rather the aim is to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon and to gain insights into what is happening and why. Case studies must be informative and relevant for at least some of the actors

involved in the study. For example, if it is an educational case study, it is supposed to be significant for some of the following groups: teachers, pupils, parents, headmasters, policy makers, etc. According to Wellington (2000, p.97) some of the strengths of case studies is that they are illustrative, illuminating, insightful, disseminable, accessible, attention-holding, strong on reality, vivid and of value in teaching.

The use of case studies in research has also faced some criticism on the part of more positivist-oriented researchers who have argued that frequently the results or findings gained through the application of case studies are not representative, replicable or generalisable. In relation to this problem, some authors argue that the use of case studies as a research design provides opportunities for generalisation, but only in similar cases or contexts. Nevertheless, for most of the studies that use a case study research design, the problem of generalisation is not an issue because, frequently, the focus of a case study is to gain insights about a particular case, rather than establishing truths that can be replicable in many cases. In relation to the previous point, Wellington (2000, p.99), citing Kluckhohn & Murray (1948, p.35), explains that “every man is in certain respects, like all men, like some men, like no other man”. In the same way, I argue, a school can be like all the schools, like some schools, like no other school. Bassey (2003, p.115), referring to the work of Donmoyer, indicates that “not only similarities but also differences between contexts may be illuminating”. In my particular case, I am not interested in establishing truths or facts about effective schools in challenging circumstances. I am aware that the possibilities of generalisation of my findings

are reduced and if there are some, they are restricted to very similar schools, inhabiting similar contexts.

My adoption of this research design can be explained by my intention of gaining a real understanding of the internal processes that support the greater educational effectiveness of a group of schools. In doing so, it is necessary to study in depth these institutions and apply different methods of data collection. I need to explore in detail the working systems of these schools, their educational objectives, their organisational characteristics, the nature of interactions between the different school stakeholders, the contextual scenarios in which they are located and some of the unique features and complexities of these schools. With respect to this, Yin (2009, p.18) indicates, “you would use the case study method because you wanted to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth, but such understanding encompassed important contextual conditions”.

The use of a multiple-case design that combines qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection has sought to address in depth the research questions guiding this study. It is certainly not the only way to approach my research problem but it seems an appropriate one for the study of educational institutions. Schools are complex social institutions and it is almost impossible to present robust and trustworthy findings if only one method of data collection is used, as for example, a survey. A researcher may certainly get a lot of valuable data by applying a survey about educational effectiveness factors, but those findings could be improved by making them less biased and stronger through the use of qualitative methods as a triangulation strategy.

Finally, it is important to indicate that in the process of analysing the six cases, I am focusing on similarities and common patterns between the schools but also on differences and unique features of each institution in relation to their educational effectiveness. After the analysis of each individual case study, I make a comparison of them through a cross-case analysis.

## 4.5 Research sampling

### *Schools samples*

The main school sample used in this study is purposive, atypical, and consists of four schools (Araucaria, Canelo, Rauli and Avellano)<sup>18</sup>. The second is a small purposive sample of two typical institutions (Quillay and Lenga)<sup>19</sup>. Atypical schools are the ones that demonstrate better results in SIMCE and typical schools the ones that have normal results. As was indicated previously, SIMCE is an examination used to measure the quality of education in Chile (see Chapter 2, section 2.3). I analysed the student level of achievement in Language and Mathematics during the years 2003, 2006 and 2008. I used the following criteria to select my school samples:

1. Firstly, I considered the socio-economic group to which the schools belong. In Chile schools are classified in five socio-economic groups (A-E)<sup>20</sup> which are defined by consideration of the students' household income, the vulnerability level index of the school and the parents' level of schooling. My intention in this study was to focus on schools in disadvantaged circumstances, thus I did not include schools in the highest socio-economic levels (D-E). In the first year analysed, 2003, all the atypical and typical schools that I selected were classified in socio-economic group B. I tried to include schools in socio-economic group A, but it was difficult to find schools with a good level of achievement within

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<sup>18</sup> Pseudonyms of the schools.

<sup>19</sup> Pseudonyms of the schools.

<sup>20</sup> A: very low / B: lower class/ C: lower middle/ D: middle-upper middle / E: upper.

this group. In the years 2006 and 2008, two of my atypical schools upgraded to group C. Therefore, my samples only include schools in groups B and C.

2. Secondly, I have only considered municipal schools, corporation schools and private-subsidised schools. I have excluded private-paid schools (see Chapter 2, section 2.2).
3. Thirdly, in my sample of atypical schools, I have considered schools that have the previous two characteristics and demonstrate a good level of student achievement in SIMCE. All the schools selected are taken from the 30% of schools with the highest level of performance during the years 2003, 2006 and 2008, considering schools with similar characteristics. The sample of typical schools is made up of schools that have a normal level of performance. Their results are near the national average, considering schools with similar characteristics.

It is important to indicate that all the schools in both samples are vocational institutions. One of them is polyvalent, which means that it offers a vocational pathway and an academic pathway. This fact was a coincidence because I did not consider this criterion for the selection of the schools.



### *Typical schools sample*

Two schools were selected as a sample of typical secondary schools. The main objective to select this sample was to make a comparison between typical and atypical schools. This particular sample includes only schools in the socio-economic group B. Considering school type of administration and funding, this particular sample includes one municipal school (Quillay) and one private-subsidised school (Lenga), (see Chapter 2, section 2.2). In summary, these two schools share similar characteristics with the ones in the main sample, but there is one important difference, their results in SIMCE are average or typical, in other words, they are neither exceptional, nor underachieving.

### *Atypical schools sample*

The main sample consists of four schools that have been selected after the consideration of the criteria that was previously detailed. These schools are classified in socio-economic groups B and C. Araucaria and Canelo were classified in group B in 2003 and in group C in 2006 and 2008. Rauli and Avellano are classified in group B throughout all the years considered. In terms of administration and funding, Araucaria and Rauli are corporation schools. Canelo and Avellano are municipal institutions (see Chapter 2, section 2.2). These four schools have been considered atypical because they demonstrate a better level of student academic achievement than could be expected on consideration of the challenging contextual conditions they face and their student intake from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### ***Geographical setting***

The schools selected for this study are geographically located in two Chilean regions, Metropolitan and Bío Bío Regions (see Table 4.5.1 and Chapter 2, section 2.1). The selection of schools from these two regions helps to satisfy my intention of having a more representative sample. Initially, I wanted to select schools from at least three Chilean regions. However, for practical reasons (funding, time to conduct the study), I could not achieve those intentions.

### ***Negotiating access to schools***

A very important stage in defining the sample is to get access and cooperation from the schools. Initially, I selected a group of 10 schools and I contacted them via email. I attached a formal letter which included an introduction about the researcher, an explanation about the study and a brief exposition about the nature of involvement of the schools and participants. The four atypical and the two typical schools that I included in the final samples were the ones that showed interest in taking part in this study. Finally, before going to Chile to undertake the field work in June 2009, I had telephone contact with the schools in order to arrange meetings to plan the data collection procedures. Once in Chile, I attended these meetings in each school to define the participants' availability and the sort of cooperation required by them.

**Table 4.5.1: Schools sample overview**

| Schools pseudonyms  | Location                       | Number of students | Classification for this study considering SIMCE results | Socio-economic group | Classification for type of administration and funding | Orientation                        |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---|----------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>1: Araucaria</b> | Bío Bío Region (Concepción)    | 1,184              | Atypical  | B-C                  | Corporation school with public funding                | Technical-vocational               |
| <b>2: Canelo</b>    | Metropolitan Region (Santiago) | 1,337              | Atypical  | B-C                  | Municipal school with public funding                  | Technical-vocational               |
| <b>3: Rauli</b>     | Bío Bío Region (Hualpén)       | 702                | Atypical  | B                    | Corporation school with public funding                | Technical-vocational               |
| <b>4: Avellano</b>  | Bío Bío Region (Los Ángeles)   | 1,260              | Atypical  | B                    | Municipal school with public funding                  | Technical-vocational               |
| <b>5: Quillay</b>   | Bío Bío Region (Curanilahue)   | 1,404              | Typical   | B                    | Municipal school with public funding                  | Polyvalent (vocational + academic) |
| <b>6: Lenga</b>     | Metropolitan Region (Santiago) | 829                | Typical   | B                    | Private-subsidised school with public funding         | Technical-vocational               |

### *Headteachers sample*

The six headteachers of the schools that I am analysing took part in the study; all of them accepted the invitations to participate in interviews. Five of them are male and one is female. At the time of the application they were aged between 40 and 71 years. The years of educational experience they have vary from 20 to 51 years. The majority of them have more than 9 years of experience as headteachers with one exception that corresponds to the youngest headteacher, who has been working in this position for less than 1 year. In terms of their educational levels,

in all the cases they have a Master's degree in Education and several professional development courses.

In all the cases, they were facilitators who helped me to gain access to schools and to other participants. Specifically their role as facilitators consisted in putting me in contact with a person who coordinated the participation of students, teachers and parents in each school. In most of the cases the coordinators were teachers or members of the leadership teams. For the purposes of this research, it was necessary to have contact with one person who coordinated my access to participants in each school because as external researcher; I did not have my own means to recruit school participants without the intervention of a school coordinator or facilitator. The fact that my access to participants was mediated by someone else could have some inherent bias, but I consider they were minimised because I personally recommended to the coordinators to choose students, teachers and parents groups in a random way, without consideration of any pre-conceived criteria for selection.

### ***Teacher sample***

In each school a sample of approximately 20 teachers participated in answering the questionnaire-surveys. At the time of the data collection process, participants were aged between 23 and 63 years old and the average age was 45. Concerning the total number of years that they have been working in the teaching profession, the average is 19 years and in the case of the total of years working in the school they are now, the average is 14 years. The majority of teachers that collaborated in

answering the questionnaires have further professional qualifications. Of those, 26% have a post-graduate diploma, 17% hold a Master's degree in Education, 35% have undertaken professional development courses, while 18% have a Bachelor's degree. This information demonstrates that more than 60% of teachers have undertaken post-graduate or professional development courses. The data also indicates that not many teachers have a Master's degree which seems logical in the Chilean context where Masters' degrees have a stronger research orientation. In addition to this, a group of between 7 and 10 teachers per school took part in the focus group sessions. All the participants were asked to voluntarily participate in the study by a teachers' coordinator or directly by the headteachers and they accepted the invitation to take part.

### ***Student sample***

In each school, two classes participated in answering the questionnaire-surveys; the total number of students was 374. In the majority of the schools, the student sample was higher than 50 participants with the exception of school 2 (Canelo), where the number of students who answered the questionnaire was 38. At the time that I applied the data collection instruments, the students were aged between 13 and 18 years old but the majority of them were 16 or 17 years old. In terms of the time that students have been in the school, the majority had studied in the school between 1 and 4 years. In addition to this, a group of 10 students per school took part in the focus groups. Students who took part in the questionnaire application and focus group were asked to voluntarily participate in the study by a teachers' coordinator.

### ***Parent Sample***

In all the schools, the parents of the students who took part in the study were sent questionnaire-surveys to answer at home. From a sample of 374 students, 219 parents returned the questionnaires. In almost all the schools, with the exception of school 3 (Rauli), the number of parents who responded to the questionnaire was over 30. Of these, 80% were females and 20% males. At the time of the application, participants were aged between 28 and 77 years and the average age was 43. Of the parents 66% indicated that they were married, 12% single, 10% separated and the rest of categories have a very low percentage of cases. In terms of parents' level of schooling, 35% of parents indicated that they did not complete

either primary or secondary school. 38% indicated that they completed school. The rest did not give information about this aspect. A significant number of mothers are housewives and the majority of the rest of parents do manual jobs or work in the services or technical industries. A group of between 7 and 10 parents per school accepted to voluntarily participate in the focus group. They were contacted by a member of the school leadership team or by a teachers' coordinator. Table 4.5.2 details the number of participants who took part in the different parts of the fieldwork.

**Table 4.5.2: Number of participants who took part in fieldwork**

| <b>Instruments</b><br><b>Participants</b> | <b>Questionnaires surveys <sup>21</sup></b>     | <b>Focus groups<sup>22</sup></b> | <b>Interviews</b>                                  |
|---|---|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Students</b>                           | 2 classes per school<br>(374 students in total) | 10 participants per school.      |  |
| <b>Teachers</b>                           | 134 teachers in total                           | 7-10 participants per school.    |  |
| <b>Parents</b>                            | 219 parents in total.                           | 7-10 participants per school.    |  |
| <b>Headteachers</b>                       |   |                                  | 1 participant per school. 6 headteachers in total. |

<sup>21</sup> The total number of participants corresponds to the six schools of the sample.

<sup>22</sup> The number of participants is for each school.

#### **4.6 Instruments and techniques of data collection**

This research combines quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The specific instruments and techniques used to undertake the case studies are: questionnaire-surveys, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. It is important to mention that all my instruments had to be translated into Spanish, since the fieldwork was conducted in a Spanish speaking country. The questionnaire-surveys and the interviews and focus group schedules were also piloted, as will be discussed later in this section. In the following section, I explain some of the characteristics of these methods and the criteria that I used to select them for my study.

##### ***Questionnaire-surveys***

In order to address my research questions regarding effective school characteristics, instruments and techniques of data collection have been selected. One of them is the questionnaire-survey. The objective of the application of this instrument was to test if a large number of effective school conditions, commonly included in school effectiveness literature, were present in this group of schools. I considered that the application of a questionnaire-survey is a pragmatic way to survey a large number of respondents about many different topics. Denscombe (2010) indicates that the use of questionnaire-survey is appropriate for a large number of respondents. This fact makes the possibilities of generalisation of its findings greater than if an interviewing method is used. Additionally, the time



consumption in the application and analysis processes is less than in the case of other data collection techniques such as observation or interviews.

In terms of questionnaire-survey design, Wellington (2000) indicates that it is crucial that the questionnaire is targeted to a particular person within an organisation. He also mentions that the items should be designed in the form of straightforward closed questions. In addition to this, he recommends an attractive and clear questionnaire-survey presentation otherwise it may be ignored by respondents. I have taken into account these three important considerations in the design of my questionnaire-surveys. Firstly, I created three versions to be given to the different participants of the study, teachers, parents and pupils. Secondly, I used closed questions presented in affirmative or negative sentences that require a straightforward answer from the respondent. For each item, the participant has to choose an option that corresponds to a number on a Likert Scale. Number 5 represents a very positive position in relation to the variable; 4 a positive perception; 3 a neutral position; 2 a negative perception and 1 a very negative position. Thirdly, each questionnaire version was presented in an attractive and clear way. All of them include an introductory section on the first page in which the objective of the application and the instructions to answer are described. The majority of the sections and statements/items of the questionnaires were included in the three versions, but the language has been adapted to the type of participant. In the case of students, the vocabulary used in the questions is clearer and less technical than in the case of teachers.

Concerning the questionnaire-surveys' structure and content, each version includes some school effective factors and each factor has at least three associated items. In total the questionnaire-surveys have approximately 50 items that have been designed taking into consideration findings from existing school effectiveness studies. From the vast existing literature on the topic, there are numerous categorisations of school effectiveness conditions (Scheerens, 1989; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Sammons et al., 1995; Cotton, 1995; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). These established effectiveness conditions were considered to define the factors that I included in my questionnaires, for example, some of them are "school leadership", "teaching and learning processes", "school climate", "teachers' professional competences and commitment", "expectation of students' success", etc. (see sample of questionnaire-surveys in Appendices 3 and 4). In addition to the consideration of the extant school effectiveness literature to define the main factors included in the questionnaires, I also considered one existing instrument developed by other researchers: ISTOF<sup>23</sup> questionnaire 'my classroom' (students grades 7-12) (Teddlie et al., 2006). This instrument assesses the opinions of students about the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes occurring in the classroom. It makes use of a Likert scale for respondents to answer the questions. This questionnaire gave me an idea of how to design and structure my questionnaires and I have also decided to use a Likert scale. In addition, this instrument gave me a sense of the type of items addressing classroom effectiveness, which is one of the topics covered in my questionnaire-surveys. All the versions of my questionnaire-surveys (teachers, students, parents)

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<sup>23</sup> International System for Teachers Observation and Feedback.

were presented to the Ethics Committee of the University of Nottingham and they were also piloted, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Finally, in terms of response rates, teacher questionnaire-surveys were administered to the teaching staff in the 6 schools, the total response rate for the 6 schools is 134. Student questionnaire-surveys were administered to two different classes in each school and the total response rate is 374. Parent questionnaire-surveys were sent to the parents of the students who responded to the questionnaire-surveys in each school and the total response rate is 219 (see Table 4.5.2).

### ***Focus groups***

One of the qualitative techniques of data collection that I used in my study was focus groups. According to Bryman (2004, p.345) “The focus group method is an interview with several people on a specific topic or issue”. I applied focus groups to samples of teachers, students and parents. The main objective of the administration of focus groups was to explore participants’ personal constructs and perceptions about factors that help to make the schools more or less effective. My intention was to get important insights from participants through an in depth exploration of the same topics that were addressed in the questionnaire-surveys. In addition to this, this exploration aimed to get more emerging factors associated with the effectiveness of the school. This technique was applied to different types of participants with the objective of getting data from different perspectives. I decided to use focus groups as an alternative to the use of interviews because I

wanted to get qualitative data from many participants in each school and I did not have the time to interview individually a group of students, teachers and parents in all the six schools. Focus groups provide the opportunity of getting a number of different perspectives in the same collective interview.

Three focus group sessions were undertaken in all the schools, one session with a group of 10 students, one with 7-10 teachers and one with 7-10 parents. Wellington (2000, p.124) indicates that “a focus group is a small group made up of perhaps six to ten individuals with certain common features or characteristics, with whom a discussion can be focused onto a given issue or topic”. The number of participants that I defined for the focus groups was 10, the maximum that Wellington recommends. I made this decision because I was conscious that sometimes not all the expected participants attend so I wanted to make sure that in the case of two or three participants not being able to attend at the last minute, I would still have enough participants. As I was expecting, some participants did not attend the appointment, especially in the case of parents. However, my research was not affected by this because in all the sessions I had at least 7 participants. Regarding the time taken in the sessions, each focus group took approximately 45 minutes.

Wellington (2000, p.125) stresses the importance of the organisation and planning of the focus group sessions: “The focus group needs to be carefully planned and chosen with the objectives of the research in mind”. In addition to this, it is also important to establish a positive climate of interaction or rapport in the session. In

relation to this point, Wellington (2000, p.125) indicates “groups members need to be at ease, and seated so that all the group can make eye contact with the other”.

The focus groups were carefully planned and organised. I piloted the focus group application some months before the main study application. I encountered some minor problems in the pilot study, so I considered some potential inconveniences in advance and I prevented them happening again. Unfortunately, even when I tried to organise more efficiently the attendance of participants to the focus groups in each school, especially in the case of teachers or parents, some participants did not attend the appointments. Secondly, regarding the climate of interactions during the sessions, I tried to establish a positive rapport with the participants which was facilitated by my previous experience as a teacher and educational counsellor used to working with groups of people. In general, participants were well disposed to take part in the pilot study.

In order to organise each session better and encourage more participation from stakeholders (students, teachers, parents), I used a big poster with a mind map that was put on a board. It had the words ‘school effectiveness’ in the centre and all the pre-conceived factors of effectiveness surrounding the main words and connected to it with arrows. Participants were asked to give their perceptions and opinions about the presence of the educational effectiveness conditions described on the mind map in their schools. They were also encouraged to think about other factors that could be associated to the greater or lesser effectiveness of their schools and I wrote them in some blank spaces that were left in order to add more factors given by the participants. I managed to cover all the topics considered in

the schedule and we also discussed other emerging topics that might help to understand the effectiveness in their schools. All the focus group sessions were recorded given the group's permission and some notes were taken by the researcher.

### ***Semi-structured interviews***

In order to get data on the opinions and perceptions of headteachers about the effectiveness of their institutions, I decided to use semi-structured interviews. In this case, the use of interviews is appropriate because I have just one participant per school, so I conducted six interviews in total. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. I decided to use semi-structured interviews because it allows more flexibility in the interaction with the interviewee than a structured interview. A semi-structured interview provides the researcher more control over the schedule. For example, during the interview the researcher may decide to adapt some of the questions depending on the flow of the conversation, he or she can also decide to add more questions in order to explore in more depth some of the topics. For Wellington (2000, p.74) a semi-structure interview, "although it depends greatly on the tactics and interactions, is often the most valuable". In addition to this, another important factor that I considered in the administration of the interviews was the 'rapport'. I tried to create a positive and pleasant climate in the interaction with all my interviewees.

Finally it is important to indicate that I used a semi-structured interview schedule with a checklist of topics closely linked with the factors included in the

questionnaire-surveys. I was successful in covering all the topics and, additionally, I got some valuable insights that emerged from participants' responses. All the interviews were recorded, given the interviewees' permission. In addition, some notes were taken by the researcher.

#### **4.7 Pilot study**

The pilot study was conducted in two secondary schools in Concepción, Chile. One of the piloted schools has been included in the main sample of the study but the participants who took part in the pilot study did not take part in the main study. I was very conscious about the fact that in terms of reliability, it was not appropriate to have the same participants in the application of the main study. It is frequently recommended to pilot different participants in order to obtain more reliable data than can be obtained from individuals who have been studied previously. The results of people who already know the sort of questions they will face might be biased and affect the trustworthiness of the results.

The pilot study was conducted between December 15<sup>th</sup> and December 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2008. In general, the schools' willingness to participate was positive, however, there were some problems related to teachers' availability, especially in one of the schools where the number of participants for the focus group sessions was lower than expected. The reason for this was that December is a very busy period for Chilean schools because it is the last month of the academic year and frequently teachers are very busy finishing all their duties and planning for the next year.

The main objective of piloting my instruments was to test their validity. It was important for me to confirm if they were really useful to collect the type of data that I wanted to collect in order to answer my research questions. Additionally, another important aspect for me was to check if the data collected with these instruments had the appropriate quality and relevance for this study. After the administration of the instruments and techniques of data collection, I assessed that their weaknesses were minimal, especially in the case of the interviews and focus groups.

In general, the piloting process gave me valuable information about the quality of my instruments and I managed to make the necessary changes for the main study fieldwork. The piloting of interviews and focus group applications went well and it was not necessary to make many changes to the schedules or to the strategies used in their administration. However, some minor problems were encountered in the application of questionnaires-surveys. According to Cohen et al. (2000, p.260), “a pilot has several functions, principally to increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire”. In the case of my questionnaires, some ambiguous items and the use of certain unknown terms for some of the participants were affecting the validity of the instruments and the reliability of the results that those instruments were able to provide. Therefore, in order to improve the effectiveness of these instruments, I revised a number of items and adapted the vocabulary used in the questionnaire-surveys to suit the different participants.

In conclusion, considering my experience piloting the instruments and the feedback that I received from the participants, some minimal corrections were



made to their design in order to improve their efficacy and quality. In addition, I can indicate that the pilot study was a learning experience in many aspects, especially in issues concerning schools' access, the ethical approval process and application of research instruments.

#### **4.8 Data analysis**

As previously discussed in this chapter, my methodological approach is an MM parallel design: **QUAL + quan**. Within this design, I have used methodological triangulation, which means that I have collected data using different methods that in this particular case belong to QUAL and QUAN research traditions. I have also used data triangulation, which means that my data come from more than one source. In terms of analysis, in the first phase, I have analysed in parallel my QUAN and QUAL data.

##### *Analysis of questionnaires (QUAN element)*

After a long process of data entry, cleaning and preparation for the analysis using SPSS software, I conducted a descriptive statistical analysis of the six schools in my sample. The descriptive analysis considered mean scores, mode scores, standard deviations, frequencies and bar graphs. In addition to this, I calculated t-tests scores for many of my variables. The t-test is a statistical technique used to explore the differences between two groups. It is employed when the researcher wants to know if there is statistical significance between two groups in the analysis of certain variables. According to Pallant (2005, p.97) "T-tests are used

when you have two groups (e.g. males and females) or two sets of data (before and after) and you want to compare the mean score on some continuous variables”. There are two types of t-tests, paired sample and independent sample t-tests.

In the particular case of this research, I performed independent sample t-tests, which means that I compared the mean scores of a number of variables between two different groups that corresponded to atypical and typical schools to check whether the differences between the two types of schools were significant or not. In doing this, I first checked the results of the Levene’s test for equality of variances, in order to assess whether the variances of the scores for the two groups (atypical and typical schools) were the same or not. After this process, I assessed the differences between the two groups by checking the results of the Sig. (2 tailed) column. Some of the variables that demonstrated significant differences between typical schools and atypical ones were the ones associated to ‘school discipline’, ‘maximization of learning time’ and ‘expectations of students.’ In general, atypical schools got significantly better results on the results of these aspects. Other variables did not demonstrate to be significantly different in both types of schools. However, in qualitative analysis stages other significant differences between schools emerged.

While I was performing this quantitative analysis, I was also working on the analysis of my qualitative data sets in order to integrate both approaches’ findings in the next stage of analysis. Eventually, the results of the quantitative statistical analysis were triangulated with the qualitative findings and presented in the

school profiles (case studies) in an integrated way (see Chapter 5). Additionally, the findings from the questionnaire-surveys were also included in the analytical tables used in the cross-case analysis process (see Chapter 6).

### *Analysis of focus groups and interviews (QUAL elements)*

In terms of data analysis, each focus group session and interview was transcribed and translated into English and the transcriptions were analysed using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. A high number of ‘free nodes’ and ‘tree nodes’ emerged from this first categorisation process (see example in Appendix 7). For that reason, it was necessary to reorganise the nodes and classify them into bigger themes or categories using a mind mapping tool available on the internet<sup>24</sup>. The final resulting themes were included in the school portraits and explored by using qualitative information and illustrative quotes (see Chapter 5). In this phase of the analysis process, the qualitative data was triangulated with the quantitative data and interpreted in an integrated way. In addition to this, the qualitative findings of the focus groups and interviews were also considered in the analytical tables used in the cross-case analysis process (see Chapter 6).

### *Integration of QUAN and QUAL data in the school portraits*

After the parallel analysis of both QUAN and QUAL data, I wrote six school portraits that report my case studies. These portraits include **quan + QUAL** evidence. I have explored the distinctive features that influence the greater or

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<sup>24</sup> **bubbl.us**: brainstorm and mind map online tool.

lesser effectiveness of my sample of atypical and typical schools. In doing so, I have conducted a thematic analysis integrating the findings of the questionnaire-surveys, focus groups and interviews. According to Bazeley (2009, p.205), one of the strategies for integrating data is the “synthesis of data generated from a variety of sources, for further joint interpretation”. In the school profiles that I wrote, I integrated data from different sources by synthesising the findings and organising them into categories. These integrated findings are further interpreted in the next chapters. In the process of analysis of each theme or category, I have given a greater emphasis to the QUAL approach because my interpretation is focused on ‘understanding’. In my view, the most effective elements to consider in achieving this understanding are the voices of participants and their own interpretation of their experiences or circumstances. In this way, the quantitative element is integrated in the analysis but its main purpose is to support the qualitative evidence.

### ***Cross-case analysis and data integration***

In a third phase of analysis, I performed a cross-case analysis by using analytical tables where I present findings for all the six schools. In each table I analysed a main theme or category that was found to be positively or negatively impacting the effectiveness of the schools. For each category, many findings are presented in the form of statements or variables. These findings emerged either from QUAN, QUAL or both sources of data. In order to present the quantitative data in the tables, I had to transform the results of the quantitative analysis (frequencies, modes scores) into an opinion scale that employs + 0 – symbols. The Likert Scale

used in the questionnaire-surveys has a very similar structure to this opinion scale. In the surveys 5 represents a very positive position in relation to the variable; 4 a positive perception; 3 a neutral position; 2 a negative perception and 1 a very negative position. The opinion scale follows the same criteria, ++ indicates a very positive judgement about the finding; + a positive judgement; 0 a neutral position, neither positive nor negative; - a negative judgement and --a very negative judgement (see Chapter 6, analytical tables).

While undertaking this process of transformation of numbers into this symbol opinion scale, I also had to transform the qualitative data into this type of scale that assesses the opinions of participants. In relation to the qualitative data, the analysis process was more complex because this type of scale has a quantitative logic, so I had to quantify my qualitative data. I tried to assess the level of agreement or disagreement with the variable by analysing the intensity of the opinions of participants and the number of participants that have the same opinion. For example, if teachers, students, parents and the headteacher have a similar opinion about the variable, I assigned a positive value to the variable expressed in a + or ++ symbol. The process of assigning a value to the intensity and repetition of a qualitative finding can be considered a rather unorthodox way to quantify qualitative data. A more formal quantification process of qualitative data would consider the intensity and repetition of an opinion, but also the performance of some quantitative measurements, such as for example calculating the exact percentage of negative, positive or neutral perceptions about a variable. Teddlie & Tashakkori (2009, p.269) argue “quantitizing might involve a simple frequency count of certain themes or responses. Conversely, it may consist of

more complex ratings of the strength or intensity of those themes or responses”. In this case, my way to quantify the qualitative finding consisted of an informal process of rating the intensity of the perceptions and counting the repetitions of particular opinions. In relation to this point, Creswell & Plano Clark (2007, p.139) indicate “no matter how the qualitative data is transformed, the researcher must consider that the counts may not be an accurate representation of the themes and keep this in mind during the analysis and interpretation of the transformed data”. Considering this, one should be very careful in the interpretation of transformed data.

In the particular cases in which the variables are informed by both qualitative and quantitative sources of information, first I have made a parallel analysis of my qualitative and quantitative findings and a transformation into the symbol scale. After that, I integrated both strands by assigning a final symbol to each variable that is the result of the integration of both the quantitative and qualitative data sources about the same variable or finding (see Chapter 6, analytical tables). In simpler words, it is a sort of average result of the addition of the separate values (symbols) of my qualitative and quantitative data sources. When there is only qualitative or quantitative data for a variable, I used only the available source of information to assign a value to the finding. After the analysis of all the individual variables or findings related to a theme or category, I made an overall judgement about the general situation of each theme per school. At this point, it is possible to indicate that the QUAL and QUAN data are fully integrated in a final value related to the specific category per school. Based on this judgement, I made a general interpretation of the results and a comparison between atypical and typical

schools. The interpretations were done in a narrative way, without the use of any numeric element to support the conclusions. Therefore, it is possible to indicate that at this level the quantitative data that was integrated with the qualitative data in the tables and expressed in a final average symbol has been ‘qualitized’ and presented in the form of interpretations and conclusions of the category. However, it is not clear that transforming quantitative information into narratives could be considered a formal procedure of qualifying data. It could be also regarded as a common interpretation process. However, there are many studies that use quantitative data based on responses to survey items to generate qualitative profiles (Taylor & Tashakkori, 1997; Sandelowski, 2003; Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006).

It is important to emphasise that the techniques of quantifying and qualifying data are still in a development process, since the use of effective data integration within mixed methods research is relatively new. Creswell & Plano Clark (2007) have acknowledged tensions in the use of these techniques and the necessity to develop strategies more accurate for data transformation purposes:

“More work needs to be done to expand the techniques for quantifying qualitative data and to develop the analysis option for such transformed data. Writers have written even less about transforming quantitative data into qualitative data. This area is ripe for researcher innovation and future research” (p.188).

Finally, in the last phase of the cross-case analysis, I have explored and interpreted only the main categories with their corresponding integrated overall results per school.

## **4.9 Ethical issues**

In doing educational research, ethical considerations have to be explored regarding the design, methods, conduct of research, analysis, and presentation of results. According to Wellington (2000, p.54), “the main criterion for educational research is that it should be ethical”. Denscombe (2010, p.329) indicates that “social researchers are expected to approach their task in an ethical manner”. He continues arguing “researchers have no privileged position in the society that justifies them pursuing their interests at the expense of those they are studying - no matter how valuable they hope the findings might be”. For the purposes of this study, I operate under the BERA guidelines (BERA 2004) which consider that “all educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom”. As part of the process of getting ethical approval from the Ethics Coordinators of the School of Education of The University of Nottingham, I discussed the design of my surveys, interviews schedules and focus groups schedules with my supervisors. I tried to adapt the use of language to the different groups of participants in order to produce instruments more appropriate and clear for them.



### ***Researcher's role***

Before the data collection process, I went through a process of reflection about my role as a researcher and the ethical implications that my work was going to have for participants and, more generally, for the institutions. In relation to this, firstly, I was concerned about the ethical aspect related to the participants' personal treatment. As a teacher, I am used to dealing with groups of students and I am confident of my capacity to approach people with empathy and respect. Wellington (2000, pp.56-57) indicates that "honesty and openness should characterise the relationship between researchers, participants and institutional representatives". Denscombe (2010, p.335) has a similar view in terms of the principles of research ethics and argues "researchers should operate in an open and honest manner with respect to the investigation". This honesty and openness in the relationship with participants should avoid any possibility of ambiguity and misrepresentation in relation to the nature of the study. Researchers need to be clear about the objectives of the application of instruments and about the type of role required from the participants. Secondly, I was also concerned about the ethical professional aspect. Denscombe (2010, p.336) indicates that researchers need to demonstrate "honesty and integrity in the conduct of research". This involves the provision of "fair and unbiased interpretation of their findings" and the acknowledgement of "any sponsorship or vested interests relating to the research".

### ***Informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity***

One of the necessary requirements to get ethical approval from the University of Nottingham to undertake a research project was to produce a participant consent form (see Appendix 1). In this document it was clearly stated that participation in the study was totally voluntary and participants could decide to leave the study at any stage if they felt uncomfortable or not able to continue. Before signing the consent form, participants need to have enough information about the study, in order to decide whether they want to participate or not (see Appendix 2). Therefore, I gave each participant a document providing information about the research. I also indicated clearly in the consent form the kind of commitment expected from participants. In addition to this, the consent form also ensured the participants that all the data that they gave would be treated with absolute confidentiality. In relation to this point Denscombe (2010, p.334) suggested that it is very important to inform the participants what security measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the data. For example, that the pieces of data that they could give will be kept in a secured place and that they will not be disclosed.

Another important ethical aspect is to guarantee the anonymity of participants and organisations that have taken part in the research. In this particular study, I have also considered this aspect which is stated on the consent form. All the instruments of data collection are anonymous, thus participants are not identified individually. To summarise: it is important to mention that during the whole process of data collection, analysis and writing up, I have always acted in a

strictly ethical way, respecting what was agreed with individual participants and schools.

#### **4.10 Assessing the quality of the design and inferences of this MM study**

In order to assess the quality of the design of this study and the types of inferences produced, I will use some of the criteria described by Teddlie & Tashakkori (2009, pp.301-302) and some of the elements presented by O’Cathain (2010, pp.550-551). These authors propose some criteria to evaluate MM research. Two general aspects that they consider in assessing research quality are “design quality” and “interpretative rigour”.

In terms of “design quality”, these authors indicate that the design has to be appropriate in aspects such as addressing the research questions and matching with the stated purpose for doing MM research. In this particular study, the choice of a multiple case study design, and the employment of different methods of data collection and strategies for the analysis is appropriate for the purposes of my study. I am assessing the effectiveness of a group of schools and, as complex social organisations, in depth case studies that are informed by different sources of data seem to be very pertinent in evaluating school processes. For example, in terms of the suitability of my research methods, and considering that I am analysing many aspects of the schools, the use of questionnaire-surveys has been very useful in obtaining data on a considerable number of topics. It has also contributed to adding reliability and generalisability to my findings, since this method allows the surveying of a high number of participants. The use of focus

groups and interviews has been very useful to analyse in more depth some main topics, adding to the trustworthiness of my findings. In general, this process of methodological triangulation, combined with the data triangulation (data coming from different types of respondents) has increased the possibilities of generating robust research insights that provide better answers to my research questions.

The adequacy of the design is also important, which means that the procedures of the study (sampling, data collection, data analysis) have to be implemented with the necessary rigour and effectiveness required to obtain the expected results. The design has to be characterised by “within-design consistency” which means that the components have to fit together and be linked in a logical way. Finally, the design has to demonstrate “analytic adequacy”, which indicates that the analysis procedures and strategies have to be adequate and implemented in an efficient manner in order to answer the research questions. In relation to these aspects, the processes of sampling, data collection and data analysis have been informed by the detailed study of the literature on the best procedures to conduct an MM study. For example, in terms of data collection, I have ensured that all the instruments used for this purpose are carefully designed, piloted and applied (see sections 4.6 and 4.7). Regarding the data analysis, I have used procedures of integration and data transformation used in integrative MM studies that have been described by authors such as Creswell, Teddlie and Tashakkori (see section 4.8). I have tried to be consistent in the application of the analysis phases within a parallel MM design with integration procedures. The phases included, parallel data analysis; data integration and interpretation in the profiles; data transformation, integration and interpretation in the analytical tables; in depth analysis of integrative findings in

the discussion section and synthesis of findings in the conclusion section. These steps have followed a logical sequence and are consistent with the aims of this research.

Concerning “interpretive rigour”, the findings have to be characterised by “interpretative consistency” and by “theoretical consistency”. “Interpretative consistency” refers to the fact that the different inferences about the same findings have to be consistent with each other and “theoretical consistency” is the degree to which inferences are consistent with the theory in the specific field. In relation to these aspects, I can indicate that my findings are characterised by having a good level of “interpretative consistency” which is demonstrated by the fact that my QUAL and QUAN inferences are consistent between them. My qualitative findings are complemented by the quantitative ones. In fact, I was able to corroborate the findings of one of my strands with the findings of the other, which facilitated their integration in the school profiles. There is coincidence of both types of data in the majority of findings, although in some cases a particular finding was only supported by one of the data sources (see Chapter 6, analytical tables). In terms of theoretical consistency, it is evident from the research literature (see Chapter 3, section 3.7) that my findings are consistent with the theory produced in the field. The majority of factors found in my research have been previously identified in school effectiveness studies.

Other elements that contribute to the ‘interpretive rigour’ are “interpretative agreement” and “integrative efficacy”. The first describes the extent to which the inferences are in agreement with other researchers’ views or with participants’

constructions. In relation to this point, I can indicate that my views coincide with those of many other researchers, since the fact that the traditional literature on school effectiveness has identified similar findings reveal that these researchers have arrived at similar interpretations and conclusions. Regarding “integrative efficacy”, this concept is associated with the extent to which both QUAN and QUAL inferences are consistently integrated. I believe that the majority of my findings have been consistently integrated because, as already suggested in this section, I have followed a rigorous process of data analysis which has included processes of data transformation and integration. Furthermore, the integration of the data has been done at different phases of the study (school profiles and analytical tables).

Finally, it is important to indicate that even though I have attempted to ensure that my research design and methodological approach has the necessary conditions to provide quality findings and consistent research inferences, the results of a study can always be biased by the subjective interpretation of the researcher. In relation to this point, I have tried to be as objective as possible, but complete objectivity is never possible.

#### **4.11 Summary**

In this chapter, I have described my research methodology in detail. Firstly, I provided a rationale to justify my methodological choices. This reflection explored my ontological and epistemological assumptions which consider reality as a human construct. I argued that in order to understand this reality, it is important to take into account the interpretations and voices of the actors. After having reflected about my way of understanding and producing new knowledge about the particular reality I am addressing with this research, I needed to select a particular methodology to approach the problem. In this case, I have used a mixed methods (MM) approach which, I believe, is an appropriate way to address schools. Educational institutions are complex organisations that have to be studied while considering a lot of different aspects and types of participants. For that reason, in the study of schools, it is more appropriate to use a methodological approach that employs multiple methods of data collection and analysis of findings rather than methods necessarily coming from the same research tradition. With the selection of this particular methodology, I have also ignored the epistemological wars and controversies that characterise mixed methods use because I argue that any method that can help me to answer my research questions is justified, independent of the particular epistemology adopted.

Another important element considered in my methodological plan was the selection of an appropriate research design. I decided to use case studies in the analysis of each school because it is an approach that allows the researcher to

study a phenomenon in depth. In addition to this, case studies provide the opportunity to combine many methods in the analysis of a case.

In the later sections of the chapter, I have addressed the sampling procedures, research methods and data analysis strategies. Additionally, I have discussed issues concerning school access, piloting of instruments and ethical procedures. Finally, in the last section, I have reflected about some of the criteria used to evaluate the appropriateness of my research methodology and the quality of my research inferences. In the next chapter, I present the six school portraits that I have produced based on the analysis of the six case studies.



# CHAPTER 5

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## 5. School Portraits

### 5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the six schools that I have selected for this study. The first four schools are atypical institutions and the last two typical<sup>25</sup>. My classification of the schools into these two groups was based on the results that these six institutions demonstrated in the examination used to measure the quality of Chilean education (SIMCE)<sup>26</sup>. Through the use of case studies which include quantitative and qualitative evidence, I have addressed the main aspects of school effectiveness. The exploration of these specific factors was firstly determined by the study of the literature (see Chapter 3). This gave me a specific framework to approach the study of these schools, bearing in mind some models of school effectiveness and some common factors that have been found in school effectiveness studies. In addition to this, I considered the emergence of new factors from my data. I can argue that my study concluded that many of the factors that have traditionally characterised effective schools are present in my sample of more effective schools.

All the schools selected for this study share some common characteristics. For example, all of them are vocational institutions which provide secondary education targeted at a disadvantaged student intake. For ethical reasons, I have

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<sup>25</sup> See Chapter 4, section 4.5, for a description of atypical and typical schools.

<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, 'national assessment system' (SIMCE).

used pseudonyms to identify my atypical and typical schools. These names correspond to the denominations of some native trees from Chile. As already indicated in a previous chapter (see Chapter 2, section 2.1), these schools are located in two important regions of Chile which are the most prominent in the country. Araucaria, Rauli, Avellano and Quillay are located in different cities from the Bío Bío Region and Canelo and Lenga are located in the Metropolitan Region, specifically in Santiago, the capital of Chile.

Finally, it is imperative to point out that this chapter does not attempt to provide an extensive and deep analysis of the factors that positively influence or negatively impact the effectiveness of these institutions. It is rather a presentation of the six cases that are the product of the data collection process and data analysis of my qualitative and quantitative sources.

## **5.1 Atypical school portraits**

In the following pages I present the school portraits of the four atypical institutions. In the process of analysing the data, I produced many different categorisations of effectiveness factors. However, in trying to establish the common factors of these four schools, I eventually finish with 5 main categories. The specific factors that demonstrate an association with the greater effectiveness of these institutions are: 'positive school climate', 'school practices focused on academic success', 'effective school leadership practices', 'high teacher professional commitment' and 'high expectations of students'. It is important to mention that not all these factors have the same level of importance in all the effective schools.

## **School portrait 1 “Araucaria<sup>27</sup>” (atypical school)**

### **5.2 Background information of Araucaria School**

Number of students<sup>28</sup>: 1,184.

Classification for type of administration and funding<sup>29</sup>: Corporation school with public funding.

Orientation<sup>30</sup>: Technical-vocational school.

Socio-economic group<sup>31</sup>: B (2003) C (2006-2008).

City: Concepción, Chile

### **5.3 General profile**

Araucaria School is an institution that provides education at both primary and secondary levels. This institution is located in Concepción, an important city in the south of Chile. At the secondary level, this school has a technical-vocational orientation and currently offers three specialisation courses: administration, industrial assembly and secretarial studies. Araucaria School is administered by a corporation (see Chapter 2, section 2.2). This association is a non-profit institution which administers seven schools in the country and its aim is to provide quality education in the Construction and Administration area.

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<sup>27</sup> Pseudonym used for this school.

<sup>28</sup> Number of students at the time this study was conducted (June, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the classification of schools in Chile depending on their type of administration and funding.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the different orientations of schools in Chile.

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 4, section 4.5, for a description of the socio-economic groups included in the sample.

The majority of students attending these schools come from low-income families and vulnerable social contexts. These families see in this school a possibility for their children to learn a vocational specialisation that will allow them to have a job in the future. Araucaria also provides opportunities for students to continue their education in technical higher education institutions, as part of the agreements that the corporation has with a number of colleges and technical universities that offer scholarships for students who demonstrate very good academic performance. This is regarded by students and their families as one of the advantages of studying in this school.

The school's vision and mission state very clearly that Araucaria aims to address students' holistic development which involves the academic, social and personal aspects. Therefore, in all aspects of schooling school staff try to encourage the development of positive social skills and moral values in students. For example, there are some specific initiatives that promote personal and social development education, such as the subject "development of the enterprising spirit" that aims to develop abilities and values in students. There is another project called "self-esteem and learning development in language and mathematics education" which provides extra academic support and reinforces students' self-esteem.

Finally, it is important to indicate that this school has high prestige in its community which can be explained by the quality vocational educational opportunity it provides. This is demonstrated by the good academic results it achieves when compared with schools with similar characteristics. In the

following lines, I present the main effectiveness features that have been identified in this case study.

#### **5.4 Analysis of distinctive school features influencing educational effectiveness**

##### ***Focus on success***

As previously indicated, this school is administered by a corporation which manages vocational schools and its main objective is to educate students to work in the construction industry. In addition to this, this corporation has a commitment to working with socially disadvantaged communities. The main aim of this organisation is to achieve educational excellence and maintain high standards. The majority of schools administered by this corporation have good academic results in comparison with schools serving similar student populations. In the case of Araucaria School, it is possible to observe that some management strategies used by this corporation have a very positive influence on the effectiveness of the school.

Firstly, ‘planning’ is a fundamental process for this organisation, especially in relation to the specific actions that have to be undertaken in order to succeed. There is a strategic plan conceived to cover a period of three years, which means an organised working system where nothing is improvised. The plan includes around 70 school goals and the achievement of these depends on the collaborative

effort of all the stakeholders. The creation of this plan is internal, as the headteacher indicated:

*“The school working system is the result of strategic planning that is generated in the school but is evaluated by the corporation.”*  
(Headteacher)

Teachers’ opinions are considered in the design of this plan and they can propose some of the goals to be included. This point is particularly interesting because teachers assume an active role in the achievement of school success by suggesting what needs to be done in order to improve. It is very positive that school improvement initiatives are generated inside the school because the main actors of the educational scene (e.g. students, teachers) know best the weaknesses of the systems. Nevertheless, it is also recommended that external bodies, such as this corporation, evaluate these initiatives in order to provide judgements without the usual prejudices and subjectivities that the school members may have about their own organisation.

Secondly, ‘accountability’ is also very important for this corporation and, for this reason, the evaluation processes of the school results are given high importance. For example, teaching staff have to demonstrate their achievement of the goals described in the strategic plan. Therefore, there is a very demanding ‘process of teacher evaluation’ every year and each teacher has to demonstrate a high level of professional performance to get the results expected (in this evaluation, teachers’ performance is marked and teachers need to get, as a minimum mark, an 80% of efficiency). If they do not achieve the level of performance expected from them, they are given a maximum of three years to attain this level. If they are

unsuccessful within the three years, they cannot continue teaching in the school. Some of the criteria used in this evaluation are described by the headteacher in the following testimony:

*“There has been a system of evaluation since 1995. It includes classroom supervision; accomplishment of commitments that teachers sign; management of administrative-pedagogical duties; professional responsibility; teachers’ self-evaluation and students’ evaluation of teachers. Teachers who get good results are given money incentives.” (Headteacher)*

This demanding process of evaluation and the high level of professional performance expected from teachers are clear indications of the school’s high focus on achievement. Teachers’ attitudes in relation to this evaluation are positive with 100% of them indicating that they are happy to be evaluated in their teaching practices and receive feedback. In this school, it is common practice to give feedback to teachers about their performance. In fact, 82% of teachers indicated that they frequently receive feedback from the school administration about their work.

In addition to the ‘process of evaluation of teacher performance’, the corporation places high importance on ‘external assessment’ of students’ academic outcomes. This school places a particularly high importance on the SIMCE examination and also on the internal standardised tests applied in all the schools administered by this corporation. However, no special preparation is provided for the university admission test (PSU<sup>32</sup>) because of the vocational orientation of the school. Araucaria takes external assessment seriously, for example, 93% of students indicated that this school expects them to do well in SIMCE. In addition to this,

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<sup>32</sup> PSU stands for ‘Prueba de Selección Universitaria’ which translates as ‘University Admission Test’.



77% of teachers said that the school places a lot of importance on the aspects of the curriculum that are measured by SIMCE, as it is possible to infer from the following comment by a teacher:

*“There is a special planning of actions that have to be undertaken by teachers of the subjects and levels that are measured by SIMCE.”(Teacher)*

However, preparation is not only about content, but about creating awareness in students of the importance of this examination for them and also for the school. Students are conscious that good results demonstrate that their own learning has been effective. In addition, high levels of student attainment mean extra funding opportunities for the school and social prestige. Finally, it is important to mention that the corporation aims for the schools it administers to make a difference in terms of SIMCE results when compared with other schools. In fact, they gradually evaluate the level of student achievement and prepare students for external assessment via the internal evaluation system that the corporation uses to evaluate all the schools under its administration.

Another accountability practice promoted by the corporation is the student ‘follow-up process.’ The corporation is very interested in having accurate information about students’ future choices, opportunities and careers, in order to evaluate the general effectiveness and results of the school.

Thirdly, the corporation promotes the use of ‘incentives’ as a way to motivate staff and students. Incentives are mainly used to encourage them to perform

better, but sometimes they are also used, as a way to motivate them to become more involved in school matters, as this testimony indicates:

*“In the past, it was difficult to motivate students to assume leadership positions. Now, they participate more because they have been offered some incentives. Students’ representatives of each class go on a trip to the capital.” (Teacher)*

According to 96% of teachers, students’ motivation increases when they are given incentives or rewards. There are incentives for students who demonstrate positive qualities in different aspects of schooling, which include public acknowledgement and higher technical education scholarships, among other things. There is also an effective system of incentives for teachers who achieve outstanding professional performance as demonstrated in the teachers’ evaluation process. These incentives include public acknowledgment and economic rewards.

Finally, it is important to mention that another school policy encouraged by the corporation is the high importance given to ‘teachers’ professional development’. The corporation is very interested in having a well prepared teaching staff, thus, teachers are expected to take part in professional development courses arranged by the corporation or offered by the Ministry of Education.

### ***Teacher professional commitment***

In Araucaria school, teachers demonstrate a very high commitment to their students and this element has many positive implications in terms of the greater effectiveness of this school. Teachers care about their students and their commitment to them goes beyond the academic aspect, as the following evidence

demonstrates:

*“Here many teachers show interest in students, they help us in the organisation of activities that have nothing to do with the subjects they teach.”(Student)*

Stakeholders’ perceptions in relation to teachers’ commitment are positive. For example, 87% of students indicate that teachers demonstrate genuine interest in students’ learning and 75% of students and 98% of parents think that teachers are understanding and approachable. The teachers’ disposition to help students in different matters is also very high, as a teacher comments:

*“Students know that they can have the support of teachers if they have a problem. There is disposition to help on the part of teachers and students are close to them and trust them.”(Teacher)*

This positive teacher disposition to help has an impact on the student-teacher relationship, which, in turn, has implications in terms of the respect, discipline and attention that students demonstrate during lessons. Students’ motivation and learning is encouraged by a teaching figure who cares about them in the academic, social and personal aspects.

Other evidence of the outstanding level of professional commitment of teachers is the high motivation that most of them have to take part in professional development courses, as can be corroborated by this testimony:

*“The majority of them are constantly getting enrolled in professional development courses in order to improve their methodologies or develop better skills to help students in personal aspects.” (Headteacher)*

In addition to this, survey data demonstrates that 84% of students and 90% of

parents believe that teachers demonstrate an interest in their job. The level of parents' satisfaction of teaching is very high, with 95% of parents expressing positive views about teachers' work. Furthermore, 88% of parents and 93% of students indicated that teachers are well prepared in the subjects they teach.

One particular practice of this school is to make teachers sign a document at the beginning of the year in which they are informed about their responsibilities and professional duties. This is a way to make them more conscious about their professional responsibilities which go beyond the academic aspect.

Finally, it is important to indicate that teachers themselves emphasised their strong professional commitment. They believe that their work is fundamental for the effectiveness of the school, as the following evidence suggests:

*“As teachers, we have commitment to our students in terms of lesson planning, design of learning material, etc. Almost every year, many of us take training courses in order to improve our methodologies and teaching techniques. It is demonstrated in our students' results.” (Teacher)*

### ***School climate***

In general, teachers, parents and students indicate that there is a climate of respect and positive interactions in the school. For instance, 95% of teachers believe that the school climate is positive and collaborative. This characteristic is favourable for students' cognitive, social and personal development. Good interactions and good discipline in a classroom promote learning and facilitate healthy relationships between people which has implications for students' social

relationships and self-esteem. School members also emphasised the good relationship between teachers and students, with 84% of students, 96% of teachers and 90% of parents reporting a positive opinion about this interaction. Additionally, all the students that participated in the focus group agreed that teachers are very supportive and close to them, as this testimony emphasises:

*“In our school, it is very important the relationship between teachers and students. In other schools this relationship is more distant, while here you can be a friend of your teachers”. (Student)*

There is general agreement amongst participants that school discipline is very good. The majority of students are considered respectful by their teachers and cases of poor behaviour are rare. Of the teachers, 95% indicated that discipline is good and also 95% of them emphasised the students' good behaviour in the classroom. An aspect that was highlighted by participants and that can be considered quite unusual in Chilean schools is the system of self-discipline of this school. In Araucaria there is not a head of discipline or discipline assistants to control students' behaviour during breaks or when students are not under the supervision of a teacher. This uncommon characteristic confirms that the level of discipline is extremely positive. Parents also agreed on considering the discipline as a positive element in the school. For example, 85% of them considered that the school is characterised by an orderly and secure atmosphere and 95% indicated that discipline is good.

Finally, it seems that the positive elements that characterise the climate of the school have a positive impact on the attitude that a high number of students show in relation to the school. For example, 85% of parents indicated that their children

feel comfortable and happy in the school.

### ***School leadership***

Araucaria's headteacher is perceived as an influential leader by 95% of teachers. He is a very active person and one of the distinctive elements that characterise his style of leadership is his constant interest in getting involved in different school improvement projects. With the corporation's support, this headteacher is always applying for external funding opportunities oriented to improve students' educational outcomes. In addition to this, this leader encourages teachers to enrol in professional development courses as this comment suggests:

*"I consider myself a leader who is always trying to encourage people to do things and improve." (Headteacher)*

This headteacher also tries to take advantage of the external invitations that the school receives, especially if they provide opportunities for improvement of the school (e.g. oratory school contests, science contests, etc.). In general, this leader demonstrates a high involvement in trying to make Araucaria a better school and his proactive and encouraging leadership style has a positive impact on the effectiveness of this institution.

### ***Expectations of students' performance***

The evidence from Araucaria demonstrates that expectations of stakeholders about students' performance are high. Specifically, 97% of students and 93% of parents indicated that the school expectations of students are very ambitious. An impressive 98% of parents indicated that they trust in the capabilities of their children to do well. Similarly, 100% of teachers also have the same opinion of the students' capacity to succeed. They believe in their students and they try to transmit this message to them as this teacher indicates:

*"We are always telling them that they have the capabilities to be successful in whatever they choose." (Teacher)*

In addition, 88% of students are confident of their capabilities; they believe that they will achieve good academic results and display good social behaviour. Furthermore, 91% of them also indicated that their parents have high aspirations for them. This high level of expectations seems to have a positive impact on students' achievement, motivation and self-belief. For example, the evidence demonstrates that in this school students demonstrate significant motivation for their studies, with 73% of students' opinions corroborating this. In fact 87% of students are highly motivated to continue higher education studies, even though they are enrolled in a school which offers vocational courses. This significant level of motivation is also reflected in the degree of involvement and responsibility students demonstrate. For example, 91%, of teachers and 95% of parents indicated that students demonstrate responsibility and involvement in their own processes of learning.

## **5.5 Summary of findings**

### ***1) Factor 1: Focus on success***

- Planning for success.
- Accountability practices.
- Incentives.
- Teachers' professional development.

### ***2) Factor 2: Teacher professional commitment***

- Good relationship with students.
- High commitment with students in matters that go beyond the academic aspect.
- High disposition to undertake professional development.

### ***3) Factor 3: School climate***

- Positive relationships between school stakeholders.
- Very good level of discipline.

### ***4) Factor 4: Leadership***

- The headteacher is constantly trying to get the school involved in different improvement projects.
- The headteacher encourages staff to get involved in professional development initiatives.

### ***5) Factor 5: Expectations of students' performance***

- Students trust in their own capabilities to succeed.
- Teachers and parents demonstrate high expectations of students.
- These high expectations have a positive influence on student motivation.



## School portrait 2 “Canelo”<sup>33</sup> (atypical school)

### 5.6 Background information of Canelo School

Number of students<sup>34</sup>: 1, 337.

Classification for type of administration and funding<sup>35</sup>: Municipal school with public funding.

Orientation<sup>36</sup>: Technical-vocational school.

Socio-economic group<sup>37</sup>: B (2003) C (2006-2008)

City: Santiago, Chile

### 5.7 General profile

Canelo School is a secondary institution located in Santiago, the capital of Chile. Its students are distributed in three different school shifts: morning shift, afternoon shift and evening shift. The evening shift offers secondary education to adults (see Chapter 2, section 2.2, ‘special education programmes’). This school offers two vocational specialisation courses: Accounting and Secretarial Studies.

The majority of students who attend Canelo School are from low-income families. Most of them travel from remote parts of the city to attend this school. They consider it a good opportunity to be in this vocational institution because their

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<sup>33</sup> Pseudonym used for this school.

<sup>34</sup> Number of students at the time this study was conducted (June, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the classification of schools in Chile depending on their type of administration and funding.

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the different orientations of schools in Chile.

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 4, section 4.5, for a description of the socio-economic groups included in the sample.

socio-economic status makes it difficult for them to aspire to higher education and this school gives students the possibility of getting a technical qualification to work in the future and consequently to pay for further studies if they want. Students recognise the value of vocational courses, even if the ultimate ambition of some of them is to pursue an alternative course of study. In addition to this, this school has some agreements with higher education institutions that offer scholarships for students.

One of the main reasons attracting students to this vocational school is the school's higher educational quality when compared with other similar schools, as demonstrated by the higher level of student achievement in examinations such as SIMCE and PSU (See Chapter 2, section 2.2, 'national assessment system' and 'higher education').

Nevertheless, in spite of the high focus given to academic outcomes which contributes to the better results of this school in comparison to institutions with a similar student intake, school members are conscious that the objective of education is not only the provision of knowledge. Therefore, the school is committed to giving students the opportunity of achieving personal and social development. Canelo is a place where students find a space for personal development, for example, the school offers a range of extracurricular activities for students to develop artistic, emotional and social skills. Among these activities there is a traditional music group of students (estudiantina), a percussion group (batucada), capoeira, taekwondo, language academy, sciences academy, dance, drama club, chess club, sports clubs, etc.

In addition to this, emotional and social, ethical and moral education is also an important aspect for the school. Teachers are conscious that they also have a formative responsibility with students. For that reason, they are constantly trying to reinforce values during lessons. This aspect is also supported by specialised school staff, specifically a psychologist and a school counsellor. They prepare material to work with students on values and emotional education and offer a service of personal and vocational guidance.

After the exploration of the internal processes taking place in this school, I identified specific factors related to the greater academic effectiveness of this school. In the following section, I discuss each factor.

## **5.8 Analysis of distinctive school features influencing educational effectiveness**

### ***Focus on success***

As an institution, Canelo School is very focused on academic results. A highly significant 82% of parents consider academic performance of students as one of the main objectives of the school. The majority of students (86%) also agree; they consider students' learning and academic performance as one of the most important school goals. Teachers are also more likely to give higher importance to the academic performance and results of students, rather than to aspects such as students' well-being, social development and value acquisition. These aspects are also important for them, but they are not considered more important than the

students' academic results. The high importance given to students' attainment in this school, along with the fact that there is a plan of action oriented to achieve the academic success of the school, have a positive impact on academic outcomes.

Furthermore, the fact that Canelo is characterised by good academic results in external examinations has a high impact on the prestige of this institution in the community, especially, when compared with other vocational schools in Santiago. For years this school has had one of the best results in SIMCE among vocational schools in the country. Canelo also has very good results in the university admission examination, PSU, even though this is a vocational school which is supposed to emphasise the vocational preparation of students rather than the academic one. Teachers invest time and effort preparing students for these external examinations because they want to keep this prestige and continue being considered an effective school with good teachers.

### ***Teacher professional commitment***

Teachers demonstrate high professional commitment in this school. For example, 75% of students indicated that teachers demonstrate a genuine interest in students' learning and 77% of them considered that teachers are understanding and approachable. In general, teachers are highly appreciated and respected by parents and students who indicated that they are not only concerned about the academic development of their students, but also about their personal and social development. According to 77% of students and 75% of parents, teachers demonstrate interest in their job. The evidence also shows that 82% of students

and 71% of parents consider that teachers are very well prepared in the subjects they teach. In addition to this, 93% of teachers in this school indicated they are satisfied with their choice of career.

Something particular about this school is the fact that in this institution teachers are very proud of being educators in this municipal vocational school and this is not a common feeling shared by teachers working in this segment of the Chilean educational system, mainly because of the equity and quality problems affecting municipal education (see Chapter 2, section 2.5). Probably, one of the main reasons for this pride is the high prestige of this school in comparison to similar schools. Teachers consider themselves as playing an essential role in the success of the school and the positive student academic outcomes make them feel motivated to continue providing students with sound academic preparation.

Teachers are very committed to the students' preparation for external assessment. I observed that the subject departments that are measured in these examinations organise a special preparation plan and these actions demonstrate their commitment to the students. For example, 71% of teachers indicated that they give special coverage to the aspects of the curriculum measured by SIMCE. Teachers also provide preparation for the university admission exam (PSU), even though the school administration does not encourage the preparation for this exam as this comment indicates:

*“Teachers are very committed. They want us to have good results. For example, it is not their responsibility to prepare us for the university entry test because this is a vocational school, but they do anyway.” (Student)*

### *School climate*

Concerning school climate, participants from this school highlighted the good relationships between students and teachers. For example 94% of teachers and 77% of students considered this interaction very positive. In addition to this, 88% of teachers considered that the relationship with parents is also very constructive.

Opinions of school members about the discipline in the school are also very positive. All teachers, (100%) who were surveyed considered that the discipline of the school is very good. Additionally, the majority of parents (75%) and students (72%) had good opinions about the level of discipline as well. In terms of discipline in the classroom, 100% of teachers indicated that, in general, students behave very well, which is positive for the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes taking place in the classrooms.

Another important feature that characterises Canelo is the particularly high level of satisfaction and identification that students have in relation to the school. For example, 84% of students indicated that they feel happy in the school. This was also corroborated by the headteacher who indicated that this school is a place where students feel well. It is unusual for students to spend so much of their free time in their schools, but in Canelo many students choose to do so because they like to be there, as this comment suggests:

*“In general students feel well here. You can see that in their attitudes. Many of them are here for the whole day. They stay in the library or they participate in extracurricular activities. Sometimes they arrive at 7 am, one hour before the school day*

*starts, and they leave at 7 or 8pm when they are supposed to leave at 2pm.” (Headteacher)*

In general, students feel a strong identification with the school culture. For example, many students like to go on Saturdays and take part of the many extracurricular activities that the school offers. They feel part of the big Canelo family, as a teacher emphasises:

*“In this school they find a place where they belong. They come from urban areas where they do not adapt easily. They have their friends here; they have all their social networks here, so they are part of this institution.”(Teacher)*

In summary, the positive interactions between teachers and students in consonance with the good level of discipline and the high satisfaction and identification of students with the school culture facilitate the school teaching and learning processes. All these elements have positive implications for the effectiveness of the school.

### ***School leadership***

The current headteacher is a very experienced person in the administration of vocational secondary schools. However, although he knows the working system and history of the school very well, at the time this study was undertaken, he had been in the headteacher position for only a year. This short time in the position makes it particularly difficult to establish a link between his particular leadership style and the effectiveness of the school. In fact, the perceptions about his leadership are not positive, especially on the part of teachers who think that his less academic focus may have a negative impact on the results of the school.

This leader has a leadership approach that respects the vision and mission of the school, which is to prepare students for working life. Moreover, he has a vast experience working in vocational schools, thus he is interested in emphasising the vocational orientation of the school, which means less focus on the academic preparation of the students and more focus on the vocational one. For example, for this leader the preparation for the university admission test (PSU) is not one of the priorities of the school. Nevertheless, for the majority of the teachers, PSU preparation is a priority that has been traditionally emphasised by the leadership that has characterised this institution for years. Teachers were used to a highly academic focus that gave high importance to external assessment and encouraged the preparation of students. Results in examinations such as SIMCE and PSU were given a lot of importance, despite the vocational orientation of the school. For that reason, teachers have received this new leadership style with certain opposition.

As indicated before, the current leadership is not considered particularly effective, but I think that the previous leadership style is an important element to take into account when assessing the effectiveness that has characterised the results of this school for years. In fact, some participants in this study emphasised the role of the leadership history as a determining element of the greater effectiveness demonstrated by this school.

The first headteacher started a tradition of effective leadership practices and the second one, who was in the school for 30 years, established an effective



leadership style that was very focused on students' outcomes, as the following testimony indicates:

*“This school started very well in 1973 with an effective headteacher and it maintained the spirit of commitment, tradition and prestige for more than 30 years with the next headteacher. The community is conscious of this tradition of quality.” (Headteacher)*

This school has a history of good academic results and, according to the current headteacher, much of this success is a consequence of this efficient leadership style that promoted academic excellence which still has an influence on school practices. The majority of the teachers at Canelo have been working in the school for many years; therefore they were used to the working practices encouraged by the previous headteacher.

### ***Expectations of students' performance***

The majority of teachers have very high expectations regarding student success. For example, 94% of them are convinced of the capacity of students to get good results if they work towards them. These high expectations make them want other opportunities to be opened for students, for example, higher education. Teachers want to expand students' options, despite the fact that the objective of the school is to prepare students in a vocational specialisation, as the evidence suggests:

*“We know that this is a vocational school, but we always have high expectations of our students. They have the right to choose another thing because the current economic situation is difficult. All the students want to continue studying and we cannot deny this possibility.” (Teacher)*

Additionally, 97% of pupils and 89% of parents corroborated the fact that the school has ambitious expectations of the students. Furthermore, the evidence confirms that students also have high expectations of themselves. In fact, 91% of them trust in their ability to get good academic results and behave positively at school, and 90% want to continue their studies after they finish secondary school. Although these expectations are sometimes affected by the fact that they are aware their economic situations will make it difficult for them to aspire to higher education. In addition to this, 97% of parents have high expectations of their children.

These high expectations are favourable for the level of student motivation. In fact, a high proportion of students demonstrate significant motivation for their studies as the following comment indicates:

*“In general, students demonstrate personal interest, motivation and future expectations.” (Headteacher)*

This finding is corroborated by 76% of students and 88% of teachers indicating that students demonstrate responsibility and involvement in their studies.

## **5.9 Summary of findings**

### ***1) Factor 1: Focus on success***

- High importance given to external assessment.
- The positive academic results that have characterised the school for years have a positive impact on the prestige of the institution.

### ***2) Factor 2: Teacher professional commitment***

- Teachers demonstrate a prioritisation of students' academic preparation, but also demonstrate a high interest in students' personal and social development.
- Teachers demonstrate good professional preparation.
- The high school prestige makes teachers proud and motivates them to perform better.

### ***3) Factor 3: School climate***

- Positive relationships, especially between teachers and students.
- Good level of discipline.
- Students' strong identification and satisfaction with the school culture.

### ***4) Factor 4: School leadership***

- Teachers' practices are still very influenced by previous leadership that was focused on academic excellence.

### ***5) Factor 5: Expectations of students' performance***

- Teachers have very high expectations of students and want to expand their possibilities for the future by placing significant importance on preparation for higher education.
- Parents trust in the capacity of their children to have a good school performance.

- Students have high expectation of themselves and demonstrate motivation and good levels of responsibility and involvement in school matters.

### School portrait 3 “Rauli”<sup>38</sup> (atypical school)

#### 5.10 Background information of Rauli School

Number of students<sup>39</sup>: 702.

Classification for type of administration and funding<sup>40</sup>: Corporation school with public funding.

Orientation<sup>41</sup>: Technical-vocational school

Socio-economic group<sup>42</sup>: B

City: Talcahuano, Hualpén, Chile.

#### 5.11 General profile

Rauli is a vocational secondary school located in the Bío Bío Region<sup>43</sup> in Chile. It offers 6 different vocational specialisation courses and it is administrated by the same corporation that administers Araucaria school. In the annual convention of schools administered by this corporation, specifically the one that took place before this study was undertaken; Rauli received the awards for the best student and the best teacher.

This school provides good opportunities for students who want to continue studying after they finish school. It has agreements with two professional

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<sup>38</sup> Pseudonym used for this school.

<sup>39</sup> Number of students at the time this study was conducted (June, 2009).

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the classification of schools in Chile depending on their type of administration and funding.

<sup>41</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the different orientations of schools in Chile.

<sup>42</sup> See Chapter 4, section 4.5, for a description of the socio-economic groups included in the sample.

<sup>43</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.1.

institutes<sup>44</sup> which offer scholarships to students. It also has links with two technical universities which offer high performing students scholarships to study a technical university course.

Additionally, this institution places great importance on education for personal, social and emotional development. Therefore, the school is committed to providing an education which includes values education, psychological support, extracurricular opportunities, and academic support with emphasis on the development of positive self-esteem.

Rauli School is concerned about students' emotional wellbeing, so students who have problems that require treatment by a specialist, such as a psychologist or social worker, are referred by teachers. In addition to the psychological intervention for students who require it, the academic support programme has a focus on the development of positive self-esteem. Therefore, teachers plan special interventions using fun activities, group work strategies and positive reinforcement for students.

The school also provides students with the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities such as artistic workshops, music groups, religious activities, sport clubs, debating society, among other initiatives.

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<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, on 'higher education'.

In the following section, I discuss some effectiveness factors that characterise this institution and which were found after the exploration of the internal processes in the school.

## **5.12 Analysis of distinctive school features influencing educational effectiveness**

### ***Focus on success***

Rauli School has certain characteristics that demonstrate that this institution has a clear focus on academic success and these particular features have a positive effect on the effectiveness of Rauli. In fact, 91% of teachers, 90% of students and 100% of parents considered that the students' academic performance is the most important goal of the school. It is important to emphasise the role of the corporation in achieving this success because the majority of initiatives or strategies used by the school to achieve better academic results have been implemented or supported by the corporation. The specific strategies used in this school are: strategic plan focused on success, rigorous teacher evaluation system, high importance given to teachers' professional updating, high importance to external examinations, rewards and incentives system and follow-up process, etc.

According to parents, having a strategic plan focused on success is a fundamental element that can be associated with the greater effectiveness of this school, as the following comment demonstrates:

*“I think that the better results that the school has are a consequence of careful planning designed by the school administration.” (Parent)*

This plan is designed within the school by school leaders, but teachers’ opinions are also considered in this design. The corporation also analyses the plan and gives the necessary feedback and approval.

In addition to the emphasis given to planning, a lot of importance is placed on external examinations because good results mean more funding opportunities for the school, accomplishment of goals, prestige and satisfaction for the work done. Therefore, there is some extra preparation for these examinations which is undertaken during the normal lesson time.

For this school, it is also very important to monitor its results as an educational institution. Therefore, there is an internal follow-up process and an external one which is undertaken by a company hired by the corporation, as indicated by a parent:

*“The school is really concerned about the number of students that finish their work placement periods and actually graduate. They monitor them.” (Parent)*

Concerning teachers’ evaluation and incentives, there is a system of evaluation in which there is participation of teachers, students and school leaders. Students evaluate their teachers, teachers evaluate themselves and school leaders (UTP, Unit of Curriculum and Evaluation) evaluate teachers’ performance by supervising their lessons. In general, teachers demonstrate good professional performance and there are some economic incentives associated with this. In fact,



87% of teachers, 85% of students and 86% of parents indicated that there is a use of rewards for teachers who are successful in achieving the school's goals, as indicated in the following comment:

*“Our system of evaluation of teachers’ professional performance is associated with incentives.” (Headteacher)*

The school also gives incentives to teachers who enrol in professional development courses. In addition to this, the use of incentives is also utilised by the school to increase students’ motivation. Actually, 85% of students considered that their motivation grows if their effort is acknowledged and if they receive some reward for their school performance. There are incentives for classes that perform well in SIMCE; for the class with the best attendance; for the class with the best academic results; for the class that cares the most about having an orderly and clean classroom environment; and for the best student of each class. Furthermore, there is a reward for the best leaver of each specialisation course.

### ***Teacher professional commitment***

An important aspect that has emerged in this school as one of the factors associated with a greater effectiveness is teachers’ strong commitment. For example, 97% of parents indicated that teachers demonstrate an evident interest in their job and 97% of students indicated that teachers have genuine interest in their students’ learning, as the following comment suggests:

*“Teachers are always worried about what is happening with their students, when they miss classes more than once or twice in a row; some of them call to their houses to know what is going on.” (Parent)*

Parents also emphasised that teachers demonstrate their professional commitment through their unfailing willingness and good disposition to meet them, as indicated in this testimony:

*“They always have disposition to talk to us. If we come to the school to see them, they always try to give us some time, even when we haven’t arranged an appointment with them. I compare this school with the one where I have my other son and there I don’t have the possibility of talking to teachers as much as I can do here.” (Parent)*

In addition, 81% of parents think that teachers are understanding and approachable with students most of the time. Additionally, 91% of them indicated that teachers give constant feedback about students’ progress and 97% expressed a good opinion of teachers’ work.

Teachers also judge themselves as very committed professionals and they indicated that among all the factors that are related to Rauli’s greater effectiveness, teachers’ commitment is probably the most important one, as suggested by this teacher:

*“Many aspects are important, but teachers’ commitment is the main factor” (Teacher)*

This high professional commitment of teachers is reflected in the high level of motivation they demonstrate to undertake professional commitments. For example, 78% of them frequently enrol in professional development courses to improve their knowledge and teaching skills and 91% are happy to be evaluated in teaching practice and receive feedback. In general, 83% of them indicated that they are satisfied with the career decision.

Students and parents agree in considering teachers to be very competent professionals. For instance, 92% of students and 91% of parents indicated that teachers are well prepared in the subject they teach. The following comment emphasised the high professional quality of teachers in this school:

*“In general, they are very good. I had the opportunity to attend the public account of the school and the award ceremony organised by the corporation. There, I could see that teachers are very well evaluated because just from our school, three different teachers were awarded and the best teacher from all the corporation Schools is also from this school.” (Parent)*

### ***School climate***

It has been found that the general climate of the school in terms of social interaction and discipline is positive, which seems to have a positive impact on the effectiveness demonstrated by this school. For example, the good communication between school members has been emphasised:

*“There is clear and accurate communication between the different school stakeholders.” (Teacher)*

The relationship between teachers and pupils has been described as very good, with 91% of teachers, 91% of parents and 74% of students, having a positive view about this interaction, as this comment suggests:

*“Relationships with teachers and school staff are excellent in general.” (Student)*

Concerning relationships between teachers and parents, 87% of teachers consider that the quality of this interaction is positive. Parents also believe that there is a

general climate characterised by respect and good relationships. For example, 84% of them indicated that the interaction between school leaders and parents is good. They also emphasised the climate of respect that characterises the school, as suggested by a participant:

*“We don’t see conflicts between parents or arguments during parents meetings. There is respect towards teachers on the part of parents and students. Students respect each other, so do parents.”*  
(Parent)

In addition, 94% of parents consider that their children are happy in the school and almost 80% of students have positive feelings about studying in this school.

Concerning school discipline, the perceptions are positive which is demonstrated by 91% of teachers, 72% of students and 88% of parents having a good impression about this aspect. The positive discipline that characterises this school is supported by a system of sanctions for students’ misbehaviour that according to 78% of teachers, 85% of students and 84% of parents is very effective.

### ***School leadership***

The current headteacher has been working in the school for around 25 years and after working for some years in other school management positions, he became headteacher. He defined his personal leadership style and also that which characterises the leadership team as encouraging, supportive and not authoritarian, as the following testimony describes:

*“We are always encouraging and supporting teachers in their practices. We are not authoritarian; we have an ‘open doors’ style.” (Headteacher)*

The headteacher highlighted the importance of teachers’ professional development for the school and the role of the leadership team in encouraging teachers to get involved in these initiatives:

*“We recognise and value teachers’ professional development, thus we are always trying to motivate teachers to enrol in professional development courses.” (Headteacher)*

It is important to point out that the school policy states that all the members of the leadership team have to teach. Parents expressed satisfaction about this particular policy because they think that it demonstrates that leaders are also concerned about students’ learning. They are not just worried about administration issues but also about what is really going on in classrooms. Parents also demonstrated their satisfaction about the willingness of the headteacher to meet them, as this testimony demonstrates:

*“When we want to speak to the headteacher, we can actually do it without any problem. We come in the afternoon and the headteacher gives us some time, at least 10 or 15 minutes, but if he can, he tries to give us more time.” (Parent)*

In addition, 88% of parents emphasised that the headteacher is someone receptive and approachable. Regarding students’ views, they also expressed satisfaction with the school leadership and 75% of them indicated that this aspect can be considered positive and supportive.

According to teachers, the work of the leadership team has direct implications for

the greater effectiveness of the school, as this teacher indicates:

*“The school leadership is related to our greater effectiveness.”  
(Teacher)*

Teachers also referred to the specific work of some members of the leadership team, for example, they highlighted the efficient work of the head of the Unit of Curriculum and Evaluation (UTP) in concerns of external assessment preparation:

*“I think that the manager of the specific School Unit related to SIMCE preparation (UTP) is a very efficient leader.” (Teacher)*

Finally, 74% of teachers indicated that the headteacher provides constant support to resolve problems with parents and students.

### ***Expectations of students' performance***

In this school, students demonstrate high expectations of themselves with 98% of them indicating that they are confident of their ability to achieve good academic results and behave well in school. The majority of students (80%) want to continue to study in the future, either in technical higher education institutions or in traditional universities. In addition to this, 97% of students consider that their school expects them to do their best in terms of academic outcomes and school behaviour and 95% indicated that the school expects them to do well in SIMCE.

School staff are constantly using “positive reinforcement” with students, in order to make them believe in themselves and in their ability to succeed and increase their motivation. In fact, 91% of teachers indicated that students are able to do well if they work hard. In the following comment, the headteacher stated very

clearly that the work of teachers and school leaders does not make any sense if they do not have high expectations of their students:

*“If we work here not having expectations of our students, we are wasting our time. The majority of teachers here do have high expectations of them.” (Headteacher)*

Finally, parents also have high expectations of their children, actually 100% of the surveyed participants believe that their children are able to do well if they work hard and also all parents indicated that their children are expected to do their best at school.

## **5.13 Summary of findings**

### ***1) Factor 1: Focus on success***

- Strategic plan focused on success.
- Rigorous teacher evaluation system.
- High importance given to teacher professional update.
- High importance placed on external examinations.
- Rewards and incentives system.
- Follow-up process.

### ***2) Factor 2: Teacher professional commitment***

- Teachers demonstrate genuine interest in students.
- Teachers demonstrate good professional competences and interest in their job.
- Teachers have high disposition to meet parents and give them feedback about students.

### ***3) Factor 3: School climate***

- Positive relationships, especially between teachers and pupils.
- Satisfactory level of discipline.

### ***4) Factor 4: School leadership***

- Approachable and supportive headteacher.
- The headteacher encourages teachers to get involved in professional development.
- School leaders are involved in teaching and preparation for external assessment.

### ***5) Factor 5: Expectations of students' performance***

- Students have high expectations of themselves.
- Teachers and parents demonstrate high level of expectations of students.



- Teachers use positive reinforcement to increase motivation and expectations of students.

## School portrait 4 “Avellano”<sup>45</sup> (atypical school)

### 5.14 Background information of Avellano School

Number of students<sup>46</sup>: 1,260.

Classification for type of administration and funding<sup>47</sup>: Municipal school with public funding.

Orientation<sup>48</sup>: Technical–vocational school

Socio-economic group<sup>49</sup>: B

City: Los Angeles, Chile

### 5.15 General profile

Avellano is a Secondary School situated in Los Angeles, a city in the Bío Bío Region<sup>50</sup> of Chile. This school offers four specialisation courses: Accounting, Administration, Secretarial Studies and Sales Studies. This school was the first vocational school in the province to achieve its certification of quality for all the courses it offers.

The majority of students attending Avellano School come from low-income families, many of them are from rural areas and they come to this city to continue

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<sup>45</sup> Pseudonym used for this school.

<sup>46</sup> Number of students at the time this study was conducted (June, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the classification of schools in Chile depending on their type of administration and funding.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the different orientations of schools in Chile.

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 4, section 4.5, for a description of the socio-economic groups included in the sample.

<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.1.

their secondary education. The main motivation that many of these students have to come from rural areas to this school is the fact that it offers a vocational specialisation. The majority of these students do not have the economic resources to pay for higher education, thus they consider vocational education to be an opportunity for them to study something in order to gain employment in the future. Another important aspect to highlight about this school is the prestige it has within its community. Students, parents and teachers emphasised the fact that this school is considerably more prestigious than other vocational secondary schools in the city.

Finally, it is important to mention that students' holistic development is fundamental for this school. For example, the school tries to inculcate positive values in students; it also encourages the development of social skills; it places importance on providing students with sexual education, basic study skills and it provides students with the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities which include a students' orchestra, which is conducted by the headteacher. In addition to this, this school also considers the work with parents, since they are a fundamental part in the development of personal values of their children. Frequently, during parents' meetings, teachers work with them in some activities related to values education, in order to make them more conscious of the importance of their role as the main values transmitters.

## **5.16 Analysis of distinctive school features influencing educational effectiveness**

### ***Focus on success***

There is evidence that demonstrates that to a certain extent the school is focused on success. For example, 75% of teachers, 92% of students and 95% of parents indicated that students' academic performance is one of the main goals of the school. There is clear evidence in the school to support this view. For instance, the school provides some preparation for the external examination SIMCE and encourages teachers and students to do their best by using incentives.

Concerning SIMCE preparation, teachers of the areas measured by this examination prepare students using different types of resources, as this comment indicates:

*“There are SIMCE practice papers, hand-outs and material to prepare SIMCE and some practice papers are marked, so we take them seriously.” (Student)*

In addition to this, teachers from other subject departments also collaborate with their colleagues by preparing material, evaluating, supervising classes that have to take practice papers and even incorporating some of the content measured by SIMCE in the subject they teach (i.e. reading comprehension is done in other subjects to help students to prepare their Spanish SIMCE). The following testimony illustrates the collective effort of teachers in this school:

*“It is a team effort; colleagues from other departments and the Unit of Curriculum and Evaluation (UTP) also collaborate. Everyone is in a way involved and we are constantly doing practice papers and evaluating the results of those practice papers.” (Teacher)*

In this school teachers work for a common objective, which is a good level of student academic achievement. Good results in external examinations, especially SIMCE are the way to demonstrate that the school is doing well. Therefore, not only the teachers of the subjects traditionally measured by examinations (Mathematics, Spanish, and Sciences) are involved in student preparation. This is a shared effort of school members.

In relation to the use of incentives, there are some strategies used by this school to increase students’ motivation to do well in SIMCE, as the two following comments by students suggest:

*“The school counsellor talked to us about the importance of SIMCE and the necessity of taking it seriously.” (Student)*

*“Last year, a trip was organised for us as an incentive.” (Student)*

Unfortunately, the headteacher indicated that for economic reasons is not always possible to offer students a trip or any other material incentives, so they have to use other ways to motivate students, as this quotation indicates:

*“Well, we don’t have the real possibility of giving students material incentives. We give them instead moral support and encouragement.” (Headteacher)*

It is important to mention that the use of incentives or rewards for students is not only addressed to the ones that do well in SIMCE, but to all the students who

perform well at school. It is a strategy used by the school to increase students' motivation. In fact, 75% of parents indicated that there is use of rewards for students who are successful in achieving good results.

In the case of teachers, they do not receive specific incentives for SIMCE, but an extra economic bonus that has been introduced by the local Municipality is available for teachers who have an "outstanding" performance in the national teachers' evaluation system.

### ***Teacher professional commitment***

According to teachers, one of the reasons that can help to explain the greater effectiveness of this school is their own commitment, as this teacher emphasises:

*"One of the reasons of the greater effectiveness is the commitment of teachers. For example, in terms of SIMCE preparation, we all participate and collaborate. Each subject department elaborates questions and we apply preparation exam papers." (Teacher)*

Teachers are considered to be well prepared in the areas they teach and to be committed to the school and their students. For example, 83% of students indicated that teachers are prepared in the subjects they teach and 75% of them indicated that teachers have a genuine interest in students' learning. In addition to this, 74% of students and the same percentage of parents indicated that most teachers are understanding and approachable during lessons.

Concerning teachers' disposition to update their knowledge and be evaluated in their practices, 75% of teachers indicated that a large number of teachers

frequently enrol in new professional development courses and 80% of teachers indicated that they welcome the opportunity to be evaluated in their teaching practices and receive feedback.

### ***School climate***

Concerning school climate, the opinions of the school's different stakeholders about this aspect are overwhelmingly positive. For example, 85% of teachers consider that the school has a positive and collaborative school climate. The headteacher also emphasised this aspect, describing in a positive way the relationships between the different school members, as the following comment demonstrates:

*“Relationships are very good in general; personally I have a very close relationship with students. Relationships are also very good between teachers and students.” (Headteacher)*

Students and teachers also highlighted the good relationships between them. This element could be considered very positive in terms of the quality of classroom interactions and the consequent impact on the disposition and motivation of both school stakeholders. The following comments from a student and a teacher illustrate this point:

*“The quality of interactions between classmates and with teachers is good.” (Student)*

*“One of the strengths that we have in this school is the relationship with the majority of students. There is a lot of affection, a good climate. (Teacher)*

In relation to discipline, 85% of teachers think that the school has good discipline and the same percentage indicated that student behaviour in the classroom is good. In the case of students, they reported that the school has better discipline in comparison to other schools. They also highlighted the fact that the school is worried about students' personal presentation which is an indication of a more demanding system of discipline, as this comments suggests:

*“This school is more demanding in terms of personal presentation and behaviour. They have higher expectations about us in these two aspects.” (Student)*

The perception of students about a demanding system of school discipline is corroborated by 93% of parents indicating that there is an effective system of sanctions for students' misbehaviour.

Finally, the headteacher indicated that even if the discipline of the school could be considered positive and beneficial for the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes, it is normal that sometimes students misbehave. Therefore, the demanding system of discipline and the sanctions for students' misbehaviour are combined with certain flexibility. In fact, it is not necessary to have a very demanding system of discipline in a school where students practice self-discipline, as the following evidence suggests:

*“In general discipline is good here but we can't forget that we were adolescents too and at that age it is normal to be disruptive sometimes. Anyway, in general it is good and there is a kind of self-discipline that has been imposed by the students. (Headteacher)”*



### *School leadership*

The current headteacher of the school has been working for 51 years in the teaching profession and 10 years in this school as headteacher. In terms of his leadership style, he considers himself a democratic leader, who trusts people and distributes responsibilities, as indicated below. In fact, 80% of teachers consider that in this school they are given the possibility to be agents of change.

*“I consider that my leadership style is horizontal. It is a style of leadership that emphasises trust. I trust staff to do what they are supposed to do. I think if you give responsibilities to people and you provide the necessary conditions, they will do them without being pushed.” (Headteacher)*

This headteacher demonstrates being a proactive person. For example, he is always encouraging teaching staff to participate in different educational development initiatives in order to improve the quality of education they provide to students, as this comment suggests:

*“I encourage teachers to get involved in different projects.” (Headteacher)*

In addition to this, he created a student orchestra, and since he is a music teacher, he uses his own knowledge to run this project. This specific activity makes him actively involved in initiatives that stimulate students' integral development and requires more contact with students.

### ***Expectations of students' performance***

Regarding expectations of students' success, the headteacher indicated that, in general, they are high, as the following comment emphasises:

*“Our expectations are always high. A large number of our students have good performance.” (Headteacher)*

In the case of teachers, 95% indicated that any student is able to do well if they work hard. Of teachers, 75% considered that the majority of parents have high expectations about the academic success of their children. In addition to this, teachers also emphasised the fact that the majority of them are challenging and they expect a lot from students. In relation to this point, they think that it is important to have the support of the tutor teachers<sup>51</sup> of the different classes, as the following evidence suggests:

*When I have the support of the tutor teacher, it is easy to be more challenging because they support us when there are complaints of parents about our high expectations and efficiency standards. Therefore, parents know that the school is demanding and that their children have to work in order to get good results.” (Teacher)*

The expectations of students about themselves are also quite positive. For example, 90% of them are confident in their ability to get good academic results and behave well at school. They also consider that the school expects them to do well, with 96% indicating that they are expected to do their best in terms of academic outcomes and school behaviour and 99% reporting that they are

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<sup>51</sup> A 'tutor teacher' (profesor jefe) is a teacher who is in charge of a specific class. They normally teach the class one subject and they also meet at least one hour per week with the class to organise internal issues, to talk about academic and behavioural problems or to teach some units or apply some tests targeting integral education (values education, sexual education, drug and alcohol prevention, vocational guidance, etc.). Tutor teachers also have more contact with parents and they lead parents' evenings.

expected to do well in SIMCE. In addition to this, the majority of students (84%) have high aspirations for their future and want to continue studying a more advanced vocational course or university degree.

In the case of parents, the totality of participants agree that their children are able to do well if they work hard and 98% of them indicated that their children are expected to do their best at school.

The high expectations of parents and school staff in combination with the high level of students' expectations of themselves have positive repercussions for student motivation. In fact, 76% of students indicated that a large number of students show responsibility and involvement in their studies.

## **5.17 Summary of findings**

### ***1) Factor 1: Focus on success***

- High importance given to external examinations (SIMCE).
- Collaborative effort of teaching staff in the preparation of students for external assessment.
- Use of motivational strategies, but not many material incentives.

### ***2) Factor 2: Teacher professional commitment***

- Teachers are well prepared in the subjects they teach.
- Teachers demonstrate a disposition to enrol in teachers' professional development courses.
- Teachers are approachable and demonstrate genuine interest in students.

### ***3) Factor 3: School climate***

- Positive relationships, especially between students and teachers.
- Good level of school discipline.

### ***4) Factor 4: School leadership***

- The headteacher encourages teachers to get involved in professional development initiatives.
- The headteacher is actively involved in initiatives that stimulate the integral development of students and has more contact with them.

### ***5) Factor 5: Expectations of students' performance***

- School staff have high expectations of students.
- Parents demonstrate high expectations of students.
- Students have high expectations of their own capabilities; demonstrate high aspirations for their future and a good level of motivation and responsibility.

### **5.18 Typical school portraits**

In the following pages, I present the case studies of the two typical schools, in order to establish clear patterns of effectiveness by making comparisons between both types of schools. I analysed the same factors that were found to be particularly effective in the atypical schools. However, since the analysis of the data of these two schools did not demonstrate that there is a ‘particular focus on academic success’ in these two institutions, I decided to replace this category by the consideration of school practices that seem to be ‘impeding the success’.

## School portrait 5 “Quillay<sup>52</sup>” (typical school)

### 5.19 Background information of Quillay School

Number of students<sup>53</sup>: 1,404.

Classification for type of administration and funding<sup>54</sup>: Municipal school with public funding.

Orientation<sup>55</sup>: Polyvalent (technical-vocational route and academic route)

Socio-economic group<sup>56</sup>: B

Town: Curanilahue, Chile

### 5.20 General profile

Quillay is a Secondary school located in Curanilahue, a small town in the Bío Bío Region, which is approximately 600km to the south of Santiago, the capital of Chile. In this school students can choose between the academic pathway and the technical-vocational one. The technical-vocational pathway offers three specialisation courses: Electronics, Industrial Mechanics and Wood Products.

Quillay has been given the status of artistic secondary school by the Ministry of Education and this particular characteristic gives this school a special identity and prestige. For many years, this school has attracted national interest for having one

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<sup>52</sup> Pseudonym used for this school.

<sup>53</sup> Number of students at the time this study was conducted (June, 2009).

<sup>54</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the classification of schools in Chile depending on their type of administration and funding.

<sup>55</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the different orientations of schools in Chile.

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 4, section 4.5, for a description of the socio-economic groups included in the sample.

of the most prominent student orchestras in the country. In addition to this, there are other interesting artistic activities which are very popular among students such as the drama group, the dance group and the painting club. All these groups have had very good results in regional and national school contests. In general, there are many students who demonstrate artistic talents and this school is an ideal place for them to continue developing their artistic inclinations.

In relation to the characteristics of the student intake, it is important to indicate that the majority of students come from socio-economically vulnerable contexts. Curanilahue is a town of working class people in which the main industries are carbon-mining and fishing. The vulnerability level of students is very high and contextual problems such as family disruption and teenage pregnancy affect part of the student population.

Concerning education for holistic development, firstly, the school promotes the development of personal values and social skills in its educational processes. Secondly, the school offers religion education and a subject called “Transition to Adult Life”. In this subject students explore all kind of moral issues, sexual education and adolescence issues, among other matters. Curiously, some parents are not happy with these subjects because they think that students are using time that they can dedicate to academic subjects. Thirdly, the school provides emotional and vocational support for students. Finally, the school offers a diverse range of artistic and extra-curricular activities. For example, students with a musical inclination have the possibility of joining the students’ orchestra. In addition to this, there are other artistic opportunities, such as the drama, the

painting and the dance clubs.

## **5.21 Analysis of schooling aspects**

### ***School climate***

Concerning school climate in Quillay School, opinions are divided and there is not a clear consensus about a general characterisation of this aspect. In the headteacher's view, for example, the climate can be considered good, although he recognises that sometimes there are some small tensions, as this comment suggests:

*“The school climate is good in general. Regularly, we organise social gatherings to share and reduce stress. There are just minimal tensions.” (Headteacher)*

In the view of some teachers, the general climate of the school is positive as indicated by one teacher:

*“We have a good school climate; we are like a big family. As in every family, there are some conflicts, but we take them in a mature and professional way.” (Teacher)*

However, in the views of other teachers, the school climate and relationships are sometimes affected by a lack of communication as this testimony indicates:

*“I think that the organisational climate can be difficult sometimes. There are some communication problems. It is necessary to have more transparency and effective communication between the school's stakeholders.” (Teacher)*

In the perception of some participants, this communication problem might be



resolved or at least improved if they had more time to discuss and communicate emerging things happening in the school.

The relationship between teachers and students seems to be very positive with 94% of students, the same percentage of teachers and 82% of parents having a positive opinion about this interaction. In the following examples, this good mutual relationship is emphasised by participants:

*“Students are very affectionate. I live far away from here, and I could have applied to work in another place, but students here still value teachers, they appreciate us and that is something that you don’t find everywhere.” (Teacher)*

*“Teachers are nice and they are always supporting us. In general the relationship with them is cool.” (Student)*

Concerning school discipline, the general opinions of stakeholders are not very positive. For example, only 38% of students consider that the discipline in the school can be considered good. A modest 41% of students and 52% of parents think that the school has an orderly and secure atmosphere. In addition, only 55% of students think that discipline rules are applied by teachers, which could be an indication of certain flexibility in handling disciplinary issues in the school.

Students’ lack of responsibility is an aspect emphasised by teachers. They see a connection between discipline and responsibility and they highlighted the importance of the parents’ role in improving students’ responsibility, as the following evidence suggests:

*“I think that we have to improve the discipline, not only as it relates to social behaviour, but also in terms of students’*

*responsibility. This is an aspect where we have to work with parents, trying to make them more involved.”(Teacher)*

For some parents, the discipline problems are a direct consequence of the contextual adversity that many students face in their daily lives, as this comment indicates:

*“Lately, some children have been very aggressive, some of them bully their classmates and others are depressed. All this may be a consequence of the problems they have at home.”(Parent)*

Finally, it is important to mention that in the view of some school members, disciplinary problems and misbehaviour is something predictable in an adolescent educational context, especially if there is a vulnerability factor affecting a large proportion of the student population.

### ***School leadership***

Regarding school leadership, it is important to mention that the current headteacher has been working in the school for 28 years. He has had different positions in the school, teacher, counsellor and head of discipline. He assumed the role of headteacher in 2001, so he has been in the position for 10 years.

In terms of his leadership style, he considers himself to be someone who prefers to work with the support of a team. He likes to distribute responsibilities and to make decisions that have been previously discussed with his leadership team.

Teachers' opinions about the leadership are very diverse. Some of them highlight this aspect as a positive characteristic of the school, while others criticise it. For example, the following quotation emphasises a positive perception about the leadership team:

*“One of our strengths is the good management we have. The leadership team members are very hardworking and dedicated. They are responsible and competent people.” (Teacher)*

In contrast, some teachers are more critical about the leadership and they consider that it is not sufficiently effective. In fact, survey evidence demonstrates that only 46% of students and 50% of parents consider that the school leadership is positive and supportive. Teachers indicated that there should be more communication and more supervision of teachers' professional duty accomplishment. For example, only 47% of teachers indicated that they receive regular feedback from the school administration about their work. In the following comment a teacher stresses these aspects:

*“Leadership can improve in concerns of communication and expectations of teachers' work. The leadership should be more demanding because sometimes people think that the others are going to do what they are supposed to do, but it is not always like that.” (Teacher)*

For some teachers this lack of communication and clarity to set rules is regarded as a consequence of the headteacher's personal characteristics. In general, his leadership is considered weak.

### ***School practices and contextual factors impeding success***

In the analysis process of this school, I found some aspects that seem to be affecting the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes in this school. I estimated that it was necessary to explore them, in order to understand how these factors can be inhibiting the academic success of this school.

The first factor that is not being sufficiently effective is ‘lesson planning,’ even though teachers are expected to provide evidence of this to the unit of curriculum and evaluation of the school. Nevertheless, in the opinion of students and parents, only some teachers plan their lessons and demonstrate they are well prepared for their classes, as the following testimony indicates:

*“Not many teachers plan their classes. Many of them choose an activity from the course book when they arrive in the classroom and we realise that.” (Student)*

A second factor that is not producing the expected results is ‘additional academic support’. There is a special programme called ‘learning clinics’ for students who require extra academic support. Parents think that it is a good initiative from the school to help students to improve their results, but they indicated that many students do not take it seriously and do not take advantage of this opportunity:

*“Students make appointments for the clinics, but sometimes they are not very responsible and do not attend.” (Parent)*

A third factor that is not producing the expected results is ‘SIMCE preparation’ which is part of the teaching strategy that has been implemented to improve the results of this school. There is special planning to prepare students in the subjects

they are measured and there is collaboration between different departments in this preparation. However, in spite of this additional preparation, the results of the school in SIMCE are not above average. The headteacher indicated that the results they have had in the last years have not been as high as expected. Unfortunately, adverse contextual conditions seem to be affecting school success, as this comment suggests:

*“We were going on an upward trajectory and unfortunately last year our scores dropped almost 20 points. Maybe, if we hadn’t had all these kinds of situations, our results would be better but we have to deal with all these things.” (Headteacher)*

Many teachers from this school think that the school should not be excessively focused on SIMCE, which can be corroborated by the not very high percentage of teachers (56%) considering academic performance as one of the most important goals of the school. Nevertheless, the headteacher emphasised the importance of SIMCE for them because good results in this examination mean more opportunities for the school, including implementation of school improvement projects.

A fourth factor affecting the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes in the school is the ‘low optimisation of teaching and learning time’. Perceptions demonstrate that this aspect has to be improved. In fact, only 46% of students consider that learning time is being maximised. Participants agree on the fact that the time employed in learning activities is not being sufficiently optimised, as the headteacher emphasised:

*“There were many students’ strikes last year and many hours of classes were not done.” (Headteacher)*

In addition to this, some parents have a very critical view of the real purpose of some school subjects that address students' personal development. They think that the school should focus on academic outcomes and not use many school hours in activities that should be addressed at home, as this parent comments:

*“It is a good idea to use the hours of some classes such as TDA (Transition to adult life) or religious education because I don't see the point of them. Religious education is something that has to be addressed at home. These are hours that can be used in other important school subjects.” (Parent)*

It is important to point out that teaching and learning time optimisation is also considerably affected by teachers' absenteeism. According to participants, teachers' medical care leave related to stress and depression are a serious problem for the school, as the following evidence demonstrates:

*“Last year, there were many complaints about the extended medical leave of some teachers. If a teacher doesn't come, students miss classes because the municipality doesn't send a substitute teacher soon.” (Parent)*

This high level of absenteeism is a consequence of a fifth factor affecting teacher effectiveness and consequently the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes, which is 'teachers' heavy workload'. It is well known that teaching is one of the hardest, most stressful and most demanding jobs and sometimes the motivation and commitment of teachers is affected by contextual factors, such as not having enough contract time to undertake all the duties they are supposed to and having a high number of students per class. In addition to this, low levels of student discipline in classrooms make the situation even more difficult for teachers.

Unfortunately, it was reported that in this school, teachers' lack of time is a complex issue. Teachers do not have sufficient time to plan, to correct students' work or to take part in professional development courses. The headteacher is very conscious about this problem and he expresses discontent in the following comment:

*"Imagine a teacher of physics who teaches 44 hours a week, has 2 hours with every class and has 18 different classes. This person has to plan lessons for 18 classes and mark exams for 18 classes, etc. They just don't have time. Sometimes, it is even difficult for them to know all the names of the students they have."*  
(Headteacher)

He also indicates that there is always interest and willingness from the school and teachers to participate in different initiatives promoted by the Ministry of Education. However, he admits that it is very difficult to find the time:

*"You know, the ministry wants us to participate in studies, projects, etc., but sometimes we just don't have the time."*  
(Headteacher)

In general, the lack of time that teachers have to undertake their professional responsibilities is perceived as a barrier to effectiveness by teachers. Unfortunately, they indicated that they are obligated to work at home:

*"All the planning and preparation of evaluation instruments has to be done at home."*(Teacher)

### ***Teacher commitment***

Concerning teachers' commitment, opinions differ considerably. For example, survey evidence suggests that 81% of students indicated that teachers demonstrate

genuine interest in students' learning. However, qualitative evidence suggests that according to the perceptions of some parents and students, some teachers adopt a role of mere knowledge transmitters. The following comment from a student points out this sort of ambivalence in judging teachers' commitment:

*“There are different kinds of teachers here. Some of them are always guiding us to decide what we want in the future. But there are others who have a more distant relationship with students and they just do their classes.” (Student)*

In terms of teaching interest in professional development, the headteacher indicates that most of the teachers demonstrate motivation for professional updating. Nevertheless, the lack of time is one of the main barriers to professional development, as indicated by the headteacher:

*“Most teachers are well disposed to enrol in teaching professional development courses. Unfortunately, at the present, teachers have many hours of classes and they don't have enough time to do other things.” (Headteacher)*

Finally, it is important to mention that teachers emphasised the fact that the professional competence of the majority of teachers in the school is good. However, they admitted that the level of commitment of some members of the teaching staff is low. In their views, teachers need to have a solid knowledge in their areas, but also a high level of professional commitment in a broader sense, in order to contribute fully to the educational effectiveness of the school.

### ***Expectations of students' success and motivation***

In relation to expectations of students' success, the majority of students (94%) indicated that they have high expectations about their own capabilities of getting good academic results and displaying good behaviour in school. However, 66% of



teachers indicated that a large number of students feel that they are not capable of getting good educational results. Additionally, 63% of teachers indicated that parents have low expectations of the academic success of their children. It seems that one of the main barriers to having high expectations of students is the socio-cultural context in which the school is located, as suggested in this testimony:

*“In this town people don’t have expectations, they don’t have life projects and they live in the present without having projects for the future. This is a generalised problem in this town.” (Teacher)*

The expectations of many teachers about students are also affected by this contextual scenario. Nevertheless, in spite of the complicated contextual situation the school faces, there are some more positive views about these aspects. Some teachers indicated that their expectations, as well as those of parents, are high:

*“We always have high expectations and so do parents. If they bring their children here it is because they think that this school can give them the necessary skills to build a better future for themselves.”(Teacher)*

A contextual scenario characterised by a population with not very positive expectations about a future with better opportunities for the new generations has direct implications for students’ motivation, as indicated by a teacher:

*“Students don’t see the point in making a lot of effort in school because they think that they can work as miners in the future and make good money. Anyway, not all of them think like that.” (Teacher)*

In fact, students demonstrate low motivation in terms of the responsibility and involvement that they show in their own learning processes which can be corroborated by almost 50% of teachers indicating that students’ motivation is not high.

## **5.22 Summary of findings**

### ***1) Factor 1: School climate***

- Not particularly negative.
- Affected by some tensions and lack of communication.
- Discipline is not very positive.

### ***2) Factor 2: School leadership***

- It is regarded in a positive way by some teachers.
- For some teachers the leadership is affected by communication problems.
- Lack of supervision of the accomplishment of teachers' duties.
- Leadership is weak.

### ***3) Factor 3: School practices and contextual factors impeding success***

- Lack of efficient planning and preparation for classes.
- Students do not take advantage of academic support.
- According to some teachers the school is not sufficiently focused on academic achievement.
- Contextual factors affecting SIMCE results in spite of the preparation.
- Low optimisation of learning time.
- Teachers' heavy workload affecting teaching and learning processes (lack of time to do quality work, teacher absenteeism affecting effective use of learning time).

### ***4) Factor 4: Teacher commitment***

- Some teachers demonstrate genuine interest in student learning.
- Some teachers only act as knowledge transmitters.
- Interest in professional development but lack of time.
- Teachers' professional competences are good but the level of commitment of some of them in a broader educational sense is low (involvement in other educational

activities that do not imply formal teaching).

**5) *Factor 5: Expectations of students' success and motivation***

- Not very positive expectations influenced by adverse contextual factors (student vulnerability).
- Some optimistic views on the part of teachers and parents, but the negative influence of the context on the expectations is undeniable.
- Student motivation affected by a contextual scenario characterised by social vulnerability and a not very optimistic level of expectations of students.

## School portrait 6 “Lenga<sup>57</sup>” (typical school)

### 5.23 Background information of Lenga School

Number of students<sup>58</sup>: 829

Classification for type of administration and funding<sup>59</sup>: Private subsidised school with public funding.

Orientation<sup>60</sup>: Technical-vocational

Socio-economic group<sup>61</sup>: B

City: Santiago, Chile

### 5.24 General profile

Lenga is a school exclusively for girls and it is located in Santiago, the capital of Chile. This institution is administered by a Catholic Foundation which is part of the Archbishopric of Santiago. This foundation is a non-profit organisation that administers many schools and its objective is to serve socially deprived areas by providing educational opportunities for students from vulnerable social backgrounds. As part of a religious foundation, this school promotes the Catholic faith among students and their families, but it is not a problem for students who are not Catholic to enrol in the school.

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<sup>57</sup> Pseudonym used for this school.

<sup>58</sup> Number of students at the time this study was conducted (June, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the classification of schools in Chile depending on their type of administration and funding.

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 2, section 2.2, for a description of the different orientations of schools in Chile.

<sup>61</sup> See Chapter 4, section 4.5, for a description of the socio-economic groups included in the sample.

As a vocational secondary school, Lenga offers three different vocational courses: Nursery School Assistant, Administration and Secretarial Studies. Until recent years, this institution was only a secondary school, but the primary level was introduced in 2009. The intention of the school, by the creation of the primary level, was to provide a more extensive educational journey for students and to have a greater influence on their educational outcomes.

Regarding education for integral development, Lenga provides values, vocational and religious education. It also gives students opportunities to participate in diverse extracurricular activities. In fact, the provision of education for integral development is considered very important in Lenga because this school is very concerned about the well-being and personal development of its students.

## **5.25 Analysis of schooling aspects**

### ***School climate***

In relation to this aspect, the perceptions of school stakeholders are generally positive with 75% of teachers and 82% of students indicating that the school climate is positive and collaborative. However, these good impressions are mostly associated with the quality of personal relationships in the school because the evidence of this study demonstrates that the general climate is considerably affected by the level of discipline.

The relationship between teachers and students has been described in very

positive terms. Teachers seem to be very concerned about students and their problems, as this testimony indicates:

*“Teachers are very worried about the girls in many aspects. They talk to them if they have problems or talk to their parents. There is a lot of respect from students to teachers and also between students.” (Headteacher)*

Students also emphasised the good quality of this interaction which is characterised by affection and trust:

*“Teachers are not only teachers for us, they are like friends, they are close, they are even like family for us.” (Student)*

The headteacher indicated that although the relationships in the school are normally good, sometimes the interaction between leaders and teachers can be very formal and distant, as she points out in the comment below. This is a consequence of the previous leadership style which imposed a rigid and formal dynamics of relationships in the school.

*“We need less tension in our relationships here. For example, teachers address to me in a very formal way.” (Headteacher)*

Regarding school discipline, 44% of students think that school discipline is good, only 18% believe that students behave well in the classrooms and 35% believe that the school has an orderly and secure atmosphere. In addition to this, 41% of parents and 55% of teachers think that students behave well in the classroom.

In the opinion of students, discipline is something that has to be improved. They indicated that some students have been involved in serious situations of misbehaviour in which they have been very disrespectful to teachers. They

consider that there are some teachers who are very flexible and do not impose enough discipline and, unfortunately, students do not respect them, as this comment reflects:

*“Sometimes teachers do not impose enough authority; they show themselves as relaxed and cool people, so students tend to adopt relaxed behaviour.” (Student)*

By judging the following testimony, it seems that some students do not assume that they have an important role in maintaining school discipline and they consider teachers alone to be responsible for it.

*“On one occasion we had a test and when the teacher arrived, we started shouting ‘we don’t want test’ and the teacher said in a very low voice that the test had been planned before. We continued shouting and she finally said ‘ok, you will have the test next class’. She should have not tolerated that situation; she should have said ‘you have to take the test now, full stop’.” (Student)*

According to parents, it is not possible to generalise in terms of discipline because different classes demonstrate different levels of discipline, as the following evidence suggest:

*“Discipline is not the same in the different classes, on average it is not very good, but there are classes that have better discipline than others”. (Parent)*

Teachers have a similar opinion about discipline, they suggested that there are differences between classes and they added that the discipline problems are sometimes motivated by other sorts of issues, such as personal and emotional problems, as indicated by one teacher:

*“In general, I think that discipline is not that bad, but there are some classes in which it is difficult to make students stay quiet and*

*stop talking. Their motivations are not related to the academic aspect. Sometimes they are searching for company in the school. They need someone to listen to their problems; they need a shoulder to cry on.” (Teacher)*

During the focus group process, parents reflected on the importance of having a more effective system of sanctions for students’ misbehaviour. Some parents believe that it would be a good initiative to have a stricter system of discipline, while others prefer to have less traditional types of punishment from which students can learn a lesson, as suggested by a parent:

*“Maybe a good idea that we can discuss with the school administration would be the application of a different type of sanction for students who misbehave, as for example, the undertaking of a specific task in the school, such as cleaning, photocopying, etc.” (Parent)*

### ***School leadership***

In analysing this aspect, I realised that this school has a complex leadership history. For a long time, the leadership was characterised as autocratic and cold which affected the climate of the school, specifically the types of interactions between school members, as was pointed out in the previous section. The current headteacher emphasised that there used to be an authoritarian and distant type of leadership:

*“As far as I know, there was a very authoritarian system here. The previous head teacher was more dedicated to lead and make administrative decisions rather than to deal with situations closely related to teachers or students.” (Headteacher)*

After that period of authoritarian leadership, there were some leaders for a short time and only recently has the current headteacher assumed the position. In fact, I



conducted this study just two months after she started to work in the school. Therefore, in my view, the opinions of school stakeholders about the leadership were not sufficiently informed by evidence about her specific practices. In general, the perceptions about her leadership are not very positive, but not very negative either. Regarding leadership, 53% of students and 69% of parents think that it is positive and supportive; 60% of teachers think that the headteacher is perceived as a guide who has influential leadership in the school and only 45% of teachers think that there is regular feedback from school administration about their work.

Finally, it is important to mention that the current headteacher defines herself as a person who likes to include other people in the decision making process. She also emphasised the fact that she likes to get involved in the teaching and learning processes taking place in the school and her interest in promoting the religious orientation of the school among students.

### ***School practices and contextual factors impeding success***

Concerning this aspect, one of the problems affecting teaching and learning processes in the school is the low optimisation of learning time. For example, the headteacher indicated that a significant number of students are frequently late in the mornings. This is a serious problem because classes rarely start on time and there is less use of learning time.

In relation to academic support, the school provides extra support for its students but, unfortunately, there are some students who do not take advantage of these

opportunities and they sign up for the classes but fail to attend them. This attitude demonstrates a lack of responsibility and motivation on the part of some students.

It has been indicated by the participants that this is not a school focused solely on students' academic outcomes. In fact, only 55% of teachers consider academic performance as the most important goal of the school. Therefore, for example, additional preparation for examinations such as SIMCE is not among the main priorities of the school.

In the Chilean educational context, it is common to find controversial opinions about SIMCE preparation because many people disagree with it. They argue that students are supposed to be able to do well in this test without any special preparation or revision, since the content included in this test is based on the same curriculum covered in normal school lessons. The headteacher and some teachers from Lenga agree with this view and believe that SIMCE should not be prepared for. However, there is also a group of teachers in this school, who think that a stronger academic focus, which also involves SIMCE preparation is necessary in the school, as these testimonies suggest:

*“It is important that the school focuses on learning because otherwise it is really difficult to be an effective school, understanding effectiveness as good academic attainment measured by SIMCE.” (Teacher)*

*“No matter if we like it or not, our results are measured by external examinations and we have to accept this situation. We shouldn't think that it is enough what we are doing here; we have to aim for better results in external examinations and not being conformist.” (Teacher)*

According to teachers, another important factor that can contribute to improving the quality of the teaching and learning processes is to have access to professional development courses. Unfortunately, teachers do not always have the time, due to their heavy workload, as indicated in the following comment:

*“We need to make a big effort if we want to do professional development courses because it means going to classes on Saturdays, to do homework in the evenings, etc. We have the intention of doing it, but then we realise the big effort it implies.”*  
(Teacher)

Teachers also indicated that due to their heavy workload, sometimes they can hardly find the time to do quality work. They have to use their personal time to work because the time they are given is not enough, as was reported by this teacher:

*“We have to prepare material and correct students’ work in our personal, family and recreational time. Sometimes, we have the intention to prepare quality material or we have an innovative idea or project to use with students and there is not time to put that idea into practice. We should have more time and not only us, all the teachers in this country. We are asked for quality teaching but we are not given the conditions to make that possible.”* (Teacher)

Finally, teachers emphasised that, as a way to improve their own effectiveness, it is necessary to concentrate on specific tasks specifically related to teachers’ work and not to spend time in a lot of different activities, as this teacher suggests:

*“It is necessary to consider that in education there are three fundamental parts: teachers, parents and students. As teachers, we should stop doing things that are not our responsibility. We have become “thing makers”, we are not teachers anymore.”* (Teacher)

### ***Teacher commitment***

Regarding teachers' commitment, the perceptions of stakeholders are diverse. For example, a high percentage of students (83%) indicated that teachers seem to have interest in their job and a less high but still significant 65% indicated that a large number of teachers frequently enrol in new professional development courses to improve their knowledge and teaching skills. In contrast, some students have a less positive view about teachers' commitment and indicated that there are some teachers who demonstrate a lack of vocation and commitment to the teaching profession, as this comment shows:

*“There are some teachers who decided to teach just to have a job, just to have something, but they do not like it a lot.” (Student)*

Parents also indicated that the level of commitment of some teachers is low. According to them, there are some teachers who do not care too much about the understanding of all the students during the lessons:

*“Sometimes teachers are not very worried about all the students, they do their classes and they do not care so much if all the 40 or 45 students understood. They say that they can't dedicate extra time to particular content because they have a programme to follow and they don't want to be behind schedule.” (Parent)*

The level of teachers' commitment is sometimes affected by factors such as the lack of consideration of their professional effort. In fact, only 40% of them consider that there is recognition of their initiatives and effort and finally a modest 50% indicated that there is a use of rewards for teachers who are successful in achieving the school's goals.

### ***Expectations of students' success and motivation***

In relation to expectations about students, the headteacher indicated that as a new leader, she is not satisfied with the school's academic results and she expects a lot more from students because she is convinced that they have enough capacity to succeed. Nevertheless, she also admitted that sometimes it is difficult to have a lot of expectations of students because a high number of them come from broken families or live in highly socially and economically vulnerable contexts, as this testimony demonstrates:

*"Sometimes, as teachers, we also have low expectations because we think... well this is a difficult situation, it is difficult to change the adversity that our students face, so why should I make a lot of effort? I think that it is imperative to change this pessimistic view."*  
(Headteacher)

In the case of teachers, they indicated that the expectations of parents and even of students are low and they do not have many future aspirations:

*"They have a lot of emotional problems and they bring these problems from their homes. In general, we have families with a lot of problems here. The expectations of parents are low, they only want the students to finish their specialisation courses in the school and that is enough for them. Since parents' expectations are low, students don't have a lot of aspirations either, so they don't make a lot of effort, they just try to get the marks they need to pass. Anyway, I don't want to generalise."* (Teacher)

Unfortunately, this situation makes teachers' work more difficult, since they have to be constantly fighting against this lack of expectations. Additionally, students reported that sometimes the school does not seem to expect too much from them; they feel that it is not demanding enough and sometimes it is very flexible, as this student comments:

*“I think that maybe this school is not demanding enough or does not expect a lot from students. It’s like it’s up to students to be responsible or not.” (Student)*

A low level of expectations has repercussion on students’ motivation and consequently, this situation has a significant impact on the effectiveness of the school. In this school there is a very high proportion of students whose motivation is low. In fact 90% of teachers consider that students demonstrate low motivation for their studies. Students indicated that sometimes their motivation is affected by contextual factors, such as the frequent rotation of teachers or a better system of incentives.

## **5.26 Summary of findings**

### ***1) Factor 1: School climate***

- Positive relationships in general (sometimes the relationship between the headteacher and teachers is very formal and distant, which is a consequence of previous leadership styles).
- Climate affected by a low level of discipline (although it varies depending on the class).
- Discipline affected by contextual factors and teachers' flexibility.

### ***2) Factor 2: School leadership***

- New leader so perceptions are not informed by enough evidence.
- Previous autocratic and cold leadership affected the relationship between school leaders and teachers (formal and distant).

### ***3) Factor 3: School practices and contextual factors impeding success***

- Lack of optimisation of learning time.
- Lack of responsibility to attend extra academic support.
- No significant focus on achievement.
- Not high priority given to external assessment preparation.
- Contextual factors such as teachers' lack of time affecting professional development and teachers' work quality.

### ***4) Factor 4: Teacher commitment***

- Some students and parents believe that teachers' level of commitment is low.
- Teacher commitment is affected by a low consideration of their professional effort.

**5) *Factor 5: Expectations of students' success and motivation***

- Parents and students do not have very high expectations.
- Expectations are affected by adverse contextual conditions.
- School is not very demanding and school members do not seem to have very high expectations of students.
- Low expectations affect student motivation.



## **5.27 Summary**

In this chapter, I have presented the six schools that I have analysed in this study. The first four atypical schools have been considered effective institutions considering the level of academic attainment demonstrated by their results in the SIMCE examination. The last two typical schools are less effective in terms of academic outcomes and they have been analysed as a way to establish a comparison between more effective schools and less effective institutions. I have structured the analysis of these institutions using a case study research design. Different aspects of these institutions have been explored using different sources of information. In each school, I applied qualitative and quantitative research instruments, which included interviews, focus groups and surveys. After the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the instruments, I have written school portraits where I have presented a categorisation of five main school effectiveness factors. In addition to this, I have explored the same main categories in the typical schools for comparative purposes.

In this specific chapter, I have given a succinct descriptive exploration of the features that, in my view, are associated with the greater or lesser academic effectiveness of these schools. In the next chapter, I present a cross-case analysis, using analytical tables where I include quantitative and qualitative data of all my schools in order to illustrate clearly the similarities and differences between schools. In Chapter 7, I provide a more in depth analysis of the findings of this research and Chapter 8 brings the results of these analytical processes to a final conclusion.

# CHAPTER 6

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## 6. Cross-Case Analysis

### 6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a cross-case analysis of the six schools selected for this study (6.2). Four of them have demonstrated to be more effective than the other two, considering the level of academic attainment that these schools have in the SIMCE examination. Therefore in my analytical tables, I include the four atypical institutions (higher effectiveness) and the two typical ones (lower effectiveness). Each table evaluates a macro theme or category through the presentation of many variables related to it. After the presentation of each table, I provide an analysis of the particular category and its presence in the different schools. In the last phase of the analysis presented in this chapter (6.3), I explore only the main categories with their corresponding overall results. At this stage it is possible to evaluate the differences between atypical and typical schools and draw some general conclusions.

### 6.1 Methodology used in analytical tables

In the first phase of the analysis, I explore each category and all the variables related to that category per school. A judgement is made for each one of the variables related to a specific category. I employ the following scale to make

judgements: ++ indicates a very positive perception about the variable; + indicates a positive perception about the variable; 0 indicates that the positions of participants are neutral, neither positive nor negative; - indicates a negative perception about the variable and - - indicates a very negative perception about the variable. All the variables or factors related to the categories under analysis are elements that emerged in the interviews, focus groups or questionnaire-surveys. It was not difficult to transform the Likert scale scores of the quantitative source into this new scale because it has a similar design. For example, 5 represents a very positive position in relation to the variable, 3 a neutral position and 1 a very negative position, so a scale using + and - follow the same criteria. However, the analysis is more complex when the source is qualitative (interviews and focus groups). It is necessary to make subjective judgements about the general perceptions of participants and about the intensity of their positions and illustrate them using + and - symbols.

After a process of 'data transformation' (see Chapter 4, section 4.8) and the assignation of a particular judgement value (expressed in a symbol) to each variable, which in many cases is the product of the integration of qualitative and quantitative data, I make an overall judgement of the general situation of each category per school. The overall judgement is the result of the individual judgements of all the variables related to the category. In other words, it is a general interpretation of the situation of each category in the schools and not exactly the product of an addition of all the + or - symbols. It is the general evaluation of the presence of the category under analysis in schools and sometimes some variables were considered more important than others for the

overall judgement. At this point, it is possible to indicate that the QUAL and QUAN data related to a specific category are fully integrated and given a final interpretation value per school. After the presentation of each table, I provide a general narrative account of the results and a comparison between atypical and typical schools.

## 6.2 Analytical tables by categories of analysis

### *School climate*

The following table corresponds to variables related to school climate coming from quantitative or qualitative data sources or integrating both strands.

**Table 6.2.1: Analytical table-school climate**

| CATEGORY        |                  | VARIABLES  | S1<br>A | S2<br>A | S3<br>A | S4<br>A | S5<br>T  | S6<br>T |
|-----------------|------------------|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
| School climate. | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Good relationships between teachers and students.   | +       | +       | +       | +       | +        | +       |
|                 | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Good relationships between leaders and teachers.  | +       | –       | 0       | 0       | 0        | 0       |
|                 | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Good relationships between parents and school staff.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0        | 0       |
|                 | Quant.           | -High level of agreement between teachers about school matters.  | +       | –       | 0       | +       | +        | –       |
|                 | Quant.           | -Positive and collaborative school climate.  | +       | +       | 0       | 0       | 0        | 0       |
|                 | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Good discipline.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0        | –       |
|                 | Quant.           | -Disciplinary sanctions for student misbehaviour.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | +        | +       |
|                 | Qual.            | -Minor discipline problems, but in general good discipline.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | –        | –       |
|                 | Qual.            | -Student behaviour is generally positive and it is not seriously affected by the social vulnerability of students. | +       | +       | +       | +       | –        | –       |
|                 | Qual.            | -Most students assume their responsibility in keeping school discipline.   | +       | +       | +       | +       | –        | –       |
|                 | Quant.           | -Parents' collaboration with school discipline by encouraging students to behave well.                             | +       | 0       | +       | +       | +        | 0       |
|                 | Quant.           | -Good student behaviour in the classroom.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | +        | 0       |
|                 | Qual.            | -School discipline rules being applied by teachers.  | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0        | 0       |
|                 | Quant.           | -Students consider that they learn more in a disciplined environment.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | +        | +       |
|                 | Qual.            | -Climate of respect.   | +       | +       | +       | 0       | 0        | 0       |
|                 | Qual.            | -Good work climate for staff.  |         |         | +       |         | 0        |         |
|                 | Qual.            | -Students' identification with the school.   |         | +       |         |         |          | +       |
|                 | Quant.           | -Students feel well in the school.   | +       | +       | +       | +       | +        | +       |
|                 |                  | <b>Overall Judgement</b>   | +       | +       | +       | +       | <b>0</b> | –       |

Considering the quality of relationships between stakeholders in the schools, a common element in all the schools is the good relationship between teachers and students. This aspect was emphasised by the participants of the study in each school. In the case of school 6, this element is positive, but slightly less positive than in the other 5 cases. In terms of the variable ‘good relationships between leaders and teachers’, this factor is considered positive only in school 1, in the other cases it is neutral and negative in the case of school 2. Regarding relationships between parents and the school, in the four atypical schools they are considered better than in the typical schools. In relation to the variable ‘positive and collaborative school climate’, the perceptions of the participants are more positive in the first two cases of atypical schools and in all the other schools are neutral.

Regarding school discipline, it can be observed that it is considered more positively in the case of atypical schools. In typical schools the level of vulnerability of students negatively affects this aspect and a significant proportion of students do not assume their responsibility in keeping discipline, especially in school 6. In relation to ‘student behaviour in the classroom’ it is considered very good in the first two atypical schools, good in schools 3, 4 and 5, and the perception is neutral in school 6. In relation to the variable ‘climate of respect’, in atypical schools 1, 2 and 3, the perception is very positive and in the other three cases the opinion is neutral. According to participants, all these institutions have clear rules to deal with student misbehaviour. However, the level of agreement is stronger in atypical schools. A code of student behaviour which establishes sanctions for students who misbehave should be not seen as a negative element in

a school, but as a necessary element because it encourages a climate that facilitates student learning and social interactions characterised by respect. In fact, the majority of students from all these schools considered that they learn more in a disciplined environment. Frequently, it is not the application of sanctions what makes the discipline better, but the awareness that there is a system of rules and an expected level of behaviour from students.

Concerning the perception of students about the way they feel in school, specifically in the case of the variable 'students feel well in the school', perceptions are positive in all the cases. Finally, the overall results of the category 'school climate', considering the perceptions about all the variables related to this aspect, indicate that this factor is very positive in school 1, positive in schools 2, 3 and 4, less positive in school 5 and negative in school 6. These results demonstrate that the category 'school climate' is considered more positively in atypical institutions.

### *School practices focused on success*

The following table corresponds to variables associated with school practices that demonstrate a greater or lesser focus on success. Some of these variables are qualitative, quantitative or an integration of both types of data.

**Table 6.2.2: Analytical table-school practices focused on success**

| CATEGORY                                     |                  | VARIABLES   | S1<br>A | S2<br>A | S3<br>A | S4<br>A | S5<br>T | S6<br>T |
|--|------------------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| School practices focused on academic success | Qual.            | -Strategic planning with clear goals to be accomplished by staff.   | +       |         | +       |         |         |         |
|  | Qual.            | -Concentration on academic success.   | +       | +       | +       | +       | –       | –       |
|  | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Lesson planning.   | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0       | +       |
|  | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Learning time is maximised.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |
|  | Qual.            | -Preparation for SIMCE.   | +       | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0       |
|  | Qual.            | -Preparation for SIMCE is among school's priorities.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | +       | –       |
|  | Qual.            | -School offers extra academic support and students take advantage of this opportunity.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | –       | –       |
|  | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Use of incentives and or rewards for students, classes and teachers.   | +       | 0       | +       | 0       | 0       | 0       |
|  | Qual.            | -Higher education scholarship for good students   | +       | +       | +       |         |         |         |
|  | Qual.            | -High importance to teachers' professional update.  | +       | 0       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |
|  | Qual.            | -Rigorous teachers' evaluation system.  | +       | 0       | +       | 0       | 0       | 0       |
|  | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Incentives associated with teachers' evaluation.   | +       | 0       | +       | 0       | 0       | 0       |
|  | Qual.            | -School concerned about students' future results. Formal student follow-up processes.   | +       |         | +       |         |         |         |
|  | Qual.            | -Importance of the results in external examinations because it means funding opportunities, accomplishment of goals, prestige and satisfaction for the work done. | +       | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0       |
|  |                  | <b>Overall Judgement</b>  | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |



In terms of the first variable of this table, the evidence shows that only atypical schools 1 and 3 have a strategic plan with clear goals to be accomplished by the staff. This finding does not mean that the other schools do not have a system of institutional planning. However, in these schools, this factor has emerged as an important element related to the greater effectiveness of these institutions. This plan, which describes the goals that have to be undertaken in order to succeed, is carefully designed and evaluated. Many of the processes that characterise these two schools, which also include this strategic plan, demonstrate a significant focus on academic success. The data suggest that this particular focus is also present in the other two atypical schools. However, both typical institutions have a lower focus on academic success.

In relation to the teaching and learning processes, participants' perceptions of the variable 'lesson planning' are very positive in the case of the four atypical schools. In the typical schools perceptions are neutral in school 5 and positive in school 6. These last results suggest that planning is also done in typical schools but this aspect is slightly less important in school 6 and it has an average level of importance in school 5. In terms of the variable 'learning time being maximised', the results show positive or very positive perceptions in the case of atypical schools. In typical schools the perceptions are neutral. These results suggest that in atypical institutions the time used in teaching and learning activities is more than in typical institutions. Unfortunately, in schools 5 and 6 a lot of time is wasted on other activities and also learning time is often reduced due to contextual reasons, such as teachers' absenteeism or students' lateness. All these factors will be discussed in the next chapter.

Concerning preparation for external examinations, there is preparation for SIMCE in all the schools, but in typical schools, the level of preparation is slightly less intense than in the other cases, especially in the case of school 6. In school 5, the preparation effort is not producing the expected results. According to the data, SIMCE preparation is a priority for almost all the schools, with the exception of school 6. In addition to SIMCE preparation, all the schools offer extra academic support. Unfortunately in typical schools 5 and 6, students do not take advantage of the opportunity and demonstrate a lack of responsibility to attend.

With regards to the incentives or rewards for successful students, classes or teachers, in atypical schools 1 and 3, there is a better system of incentives than in the other institutions. This particular system has been implemented by the corporation which administers these two schools and includes economic incentives for teachers and the organisation of school trips, parties or the provision of equipment for classes that do well in SIMCE. In the other institutions incentives are frequently not material. This aspect will be discussed in the next chapter. In addition to the material or not material incentives used by these schools to encourage their teachers and students to do well, in atypical schools 1, 2 and 3, good students have the opportunity of getting higher education scholarships, which can be also considered a good form of encouragement for students.

In school 1 and 3, atypical schools administered by the corporation, some school practices emerged as important factors associated with the greater effectiveness of these institutions. For example, the teacher evaluation system is more rigorous

and there is a better system of incentives associated with teachers' evaluation results. In all the other schools the perceptions about these factors are neutral. In addition these two schools and atypical school 4 give higher importance to teachers' professional updating. Participants' opinions are neutral in school 2, 5 and 6. Furthermore, in schools 1 and 3 there is a formal follow-up process of former students. This process is undertaken by an external consultancy company.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that in almost all the schools the performance in external examination such as SIMCE is given high importance. This is because of the implications it has in terms of prestige, funding opportunities, accomplishment of goals and satisfaction for the work done. This aspect was judged as 'very important' in schools 1, 2 and 3. In schools 4 and 5 was considered 'important'. However in school 6, perceptions are neutral, which indicates a lower focus on external exams results.

In summary, considering the overall results of the category 'school practices focused on success' it is possible to indicate that atypical schools tend to have a greater focus on success than typical institutions. This focus is especially strong in atypical schools 1 and 3, which are administered by the same corporation.

### *School leadership*

The following table corresponds to variables assessing the school leadership of the schools. These variables are quantitative, qualitative or an integration of both data types.

**Table 6.2.3: Analytical table-school leadership**

| CATEGORY           |                  | VARIABLES   | S1<br>A | S2<br>A | S3<br>A | S4<br>A | S5<br>T | S6<br>T |
|--------------------|------------------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| School leadership. | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Most of the time the headteacher demonstrates a democratic leadership style.   | +       | –       | +       | 0       | +       | 0       |
|                    | Quant.           | -Supportive leadership.   | +       | –       | +       | 0       | 0       | 0       |
|                    | Qual.            | -Encouraging leadership   | +       |         | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |
|                    | Quant.           | -Regular feedback from school administration about teachers' work.  | +       | –       | +       | 0       | –       | 0       |
|                    | Qual.            | -Leadership team motivates teachers to get involved in professional development courses and school gives incentives for this. | +       |         | +       | +       |         |         |
|                    | Qual.            | -There is a collaborative work between the members of the leadership team in the organisation of systematic work.             | +       |         | +       |         | +       |         |
|                    | Qual.            | -Experienced school leaders.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | +       | –       |
|                    | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Other school members (teachers, students, parents) are considered in the decision making process.                            | +       | 0       | 0       | 0       | +       | +       |
|                    | Qual.            | -Proactive leadership. Leader tries to get the school involved in different projects.   | +       |         | +       | +       | +       |         |
|                    | Qual.            | -Previous leadership had a positive and significant influence on the school.  |         | +       |         |         |         | –       |
|                    | Qual.            | -Leader assumes other roles which imply more contact with students.   |         |         | +       | +       |         | +       |
|                    | Qual.+<br>Quant  | -The headteacher is considered a leader.  | +       | –       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |
|                    | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Parents consider the headteacher to be receptive and approachable.   | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |
|                    | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Teachers' satisfaction with the kind of leadership in the school.  | +       | –       | 0       | +       | 0       | 0       |
|                    |                  | <b>Overall Judgement</b>  | +       | 0       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |

Regarding the variable 'most of the time the headteacher demonstrates a democratic leadership style', perceptions in the first atypical school are very positive. They are positive in the case of schools 3 and 5, neutral for schools 4 and 6 and very negative in the case of school 2. The leadership is considered to be very supportive in schools 1 and 3, perceptions are neutral in schools 4, 5 and 6 and negative in school 2. In terms of the level of encouragement that leaders give to other school members, it is considered positive in school 1, 3, 4 and neutral in schools 5 and 6. In fact, the data suggest that in the majority of the atypical schools, with the exception of school 2, school stakeholders think that the leadership team encourages teachers to get involved in professional development courses and the schools provide incentives for this.

Concerning 'regular feedback about teachers' work', perceptions are positive in schools 1 and 3, neutral in schools 4 and 6 and negative in school 2 and 5. In relation to the variable 'collaborative work between the members of the leadership team in the organisation of systematic work', perceptions are very positive in schools 1 and 5 and they are positive in school 3. In terms of the 'consideration of other members of the school in decision making', perceptions are very positive in school 1 and 6, positive in school 5 and neutral in schools 2, 3 and 4. Headteachers in schools 1, 3, 4 and 5 are considered proactive, especially in school 1. These leaders are always trying to involve the school in different projects to improve the quality of education in the school.

According to the data, almost all the headteachers are considered very experienced. Only in the case of school 6, are perceptions negative about this

aspect, which can be explained by the short time that the current headteacher had been in the school at the time of this study and also by her short experience in a headteacher position. In school 2, the leader had also been recently appointed as the school headteacher when I conducted this study, but he is an experienced headteacher who has previously worked as a secondary school headteacher. In these two specific schools, the previous leadership styles have had a significant influence, which is positive in the case of school 2 and negative in the case of school 6. In school 2, there was a headteacher for 30 years and, according to participants, he had a strong influence on the tradition of academic excellence that still characterises this school. Most of the teachers of school 2 have been working in the school for many years, thus were used to a different type of leadership. They were very satisfied with the previous leadership and they have not completely accepted the new one. This fact can be corroborated by the negative perceptions of participants of this school about the variables ‘the headteacher is considered a leader’ and ‘teachers’ satisfaction with the kind of leadership in the school’. In school 6, there was a very authoritarian leadership style for some years which impacted in a not very positive way on the relationships and general climate in school.

There is particular evidence that demonstrates that in schools 3, 4 and 6 school leaders assume other roles that demand more contact with students. For example, in school 3 all the members of the leadership team have to teach; in school 4, the headteacher is also the director of the students’ orchestra; and in school 6 the current headteacher likes to visit the classroom, in order to know what is really happening inside these rooms. In this last case, this practice is only recent,

considering the short time that this headteacher has been in the position. Concerning the general impression about the leadership in these schools, in almost all the atypical schools, with the exception of school 2, the headteachers are considered leaders. The opinion about this aspect is neutral in both typical schools. In all the atypical schools the headteachers are perceived as receptive and approachable people by parents and in typical institutions the opinions are neutral. In addition to this, in atypical schools 1 and 4 teachers indicate that they are satisfied with the kind of leadership in the school. Positions about this aspect are neutral in school 3, 5 and 6 and negative in school 2.

Finally, the overall results of the analysis of this category indicate that school leadership is considered very positive in atypical schools 1 and 3 and positive in atypical school 4. Participants' perceptions about this aspect are less positive in the case of atypical school 2 and typical schools 5 and 6. These results demonstrate a difference between the majority of atypical schools and both typical institutions. Nevertheless, the results of this cross-case analysis suggest that the leadership of atypical school 2 is not more positive than that of the typical schools. In relation to this point, it is necessary to mention that these results are correct only if the analysis of the current leadership is taken into account. However, for the purposes of this study, I have decided to analyse the effects of the previous leadership on this particular school. Having some important references about its history as a school, it would not be fair to underestimate the influence of the previous leadership on the effectiveness of this school. For that reason, the findings of this particular school, that were presented in the previous

chapter and that will be discussed in the next ones, have considered the positive influence of the previous leadership.



### *Teachers' professional commitment*

The following table corresponds to variables evaluating the level of teachers' professional commitment to the schools. These variables are informed by qualitative, quantitative or both types of data.

**Table 6.2.4: Analytical table-teachers' professional commitment**

| CATEGORY                          |                  | VARIABLES  | S1<br>A | S2<br>A | S3<br>A | S4<br>A | S5<br>T | S6<br>T |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Teachers' professional commitment | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Highly competent teaching staff and very prepared in the subject they teach.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | +       | +       |
|                                   | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Frequently, many teachers enrol in new professional development courses to improve their knowledge and teaching skills. | +       | 0       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |
|                                   | Qual.            | -Teachers' strong commitment.  | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |
|                                   | Qual.            | -Teacher commitment does not seem significantly affected by contextual factors, such as heavy workload and lack of time. | +       | +       | +       | +       | -       | -       |
|                                   | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -According to students, teachers are genuinely interested in their students' learning and they demonstrate vocation.     | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |
|                                   | Quant.           | -Teachers being understanding and approachable with students most of the time.   | +       | +       | +       | +       | +       | +       |
|                                   | Quant.           | -Teachers demonstrate disposition to be evaluated in teaching practices and receive feedback.                            | +       | +       | +       | +       | +       | +       |
|                                   | Quant.           | -Efficient teacher classroom management.   | +       | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       |
|                                   | Qual.+<br>Quant. | -Teachers demonstrate interest in their job and express satisfaction about the teaching career decision.                 | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |
|                                   |                  | <b>Overall Judgement</b>   | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0       | 0       |

With respect to the first variable about teachers' professional competences, in all the schools teachers are perceived as highly competent. In schools 1, 3 and 4, participants reported that a significant proportion of teachers frequently enrol in

professional development courses, especially in schools 1 and 3. The perception about this aspect is less positive in school 2, 5 and 6. In the last two cases, teachers reported that they do not have enough time to attend professional development courses.

The data suggest that, according to participants' perceptions, the level of teachers' commitment is stronger in atypical schools. In addition to this, contextual factors that are common in the Chilean educational system, such as 'teachers' heavy workload' and 'lack of time' do not seem to affect the level of teacher commitment in atypical schools. On the contrary, these contextual factors have a negative impact on the commitment of teachers from typical schools 5 and 6. In relation to the level of teacher vocation and interest in student learning, the opinions are also slightly more positive in atypical schools. Furthermore, in all the schools teachers were considered understanding and approachable with students, especially in schools 1 and 3.

In relation to the variable 'efficient teacher classroom management', it can be observed that this aspect is only considered very good in school 1, in all the other cases, the opinions of participants are neutral, which means that this aspect is considered neither exceptional, nor bad. In terms of 'teachers' evaluation', in all the schools teachers demonstrate a very high disposition to be evaluated in their practices and receive feedback.

Finally, in all the atypical schools teachers demonstrate interest in their jobs and satisfaction with their decision to follow a career in teaching, which is an

indication of strong professional commitment. In fact, the overall results for this category confirm that teachers' professional commitment is considered more positive in atypical schools.

### *Expectations of students' success*

The following table corresponds to variables assessing the level of expectations of students' success in the different schools. These variables are coming from qualitative, quantitative or both data sources.

**Table 6.2.5: Analytical table-expectations of students' success**

| CATEGORY                          |               | VARIABLES   | S1<br>A | S2<br>A | S3<br>A | S4<br>A | S5<br>T  | S6<br>T |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
| Expectations of students' success | Qual.+ Quant. | -In general, school members have high expectations of students. They are convinced that they can do well if they work hard. | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0        | 0       |
|                                   | Qual.+ Quant. | -Students have high expectations of themselves.   | +       | +       | 0       | 0       | 0        | 0       |
|                                   | Quant.        | -Students want to continue studying after finishing school.   | +       | +       | +       | +       | +        | +       |
|                                   | Qual.+ Quant. | -Parents have high expectations of their children.  | +       | +       | 0       | +       | 0        | -       |
|                                   | Qual.         | -Contextual conditions are favourable for having high expectations of students.   |         |         |         |         | -        | -       |
|                                   | Qual.+ Quant. | -Optimistic view of school staff about students' possibilities to succeed given the vulnerability they face.                | +       | +       | +       | +       | 0        | -       |
|                                   | Qual.         | -Students feel that the expectations of the school about them are high.   | +       | +       | +       | +       |          | -       |
|                                   | Qual.+ Quant. | -In general, the level of expectations impacts student motivation in a positive way.  | +       | +       | 0       | +       | -        | -       |
|                                   |               | <b>Overall Judgement</b>  | +       | +       | +       | +       | <b>0</b> | -       |

Regarding expectations of school members about students, the data show that the perceptions of participants about this aspect are very positive in the four atypical

schools and neutral in the two typical schools. These results suggest that in general teachers and members of the leadership teams have high expectations of students in the atypical institutions. In the typical schools, the situation is more complex because some school members reported having high expectations of students, but also a significant number of them considered that their expectations of students are affected by adverse contextual conditions.

In relation to students' expectations of themselves, in the two first atypical schools, these expectations are very high, but in the other four cases, these are neither high nor low. However, even if some participants do not have the best expectations of themselves; they seem to have positive expectations for their future. In fact, the majority of students from all the schools indicated that they would like to continue their studies after finishing school. In terms of parents' expectations of students, these are very high in the case of the atypical schools 1, 2 and 4. In school 3 and 5, perceptions of participants are neutral and in school 6 low. The results indicate that expectations are higher in the majority of atypical schools with the exception of school 3.

Concerning the way in which contextual conditions affect stakeholders' expectations of students, the evidence suggests that in typical schools this aspect was emphasised as being a negative element. In the atypical school, which are also characterised by social vulnerability, these conditions did not emerge as elements affecting considerably the expectations of stakeholder about students. In fact, in atypical schools, there is an optimistic view about the future possibilities of students given the vulnerability they face, but this is clearly not the case in

typical schools, especially in school 6. In addition to this, in all the atypical schools students reported that their schools have high expectations of them. In school 5 there was not clear evidence about this aspect and in school 6 the opinions of students are not positive. Furthermore, regarding the impact of the level of expectations on student motivation, the evidence suggests that in atypical institutions, the level of students' motivation is generally positive as in schools 1, 2 and 4. In atypical school 3, the perceptions are neutral. This aspect was considered more positive in atypical schools. In the case of both typical schools, the level of student motivation was found to be low, especially in school 6.

Finally, after considering the overall results about this category, it is possible to conclude that the 'expectations of students' success' tend to be higher in atypical schools. The evidence has suggested that difficult contextual conditions are the main barriers affecting the level of expectations in the typical schools.

### 6.3 Summary of main categories analysed

The following table summarises the results of the different main categories that were analysed in the previous tables. In the paragraphs presented after the table, I provide an overall interpretation in which I compare the presence of each category in atypical and typical schools.

**Table 6.3.1: Summary table-main categories' overall results**

| Categories                                   | S1<br>A <sup>1</sup> | S2<br>A | S3<br>A | S4<br>A | S5<br>T <sup>2</sup> | S6<br>T |
|--|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| School climate                               | +                    | +       | +       | +       | 0                    | –       |
| School practices focused on academic success | +                    | +       | +       | +       | 0                    | 0       |
| School leadership                            | +                    | 0       | +       | +       | 0                    | 0       |
| Teachers' professional commitment            | +                    | +       | +       | +       | 0                    | 0       |
| Expectations of students' success            | +                    | +       | +       | +       | 0                    | –       |

In relation to 'school climate,' this aspect is considered less positive in typical institutions, especially in school 6. The main factor differentiating both types of institutions is the level of discipline. In typical schools students' behaviour is significantly less positive than in atypical institution.

Regarding the category 'school practices focused on success' results are positive for all the atypical schools and neutral for both typical schools which indicates that in schools 5 and 6 the focus on success is less evident than in the other 4 institutions. For example in school 6 there is not sufficient preparation for SIMCE

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<sup>1</sup> A= Atypical School.

<sup>2</sup> T= Typical School.

because this exam is not a priority for the school. In both schools learning time is not maximised and, according to the evidence given by participants, lesson planning is less effective than in atypical institutions.

Concerning ‘school leadership’, the results of this cross-analysis demonstrate that in three of the atypical schools the leadership is considered more effective than in the rest of the institutions. In atypical school 2, the perceptions of participants about this aspect are not more positive than typical schools. As was previously indicated in this chapter, at the time in which this study was conducted, the leadership of school 2 was not considered particularly effective. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, I have decided to assess the influence of the successful previous leadership on the academic success of this school. The characteristics of this particular leadership were explored in the Canelo School portrait and they are discussed further in the next chapter.

In terms of ‘teachers’ professional commitment’, the results of atypical schools are more positive than in the case of typical institutions. According to the evidence, in typical institutions teachers tend to demonstrate a lower commitment and they have a lower level of involvement in students’ learning and professional vocation. In addition to this, their levels of interest and satisfaction with the decision to follow a career in teaching are lower

In relation to the category ‘expectations of students’ success’, the results suggest that in the case of atypical schools expectations tend to be higher than in typical institutions. The evidence demonstrates that in typical schools, especially in

school 6, there is a less optimistic view of school staff about students' possibilities of success given the vulnerability they face. In general, in typical school contextual conditions are less favourable for having high expectations of students and, consequently, these lower expectations have negative repercussions for the levels of student motivation.



## **6.4 Summary**

In this chapter, I identified 5 main factors associated with the greater effectiveness of the four atypical schools. These conditions were also analysed in each of the typical schools. In this chapter, I have compared the six schools to corroborate and identify clear differences between the two types of schools. I have used different variables to evaluate each category, using qualitative, quantitative or in many cases an integration of both sources of data. After this cross-case analysis, it is possible to conclude that more effective schools, or atypical ones, demonstrate a better organisational climate characterised by good relationships between school members and a good level of discipline. In addition, atypical schools have a greater focus on academic success, their teachers show a higher level of professional commitment and their leaders contribute to the school success. Furthermore, in these institutions the expectations of students' success are greater, which has positive implications for student motivation. In the next chapter, I discuss in depth all these factors in order to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between these specific features and school effectiveness. This discussion is guided by the reflection about four of my research questions.

# CHAPTER 7

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## 7. Discussion

### 7.0 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the findings of the six case studies that were presented in Chapter 5 and the results of the cross-case analysis presented in Chapter 6. I address four of the five research questions guiding this study. In the first section of this chapter (7.1), I explore the general factors that help to explain the greater effectiveness of the four atypical schools selected for this study. The effectiveness factors that are common in all the atypical schools are: ‘strong focus on success’, ‘effective leadership practices’, ‘high level of teachers’ professional commitment’, ‘positive school climate’ and ‘high expectations of students’. The second section consists of an exploration of the distinctive elements of each school that seem to have a particularly positive effect on their success (7.2). In the third section, I situate each school within a particular context and history in order to understand if these particular contextual and historical elements may be influencing the results of the school in terms of pupils’ outcomes (7.3). Finally, in the last section, I discuss the differences between the atypical and typical schools (7.4). This comparison might be particularly illuminating in achieving a clear understanding of the characteristics of more effective schools in disadvantaged social contexts and will help me to elaborate my conclusion in the next chapter.

### ***7.1 What are the general factors that help to explain the greater academic success of this purposive sample of schools serving areas of social deprivation?***

In the following section there is a discussion of the general factors associated with effectiveness that were found in the four atypical schools and which, according to the evidence, do not have the same level of importance or presence in typical schools.

#### **Factor 1: Strong focus on success**

The four atypical schools demonstrate a particularly strong focus on success which is one of the factors that I have associated with the greater effectiveness of these institutions in terms of students' academic outcomes. According to Reynolds & Teddlie (2000, p.147) "focusing upon the importance of academic goals and processes and an academic emphasis have been shown to be core correlates of effective schools". Therefore, this study is corroborating the findings of previous studies. It is possible to observe that these schools are concerned with success related aspects such as 'planning for success', 'teacher evaluation', 'use of incentives', 'high importance given to teacher professional development' and 'strong focus on external assessment'.

### *Planning for success*

Considering the results of this study, it is possible to indicate that planning is particularly effective in my sample of atypical schools. In Canelo and Avellano Schools planning has emerged as an element related to pedagogical aspects involving lesson preparation and organisation of a systematic practice programme for external assessments. This is probably done in any school, but in some schools this practice seems to be more effective than in others, and that is the case of my atypical schools. As the evidence in Chapter 6 (table 6.2.2) demonstrates, perceptions of participants about lesson planning in atypical schools are very positive in all the cases. The majority of participants from atypical schools indicated that this aspect is effective, as suggested by the headteacher:

*“In this school teachers work planning learning units based on the national programmes, design learning materials and reflect about the evaluation and teaching-learning methodologies, etc.”  
(Headteacher, Rauli School)*

This testimony illustrates what is clear from the data analysis, that planning is taken very seriously in this type of institution. This planning is not just about content, but it also integrates evaluation and reflection about methodologies employed in teaching. In table 6.2.2, it is possible to corroborate that even if perceptions about this aspect are not negative in typical schools, they are less positive than in atypical schools. For example, in one of the typical schools stakeholders indicated that planning is not always done:

*“Not many teachers plan their classes. Many of them choose an activity from the course book when they arrive to the classroom and we realise that.” (Student, Lenga School)*

Unfortunately in both typical schools, contextual conditions such as ‘teachers’ lack of time’ and ‘excessive workload’ affect teaching and consequently the schools’ results. I will discuss these contextual conditions in the last section of this chapter (see section 7.4). Efficient lesson preparation also involves the consideration of other elements such as the efficient administration of ‘learning time’. According to Scheerens & Bosker (1997, p.25), “learning time can be interpreted as a measure of the quantity of exposure to ‘educational treatment’ at school”. In relation to the variable, ‘maximisation of learning time’, participants’ perceptions are more positive in atypical schools as the data show (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.2). The data suggest that in more effective institutions the time dedicated to teaching and learning activities is greater, as indicated in the following testimony:

*“In this school, teachers use effectively 40 minutes from the 45 minutes that a lesson hour lasts. This is uncommon in many schools in this area, where the time of effective teaching in a classroom is maybe around 20 minutes.” (Headteacher, Rauli School)*

Effective planning should consider the effective arrangement of aspects such as ‘learning time’, ‘resources to teach’ and ‘methodologies used in teaching’. This study has not found important differences in the type of resources or methodologies employed in teaching, between atypical and typical schools. However, one of the main differences found in terms of teaching and learning is the higher optimisation of time in atypical institutions. SER studies have produced many categorisations of effective school conditions and many of them have emphasised the importance of the time allocated to learning. For example, the studies conducted by Scheerens (1989), Selden (1990) and the categorisation by

Reynolds & Teddlie (2000) based on the studies of Levine & Lezotte (1990) and Sammons et al. (1995) have emphasised the importance of 'the optimisation of learning time' for the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes.

In Araucaria and Rauli Schools, which are administered by the same corporation, planning is also important in the organisation of lessons and programmes to prepare students for external assessment. In addition to this, in these two schools planning has a special focus on success and there is a strategic plan to organise the actions orientated to achieve educational effectiveness. The strategic plan includes a high number of goals that have to be achieved by the schools' stakeholders. This design of the plan takes into account the schools' vision and mission which will be achieved by accomplishing the goals described in this document. The plan covers a period of three years and school members' views and suggestions are considered in its design. For example, during staff meetings, teachers can propose or discuss the goals to include. The people who are most involved in the elaboration of this plan are the leadership teams of each school. Once the plans have been developed, the corporation evaluates them and gives feedback. The strategic plan has its genesis inside the schools and school stakeholders are expected to strive for success in the achievement of its goals. Teachers in both schools have to sign a document in which they acknowledge their professional responsibilities in relation to this plan. Teachers are aware of the expectations the schools have in relation to this. According to school members, having a strategic plan has a positive impact on effectiveness because the work system is organised and structured and individual responsibilities are made very clear for school members. Nothing is improvised in these two schools, everything is carefully

planned and stakeholders are very conscious that the corporation expects them to do well, as they are evaluated in relation to their results. Teachers also know that the continuity in their positions is associated with the achievement of the schools' goals, thus they do their best to meet the standards of efficiency expected of them.

It is important to mention that in school effectiveness literature, the concept of 'planning' is often more associated with 'instruction planning' rather than with 'institutional planning'. From my experience as a practitioner, the use of 'strategic plans' is not common in Chilean schools. Thus it can be considered a distinctive element of the Araucaria and Rauli Schools. It makes sense to attribute this distinctive characteristic to the fact that these schools have an external administration that incorporates practices that are not common in other schools. Araucaria and Rauli practices are established in the strategic plan, as one of the headteachers emphasised:

*"The school working system is the result of a strategic plan that is generated in the school but is evaluated by the corporation. This plan has around 70 goals and it covers a three year period." (Headteacher, Araucaria School)*

There is general agreement between members of both schools about the relevance of the strategic planning as a catalyst for these schools' greater success and it seems that this factor is more influential for the effectiveness of these schools than other factors that are traditionally given more importance. This particular point is pointed out by a parent:

*"I think that the greater effectiveness that this school has is a consequence of the strategic planning and not of strong family support and involvement." (Parent, Rauli School)*

This comment invites the reflection about the core of the SER movement which states that *“school makes a difference”*. In this case a parent gives more importance to the school effect rather than to external factors, such as the family support. In fact, this particular study has not found a strong association between the greater effectiveness of the atypical schools and parents’ involvement.

Finally, it is very important to indicate that it is essential that the results of the planning initiatives are evaluated to determine if the actions planned were actually successful. In the case of Araucaria and Rauli schools, the corporation evaluates the achievement of the goals and the plans are updated every three years considering the suggestions and new needs of the schools’ communities. In addition, school members are encouraged to do their best to meet the requirements of the strategic plans and they are offered incentives if they perform their work demonstrably well. These two aspects, evaluation and incentives, are discussed in the next sections.

### ***Teacher evaluation***

Teachers’ evaluation is the second dimension of the macro factor ‘strong focus on success.’ Only two of the atypical schools have a teacher evaluation process that seems to be particularly efficient; specifically the schools run by the corporation, Araucaria and Rauli. The other two atypical schools also have a process of teacher evaluation but the data did not demonstrate a significant association between these processes and the effectiveness of the institutions. In these schools the teacher



evaluation processes do not seem to be distinctive or very different from the typical institutions (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.2).

In Araucaria and Rauli the processes of teacher evaluation could be considered very efficient. Teachers have an assessment in which they have to demonstrate a very high level of efficiency. They are given a maximum of three years to reach this level, and if they do not achieve it over this period of time, they cannot continue working in the school. The process of evaluation is very exhaustive and includes many factors as noted in this comment:

*“There has been a system of evaluation since 1995 which includes classroom supervision, accomplishment of commitments that teachers sign, management of administrative-pedagogical duties, professional responsibility, teachers’ self-evaluation and students’ evaluation of teachers.” (Headteacher, Araucaria School)*

An effective evaluation system of teachers’ competences is a very important element in terms of the quality of teaching in schools. SER has given plentiful evidence about the role of teachers in the effectiveness of an institution. For that reason, it is very important for a school to evaluate teachers’ competences and commitment on a regular basis. Day et al., (2007, p.236) suggest that in the political agendas of developing or developed countries “issues of teacher quality, standards, recruitment and retention are central”. Therefore, in order to meet the expected teachers’ performance standards, it is necessary that at a national contextual level and at a local school level, effective policies, regulations and actions are implemented. Taking as an example, the successful teacher evaluation practices implemented in schools like Araucaria and Rauli, more schools should have rigorous teacher evaluation processes that consider various teaching aspects.

In Rauli School, the evaluation of teachers is a permanent practice. One of the leadership team members who is in charge of the Curriculum and Evaluation Unit supervises lessons continuously and provides a lot of support to teachers giving them constant feedback about their practices and recommendations about how to improve the quality of their lessons. Teachers think that the professional support they receive from this person is very useful to improve their practices and the results of their students. They expressed their satisfaction about this practice, as the following comment from a teacher demonstrates:

*“It is also very important the classroom supervision that members of the senior management team do. They give feedback in a positive and constructive way.” (Teacher, Rauli School)*

### ***Use of incentives***

A third dimension of the factor ‘strong focus on success’ is the ‘use of incentives’. This aspect is commonly associated with ‘teachers’ evaluation’ because incentives and reward systems are used by some schools to encourage their teachers to improve their professional performance, which has to be demonstrated in the evaluation process. In this group of schools incentives and rewards are used to encourage teachers and students. As the evidence suggests (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.2), the use of incentives is particularly high in Araucaria and Rauli. In the other two atypical institutions, the perceptions of stakeholders about this aspect are neutral, which indicates that the use of incentives is not something particularly strong in these schools. In fact, it has the same level of importance as in typical institutions.

In the two schools administered by a corporation, the system of incentives for teachers is based on the results that they get in the teachers' evaluation process. As previously noted, teachers are expected to achieve a very high percentage of efficiency and they are given economic incentives if they reach the expected level, which is set by the corporation. This strategy seems to be effective in increasing teachers' effort to succeed because the teaching profession in Chile, as in many other developing countries, is not a well-paid job, thus an opportunity to increase in their salaries for demonstrating satisfactory professional performance is an encouragement for many teachers.

In addition to the incentives given to teachers, student effort is also acknowledged, as the following comment indicates:

*"Incentives are not only related to SIMCE, good classes and good students also receive rewards." (Parent, Rauli School)*

For instance, classes that perform well in the external examination SIMCE are given a prize, such as a social gathering for students organised by the school or equipment for their classroom. Moreover, students who perform well academically are given prizes and their effort is acknowledged in a ceremony where good teachers are also recognised. School members value the system of incentives of these schools because they think that it has a positive effect on student motivation, as this testimony of a teacher describes:

*"I think it is fantastic when students are taken to a ceremony in Santiago to be given rewards. They are given prizes when they are studying and also when they leave. The best DUAL<sup>63</sup> student is*

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<sup>63</sup> DUAL is the immersion programme that students take when they are doing their specialisation courses.

*given a prize, also the best former student who is in higher education.” (Teacher, Araucaria School)*

The incentive policy promoted by the corporation is one of the many strategies focused on success that this organisation employs as a way to maintain good student attainment levels. School members feel motivated to make more effort because they know that in these schools it will be rewarded, not necessarily in a material way, but also through public acknowledgment. This factor differentiates these schools from others, where teachers and students are also expected to perform well but there is not an effective incentive system nor reinforcement and encouragement, which affects their motivation. More than two decades ago SER was already giving evidence about the connection between the use of “achievement stimulants” and school effectiveness (Scheerens, 1989).

### ***High importance given to teachers’ professional development***

All the atypical and typical schools analysed in this study placed importance on teachers’ professional updating. However, according to the evidence, in the atypical schools Araucaria, Rauli and Avellano, this aspect has been emphasised by school members as being particularly relevant, especially in the case of the corporation schools (see Chapter 6, tables 6.2.2 and 6.2.4). In the case of Avellano School, teacher development is a practice which is encouraged by the headteacher and teachers demonstrate a willingness to update their professional knowledge and skills. Therefore, a significant number of teachers frequently enrol in professional development courses. In the case of Araucaria and Rauli, for the corporation that runs these schools, it is important to have well trained teaching

staff able to provide quality education. Therefore, they are continuously concerned about trying to find new and appropriate opportunities of professional development for their teachers.

School effectiveness literature has referred to teachers' professional development in some of the following ways: 'practice oriented staff development' 'professional development' 'developing staff skills at the school site' (Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Cotton, 1995; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). The corporation and the leadership teams of these institutions are aware of the importance of teachers' professional development, so they encourage teachers to get involved in development courses to improve their knowledge in the subjects they teach and also their teaching strategies and techniques, as the following testimony suggests:

*"The majority of teachers are constantly getting enrolled in professional development courses in order to improve their methodologies or develop better skills to help students to develop in the personal, academic and social aspects. These courses are either funded by the Ministry of Education or by the corporation." (Headteacher, Araucaria School)*

The motivational strategies that the corporation has implemented to attract teachers' interest in getting involved in development courses include economic incentives. In general, the encouragement that teachers receive achieves very good results because the majority of teachers demonstrate significant interest in taking courses. A clear understanding of the mission of the institution in which they are working and the system of economic incentives are some of the aspects that influence teachers' positive response to the professional development offers in these schools. In relation to the first point, teachers are conscious that the corporation is an organisation which is highly focused on educational success, and

that working in one of the schools administered by this organisation means agreeing with certain practices that are part of the objectives of the school. In addition to this, the system of economic incentives is definitely valued by teachers because they feel that the time invested in these courses is rewarded.

### ***Strong focus on external assessment***

The four atypical schools are characterised by placing high importance to external assessment. These schools demonstrate a strong school focus on achievement; therefore examinations such as SIMCE are taken seriously (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.2). The relationship between school effectiveness and standardised examinations results has always been controversial with detractors arguing that the effectiveness research based on measurable outcomes neglects other types of outcomes and cultural dimensions (Goodlad, 1984; Gorard, 2010). Nevertheless, being fully aware that the range of student outcomes typically addressed in SER may be insufficient, I have considered academic outcomes in the selection of my sample of more effective schools. However, this decision does not mean that I have not included contextual information to explain those results in the analysis process (socio-economic information, cultural issues and educational policies and administration issues). In fact, in this study I have considered the analysis of elements such as ‘student aspiration’, ‘student enjoyment of education’ and ‘future student participation in education’ (Gorard, 2010). Where I have not included more attitudinal factors, or where the analysis of the aspects proposed by Gorard does not include quantitative measurement, it is because there is a lack of evidence about attitudinal and social outcome data in the Chilean context.

Considering all this, in this particular research, the analysis of the importance given to external assessment results by the schools is a key element.

According to the evidence (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.2), in atypical schools the level of preparation for SIMCE is higher than in typical schools. However, in the typical school Quillay, students also receive preparation, but results tend to be worse than in atypical schools. SIMCE preparation is not only about content, but also about helping students to become familiar with the structure of the examination and type of questions they will have to face, as the following evidence shows:

*“In the subjects that are measured by SIMCE, teachers work with models of questions that are very similar to the ones included in SIMCE.” (Headteacher, Rauli School)*

In atypical schools, the collaboration between different departments in SIMCE preparation and the involvement of different school units tend to be significant. This collective effort is particularly strong in Avellano as this example demonstrates:

*“It is a team effort; colleagues from other departments and the Evaluation and Curriculum Unit (UTP) also collaborate. Everyone is in a way involved and we are constantly doing practice papers and evaluating the results of those practice papers.” (Teacher, Avellano School)*

In the four atypical institutions, especially in Araucaria, Canelo and Rauli, school staff and pupils are aware of the importance that this exam has for their schools and for themselves in terms of personal satisfaction for the achievement of goals, school prestige and funding opportunities. For example, many school

improvement projects created by the Ministry of Education or by external sponsors (which give funding to schools) consider schools that have good results in SIMCE. Although, this is slightly illogical, considering that the schools with lower results should receive more assistance. For that reason, these atypical schools and also the typical School Quillay, consider SIMCE preparation a priority (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.2).

As was discussed in one of the previous sections, corporation schools Araucaria and Rauli have a good incentives system which also considers SIMCE results. In the other atypical schools, Canelo and Avellano, the types of incentives are basically public acknowledgement and sometimes teachers give students additional points or additional good marks as a way to value student effort.

Finally, it is important to mention that schools in Chile normally provide some preparation for the university admission examination (PSU). However, this is not a usual practice in vocational schools, where this type of preparation is lower than in humanistic-scientific schools that have an academic orientation. My research evidence demonstrates that Canelo places high importance on the preparation for this exam. This practice is not totally supported by the school administration because it is against the mission of the school, which is to prepare students for work-life, corresponding with its vocational orientation. However, in Canelo the combination of factors such as tradition of academic excellence, strong focus on achievement and teachers' high expectations of students make teachers committed to the preparation of students for any exam that provides them with the opportunity of having a better future, as a student suggests:



*“Teachers frequently apply practice papers of the university admission test. It is not their responsibility because this is a vocational institution but they do anyway.” (Student, Canelo School)*

To summarise: the evidence of this research suggests that atypical schools are characterised by some particular practices that demonstrate a high focus on success. All these features have a significant impact on the effectiveness that these schools demonstrate in comparison to schools with similar contextual conditions. This focus is especially evident and more significant in the corporation schools Araucaria and Rauli, although the other two atypical schools also have a greater focus on success than typical institutions.

## **Factor 2: Effective leadership practices**

Effective leadership is an aspect that is frequently associated with greater school success. In relation to this, Reynolds & Teddlie (2000, p.141) have indicated “we don’t know of a study that has not shown that leadership is important within effective schools”. In fact SER has given enough evidence about the presence of this factor in schools that demonstrate good levels of effectiveness (Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Sammons et al., 1995; Cotton, 1995; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). In this particular research participants demonstrate a positive perception about the current leadership in three of the atypical schools, which can be considered particularly outstanding, in both corporation schools (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.3). In the atypical school Canelo, the perceptions of participants about the school leadership are not particularly positive, they are neutral. However, the previous leadership style that characterised this institution for a long time had a very

positive impact on the school (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.3). This particular influence is still perceived by participants as one of the aspects associated with the greater success of Canelo. Therefore, I have decided to include Canelo in this reflection of successful leadership practices, but only in that it refers to the leadership of the previous headteacher.

As previously mentioned, in both corporation schools, Araucaria and Rauli, the leadership is considered particularly positive, far more so than in the rest of the schools. These leaders seem to adapt their leadership styles to the circumstances and although most of the time they are considered ‘democratic leaders’ who distribute power with other staff members, they might act more autocratically and make firm decisions when it is required, as the following comment suggests:

*“It is true that he is a little authoritarian sometimes, but maybe the school would not have the same results if he were not like that. Maybe with someone more flexible that agrees with everything and finds that things are always ok, the school would not be the same.”*  
(Parent, Araucaria School)

In relation to this previous point, many studies have emphasised that an effective leadership should be ‘firm and purposeful’ (Mortimore et al., 1988; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; and Sammons et al., 1997). This characteristic is also mentioned in the definition by Moos & Huber (2007) in a chapter where they connect school leadership and school effectiveness: “professional school leadership” is described as “firm and purposeful, sharing leadership responsibilities, involvement in and knowledge about what goes on in the classroom” (p.581). Additionally, in Araucaria and Rauli, headteachers are considered particularly supportive (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.3), which could be

considered a factor that may contribute to increasing the satisfaction of stakeholders with the school, especially in the case of teachers. In these two schools and also in Avellano, the leadership teams try to motivate teachers to get involved in professional development courses. This practice is very positive in increasing the quality of teaching in these schools and it demonstrates the greater focus on success of these institutions. Furthermore, in these former schools and also in the typical school Quillay, leaders are especially proactive and they like to get involved in different projects that frequently mean an improvement opportunity for the school (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.3).

Something particular that characterises the headteachers of Rauli and Avellano School is the fact that they assume other roles in the school which bring closer interaction with students. For example, the headteacher of Avellano is also the director of the students' orchestra and the headteacher of Rauli teaches some classes. In Rauli, all the members of the leadership team have to teach at least one lesson per week. This particular school policy is a strategy designed to bring the leadership team closer to students and teachers and to understand their experiences. Leaders are not considered detached from classroom issues because they are aware of the type of discipline problems, personal issues and teaching and learning difficulties affecting teachers and students. This particular leadership characteristic has also been emphasised by the previously mentioned definition by Moos & Huber (2007), in which they suggest that leadership should have "involvement in and knowledge about what goes on in the classroom" (p.581). In general, parents consider that this level of involvement is a very positive school

feature because leaders are able to empathise with teachers and students and help them in a more effective manner, as one parent from Rauli comments:

*“We think that he wants to be really involved in what is going on in the school. It is very encouraging to see the headteacher or any other member of the management team teaching. It is very different than in other schools where the leadership team would never teach.” (Parent, Rauli School)*

As was previously indicated, in Canelo School the specific leadership that has been considered effective by school stakeholders is that of the previous headteacher (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.3). At the time of this study, the new headteacher had been working in the school for only one year and his particular leadership style was still not well established within the school community. It seemed that a number of teachers tended to disagree with many of the policies that he was trying to promote in the school. This opposition seems to be a consequence of resistance to another type of leadership from a group of very long-serving and experienced teachers. The former headteacher, who was in the school for around 30 years, was highly respected by school staff and they feel that it is difficult to replace him. His leadership style was based on the idea of working towards academic excellence, thus the effort of the school was always focused on academic success, as indicated by the current headteacher:

*“This school maintained the spirit of commitment, tradition and prestige for more than 30 years with the previous headteacher. The community is conscious of this quality seal, good academic results and tradition.” (Headteacher, Canelo School)*

In this school, teachers were expected to prepare students to achieve good results in external examinations and even the results in the university admission test were very important for the school. The new leader does not agree with placing

excessive importance on this test because he does not consider university to be one of the priorities of a vocational school. He feels that preparation for university is in opposition with the vision and mission of the school which is essentially to prepare students to become successful administration professionals. These different criteria between teaching staff and the new headteacher have created some tensions in the school and teachers are worried about a potential decrease in their levels of academic effectiveness with these new policies. At present Canelo is facing a conflict between the school culture focused on achievement, created by the previous leader and shared by teachers, and the new model that the new headteacher is trying to instil. This idea of culture and shared experiences is well defined by Schein (2004, p.225): “culture is created by shared experience, but it is the leader who initiates this process by imposing his or her beliefs, values and assumptions at the outset”. For the new leader it will be a challenge to create a new culture in the school that emphasises a school mission targeting the vocational preparation of students. Unfortunately, teachers believe that a focus on the vocational orientation of the school threatens academic effectiveness, which is not necessarily true, as demonstrated by the other three atypical schools, especially by the corporation schools.

In summary, the atypical schools Araucaria and Rauli, both administered by the same corporation, demonstrate outstanding school leadership. The atypical school Canelo has been positively influenced by the previous school leadership. The atypical school Avellano is characterised by having positive leadership. Finally, it is important to point out that in both typical schools the perceptions of participants about school leadership are neutral (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.3).

### **Factor 3: High level of teachers' professional commitment**

It is well known that in the effective schools (as defined for the purposes of this project, see Chapter 3, section 3.2), teaching and learning processes seem to be significantly more effective than in other schools, as the SER literature has confirmed (Selden, 1990; Sammons, 1995; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). These processes are frequently associated with 'teachers' effectiveness'. According to Murnane (1981, p.33) "the primary resources that are consistently related to students' achievement are teachers and other students". Creemers (1994, p.86) arrived at a similar conclusion and suggested that "teacher behaviour in the classroom is positively related to student achievement". In his comprehensive model of educational effectiveness, Creemers (1994) emphasised the classroom level and teacher behaviour for educational effectiveness. In this particular study, I did not specifically address 'teachers' effectiveness' but 'school effectiveness as a whole'. Therefore, in this research 'teachers' effectiveness' is treated as a factor from the whole range of aspects associated with school success. In my case studies, I have analysed teaching and learning processes, teachers' professional competences and teachers' levels of commitment. Surprisingly, I did not find a significant difference between atypical schools and typical ones in terms of the quality of the teaching and learning processes taking place in the schools or the level of teacher competence. The factor that has emerged as a differentiating element between both types of schools is the level of professional commitment demonstrated by teachers.

In all the four atypical schools, teachers have a high level of professional commitment (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.4). This factor seems to have a significant impact on the effectiveness demonstrated by this group of schools, as this evidence suggests:

*“Many aspects are important to explain the effectiveness of this school, but teacher commitment is the main one.” (Teacher, Rauli School)*

In general, teachers’ professional commitment is demonstrated in many ways. For example, in all the atypical schools teachers are committed to providing good preparation for external examinations. In Canelo School this level of commitment seems to be particularly high, as the following comment of a student evidences:

*“Teachers are very committed and they want us to have good results. For example, it is not their responsibility to prepare us for the university admission test because this is a vocational school, but they do anyway.” (Student, Canelo School)*

Teachers prepare students for the university admission test, even though the headteacher does not approve of this practice because of the vocational orientation of the school. In a way, this attitude from teachers could be criticised because they are supposed to respect the school vision and mission and the policies that school leaders try to apply. Nevertheless, it can be argued that teachers are committed to preparing students to perform well in any examination that measures their knowledge. They care about students and their future and they are very conscious that students can have better opportunities (educational and economic, in the Chilean context) if they go to university, even if the objective of the school is to prepare students to follow a vocational specialisation.

Finally, in the majority of these atypical schools teachers demonstrate a strong disposition and willingness to get involved in professional development courses in order to update their knowledge and improve their teaching skills (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.4). In contrast, in both typical schools contextual conditions such as ‘teachers’ heavy workload’ and ‘lack of time’ affect teachers’ motivation levels. This aspect will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

#### **Factor 4: Positive school climate**

After the analysis of this group of schools, a factor that emerged from the data and which is common in all the atypical schools is the good organisational climate that characterises these institutions (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.1). It is important to mention that in the analysis of the climate of each school, I have focused on two main elements: the type of relationships between school stakeholders and the order or discipline of the institutions. There are other factors commonly referred to as part of the school climate or ‘school culture’. For example, the existence of a school mission shared by the school community and which influences the school environment and orientates the school actions to the achievement of that mission. In this study, this particular aspect of the ‘school culture’ was analysed as an element of the factor ‘focus on success.’ As previously discussed in this section, all the atypical schools were considered to have a significant ‘focus on success’, especially the corporation schools.

Regarding relationships, the sort of interactions between different stakeholders tend to be respectful and constructive, especially in the case of students and teachers who emphasised the positive relationship they have. For example,



students feel that teachers are not only interested in their learning but also in their development as individuals. This testimony of a student from Araucaria illustrates this general perception:

*“I think that teacher-student relationships are good here. I know people from other schools and they have told me that the relationship in their high schools is colder. Teachers just teach their students and do not interact any further with them. Here many teachers show interest in students; they help us in the organisation of activities that have nothing to do with the subjects they teach.” (Student, Araucaria School)*

It seems that students feel more motivated to pay attention and do homework when they realise that their teachers care about them, as this student from Canelo comments:

*“I think that having a more affectionate relationship with teachers is good because we see teachers with more respect, we see them as guides.” (Student, Canelo School)*

In the case of teachers, there is a general feeling in all the four schools about the quality relationship they have with students. This point was emphasised by a teacher in Avellano:

*“One of the strengths that we have in this school is the relationship we have with the majority of students. There is a lot of affection, a good climate.” (Teacher, Avellano School)*

Parents from these four schools also reported that they have a good relationship with teachers (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.1).

Another important aspect that characterises the climate in these schools is the good level of discipline they have in comparison with typical institutions (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.1). This aspect has been found to be even more important than

the quality of stakeholders' relationships, for the effective learning in these schools. Discipline and respect between people are essential elements in creating a quiet and harmonious climate of interactions in the classroom and facilitate the teaching and learning processes. In their study about improving schools, Maden & Hillman (1993) found that these types of schools had set clear disciplinary rules and they put effort into creating an orderly school environment. The importance of an 'orderly environment' for learning has been emphasised in many school effectiveness studies and reviews, including some very influential and classic research pieces (Edmonds, 1979; Taeuber, 1987; Scheerens, 1989; and Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). One of the most influential school effectiveness correlates list is the one by Edmonds, 1979 (see Chapter 3, table 3.7.1). This 'five factors' model has had many repercussions in the field of school effectiveness. Therefore, later studies also concentrated on this factor which was considered as a key element in effective schools. In relation to this point, Reynolds & Teddlie (2000, p.148) indicate:

“Some of the earliest ‘five factor’ theories on how to generate effective schools concentrated upon creating order as one of the key factors, since without order, discipline and social control at school level it would be very difficult for staff to attain high levels of student attention and engagement within the classroom.”

In all these schools, staff reported that the level of discipline is very good when compared with similar institutions, as the following evidence from one of the atypical schools suggests:

*“Discipline is good, students demonstrate good manners and respect. It is not like in other schools.” (Student, Rauli School)*

In addition, in the four atypical schools student responsibility to display

appropriate school social behaviour is higher than in typical schools. Some evidence to support this idea is the Araucaria self-discipline system, which was reported in the Araucaria School portrait presented in Chapter 5.

Finally, it is important to mention that the social vulnerability that characterises a significant part of these school populations does not seem to affect the social behaviour of students to a considerable degree as it does in typical institutions (see section 7.4). In these four schools discipline problems are minor and do not seem to affect the teaching and learning processes taking place within the school or the motivation of students and teachers. On the contrary, the good general climate of these organisations is an element that clearly contributes to these schools' greater success.

#### **Factor 5: High expectations of students**

The evidence demonstrates that in atypical schools staff have high expectations of students, even considering the difficult contextual conditions that a number of them have to face (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.5). This finding corroborates "one of the most consistent findings in the literature" (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000, p.148). In general, teachers and headteachers from these schools believe in students and encourage them to do their best, as the following comment suggests:

*"We are always telling them that they have the capabilities to be successful in whatever they choose." (Teacher, Araucaria)*

This level of expectations is demonstrated in teacher behaviour which tends to be more challenging with regard to student academic performance. The following testimony from a parent illustrates this point:

*“I think that teaching and teachers in this school are very good, very challenging. It is difficult for students to be here when they are in their first year because they have to adapt themselves to the level of academic expectations in this school.” (Parent, Canelo School)*

Students perceive these high expectations about themselves and appreciate the fact that teachers and other school staff believe in their abilities to succeed. This has a positive effect on their motivation which eventually impacts their academic results (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.5).

Students’ expectations of themselves are higher in two of the atypical schools (Araucaria, Canelo). In the other cases, including typical schools, the level of expectations is normal. Students from all the schools analysed in this study indicated that they want to continue higher education studies in the future, even though all these schools are vocational and students obtain a specialisation to work immediately after they finish school (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.5). One of the main reasons to explain these common aspirations is that a number of students, teachers and their families believe that a vocational specialisation is not enough to support a good quality of life in the future, considering the salaries that administrative assistants or technicians from vocational schools can aspire to, as a teacher from Canelo has pointed out:

*“Their salaries are going to be very low if they work in the specialisation courses they are doing. We have to show them other options, better possibilities.” (Teacher, Canelo School)*

Additionally, the level of expertise that students get in a two years course, which is combined with the traditional secondary academic curriculum (12 hours of general education and 26 hours of vocational education, OECD 2009) is not the same as the level they can get in a higher education institution. Therefore, many students prefer to finish school and continue studying the same specialisation course or a similar one in a vocational higher educational institution. Some students might also decide to go to university and do a completely different course. Nevertheless, in schools characterised by a certain degree of economic vulnerability, like the ones in this study, many students face a number of barriers to opting for higher education. These obstacles are generally associated with their socio-economic conditions. In fact, in the OECD (2009, p.13) report about vocational education in Chile, it was reported that “the majority of secondary VET<sup>64</sup> students come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (64.7% of VET students belong to the two lowest income quintiles, VET Commission, 2009)”. Unfortunately, higher education is expensive in Chile and even if scholarships or loans are available to cover the cost of studying, the majority of students cannot get these benefits (see Chapter 2, section 2.4). As indicated in the school portraits presented in Chapter 5, some of these schools have links with higher education institutions that offer scholarships for students who demonstrate good academic performance during their years of secondary education. However, these benefits are limited and only a low percentage of students can access them. The majority of students who do not have the economic resources to pay for higher education, and for whom it is not possible to get benefits to study, consider the specialisation courses provided by their schools as an opportunity. Through

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<sup>64</sup> VET stands for “Vocational Education and Training.”

these courses students can learn specific skills, have a job when they finish school and have a salary that may help them to pay for other studies, as emphasised by a teacher:

*“They know that here they get a technical-vocational diploma that opens doors to them. In the future, they can work in their specialisations and pay for higher education.” (Teacher, Avellano)*

Finally, it is important to point out that students’ high expectations of themselves are supported by high expectations from their parents in terms of their performance, especially in Araucaria, Canelo and Avellano (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.5). For example, in Avellano School the high expectations of parents are demonstrated by the high value they place on their children’s education. A high number of these families are from rural areas and many of the parents did not have the opportunity to complete their education. Therefore, they have greater expectations for their children (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.5). For instance, the headteacher emphasised the high number of attendees to parents meetings, even considering that many parents had to travel from the countryside to attend these meetings, as this comment indicates:

*“Parents’ attendance to parents’ evenings is really good in general, they are responsible.” (Headteacher, Avellano School)*

This level of parents’ commitment is impressive because in secondary schools with more urban student populations the percentage of attendance to parents’ meetings is frequently low. This level of parents’ support could be regarded as an indication of their high level of expectations, which has a positive impact on student motivation. In summary: in order to increase student motivation, it is important that students believe in themselves, but it is also very important that they know that others believe in them as well.

## ***7.2 What are the distinctive features in these schools that influence greater educational effectiveness?***

As discussed in the previous section, some main factors associated with effectiveness were found in atypical schools. In some of them, these factors had a greater presence than in others, but in the majority of them these common characteristics were important in achieving a better understanding of the effectiveness of these institutions.

In this particular section, I will attempt to answer the second research question of this study which aims to identify the distinctive or unique elements associated with effectiveness that characterise each school.

### **Distinctive features of Araucaria and Rauli Schools**

After the analysis of these two schools, it was possible to conclude that the distinctive element that influences the greater effectiveness of these institutions, differentiating them from other schools, was the type of administration. These two schools are administered by the same corporation; in fact, they belong to the same group of schools. Therefore, the administration strategies and policies used in both schools are very similar.

This particular corporation started the administration of schools in the 1980s, as a response to the educational policies that transferred the management of some technical-vocational schools to non-profit educational corporations that represent different sectors of the national industry. This policy resulted in a commitment to education among representative leaders of productive sectors, who engaged in

constructive dialogue and cooperation with educators in the definition of the vocational education curriculum reforms (Cox, 2007).

According to the OECD (2009) report on vocational education in Chile, 12% of vocational schools in Chile were administered by industrial corporations by 2009. This particular corporation administers seven schools in Chile and its objective is to prepare quality technical or administrative staff to work in the construction industry. This corporation has a social commitment to disadvantaged communities, so many of its schools are located in socially deprived areas and in consequence their student populations are characterised by having a high number of students from low-income families (see Chapter 5, portraits of Araucaria and Rauli schools). As was previously mentioned, the majority of students enrolling in vocational education in Chile come from the lowest income quintiles.

There is no evidence in the context of Chile to demonstrate that schools managed by corporations are more effective than other schools under other types of administration. However, in these particular cases, these two schools are administered by the same corporation and they are both considerably more effective in terms of students' academic outcomes than schools in similar contextual conditions. One should not immediately attribute the academic success of these schools to the type of administration they have, but after having hypothesised and analysed the data from these two schools, I suggest that this particular corporation is using effective strategies to manage its schools, which seem to have a positive effect on the effectiveness of these institutions. Factors such as 'planning for success', 'teacher evaluation', 'use of incentives', 'high



importance given to teacher professional development', 'strong focus on external assessment' (see section 7.1) and 'follow-up system' have demonstrated a close association with the effectiveness of these two schools.

The main management strategy and the one which generates all the others is the corporation's strategic planning. The plan has seven main strategic goals. Some of the aspects addressed by these main objectives are: the encouragement of social, ethical and work values; high importance of SIMCE results; quality technical education oriented to the construction industry; quality teaching and learning in classrooms; teachers' professional development; school infrastructure; improvement of employment rates for leavers; and vocational higher education opportunities for leavers. It is important to indicate that the results of this strategic plan are carefully evaluated.

Therefore, a good strategic plan defining the main goals of the school and the steps that are necessary in order to succeed, as well as, an accountability system to evaluate the achievement of this plan is one of the ingredients for the success of these schools. In addition to this, in these two schools the different school members are well aware of their individual responsibilities in relation to this plan.

In conclusion, the fact that these schools are administered by this corporation differentiates them from similar schools. In fact, their working systems are different from those of the other atypical schools and significantly different from the typical schools. After the analysis and reflection of some of the management strategies and policies used by this educational corporation, it is possible to realise

that the academic effectiveness of these two institutions is considerably improved by these distinctive factors.

### **Distinctive features of Canelo School**

Canelo School is characterised by many positive practices that have already been discussed in the previous section, in which the main factors of effectiveness found in this group of atypical schools were addressed. In the case of Canelo, what is especially distinctive about this school is the significant influence of the ‘particular tradition of success’ and the ‘high prestige’ of the school’s academic effectiveness.

Canelo School has a long history as a school (see section 7.3) and a tradition of good academic results; in fact, it is the school from my sample with the best results in SIMCE. It also has good results in the university admission test PSU. In fact, this school has one of the highest positions in external examinations results in national rankings among vocational schools. Its position is also good when compared with institutions that are not vocational and even with institutions whose student populations have more privileged socio-economic backgrounds. The high standards of quality that this school demonstrates and its extended history in the Chilean educational scene have given Canelo “prestige and tradition”. The community is aware of this high prestige, hence families who want their children to study in this school know that the expectations of students are very high and their pupils will have to put in a lot of effort to fulfil those expectations. Frequently, students and their families’ expectations are also high

and that is one of the main reasons that can explain their interest in this school. In addition, the prestige and tradition that this school holds is a motivation for school members to do well. Teachers are very conscious of the fact that they play an important role in upholding this tradition of academic excellence, so they make considerable professional effort to maintain the standards of academic effectiveness. In general, teachers are very committed to their students and to the school (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.4). Furthermore, students also demonstrate motivation to perform well academically and meet the expected standards.

In conclusion, the school community, especially teachers and students, feel proud of being part of this prestigious and traditional school characterised by good levels of student attainment. They feel part of this particular school culture which has been traditionally focused on success and they are committed and motivated to contribute to preserving the quality standards that this school has demonstrated for decades. Therefore, Canelo's tradition of success and prestige has a positive influence on the commitment and motivation of school stakeholders and consequently on the effectiveness of the school.

### **Distinctive features of Avellano School**

A particularly distinctive feature of this school, when compared to other atypical schools, is the shared effort in the achievement of the school goals. This element could be considered an aspect of the particular culture of this school. There is a 'mission and vision' shared by staff which focuses on learning. This is particularly demonstrated in the 'collaborative work' of teachers, especially in the preparation of students for external assessment. Hopkins et al. (1994) emphasised

the importance of the cooperation between colleagues, positive communication and widely agreed upon goals. In school effectiveness literature, factors such as ‘collaborative planning’ and ‘shared goals’ have been associated with effective schools (Oakes, 1987; Scheerens, 1989; Sammons et al., 1995; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). These findings can be corroborated with those which have emerged from this study. In Avellano School teachers work in teams, not only teachers from the subjects measured by external examinations, but all the teachers. There is a collective effort of the whole teaching staff to work on the preparation of external assessment, especially SIMCE. For instance, teachers of different subjects prepare students in reading comprehension; it is not necessarily the Spanish teacher who has to do this, the History, Philosophy or Biology teacher can prepare students in this aspect as well, as the following evidence indicates:

*“In general all the teachers collaborate to prepare students for SIMCE. For example, in Spanish, teachers from different areas help the children to use better the language in order to express themselves better and improve their writing and orthography.”*  
(Teacher, Avellano School)

Besides, when students take practice papers teachers from different subjects also collaborate in taking care of the students during the time they take to do the papers. In general, in this school there is a collaborative effort in achieving good academic results (see Chapter 5, section 5.16).

The ‘collaborative work’ between staff is also strong between teachers from the same department in the preparation of material for external assessment practice and also for the normal lessons of each subject. According to staff, teacher commitment is what makes the difference in terms of the greater effectiveness of

this school and this commitment is clearly demonstrated in the collective effort they make, as pointed out in this testimony:

*“One of the reasons for the greater effectiveness is the commitment of teachers. For example, in terms of SIMCE preparation, we all participate and collaborate. Each subject department elaborates questions and we apply preparation examination papers.”*  
(Teacher, Avellano School)

An effective schools study which has highlighted ‘the coordination of effort to improve performance’ is the work of Henchey (2001). It seems that in Avellano School, teachers have understood commitment not only as a personal contribution to the improvement of the school, but also as a collective and shared effort whose objective is the achievement of good academic results. They know that the impact of collaborative work is stronger than any individual effort, so they all row in the same direction.

### ***7.3 How does school history and context influence educational effectiveness?***

In the process of analysis of the four atypical schools, I identified historical and contextual elements that influence the greater effectiveness of this group of schools. For three of the four schools, there is some evidence that has allowed me to link the success of the schools with their specific histories as educational institutions. In relation to the impact of the context, in the four cases, I was able to find some common contextual elements influencing the greater academic effectiveness of these schools.

## **How history has influenced effectiveness**

Historically, Araucaria, Canelo and Rauli schools have represented an attractive educational opportunity for the community they serve. As vocational schools, these institutions were created with the main objective of providing vocational education for students to work in certain productive sectors. As was indicated in a previous section, during the 1980s, under educational policies that decentralised and privatised education in Chile (see Chapter 2, section 2.5) the administration of some vocational schools was transferred to educational corporations that represented the interests of certain industrial sectors (see section 7.2). Araucaria and Rauli, which were founded in 1971 and 1965 respectively, were some of the schools whose administration was assumed by an educational corporation, the first in 1984 and the second in 1987. The new administration of these schools started to positively impact the working systems of these schools with good management strategies (see sections 7.1 on ‘strong focus on success’ and 7.2 on ‘distinctive features of Araucaria and Rauli’). Under the administration of this corporation, the public funding provided by the government seemed to be optimised and increased thanks to additional grants and funding that the corporation secured. In this way, they could improve the infrastructure and conditions for students and school staff. The fact that a corporation assumed the administration of these schools and implemented efficient practices that improved the image and, gradually, the prestige of these institutions attracted the attention of the community. The working systems of these institutions were increasingly focusing on academic success; hence the expectations of students’ performance were higher. This fact motivated the interest of a student community characterised by a high level of expectations and motivation within the specific communities in

which these schools were located. This highly motivated student intake, in conjunction with other effectiveness factors that have been discussed in a previous section (see section 7.1), started to have a positive impact on the effectiveness of these schools.

Canelo School was founded in 1973 as a day-shift technical-vocational school. Previously, other schools occupied the huge building, including a primary school for girls on one side of the building and an evening-shift vocational school on the other side. The historical school building has a very privileged location, which is very central and near to important city landmarks. It had been a palace owned by a rich family in the past who did not have heirs, thus the palace was left to the state administration which used the building for schools. Once the primary school for girls was moved from the building to another location, the site was used by the Ministry of Education as office space. Eventually, the Ministry offices were also moved to another place, leaving that section of the building empty. A teacher who used to work in the evening-shift vocational school on the other side of the building realised that the building was empty and submitted a project to the Ministry of Education to create another day-shift vocational school there. He and other teachers founded the school and, due to a lack of funding to implement the school, they had to work collaboratively in the construction of tables and chairs to receive the first students of Canelo School. Eventually, the teacher who had the initial idea of creating this school was sent to the north of Chile by the Ministry of Education to collaborate in the creation of other schools. Therefore, he left one of his collaborators, who was also a teacher from the evening-shift vocational school, as the headteacher. As a co-founder of Canelo, this leader had a special

commitment to the school, remaining in position for more than 30 years. From the beginning his leadership style was focused on academic achievement and it was characterised by a consistency and sustaining success that has remained over time. This leader succeeded in creating a school culture shared by other school members and which still influences the working system of the school (see section 7.1 on effective leadership practices).

### **How context influences effectiveness**

Contextual characteristics such as high levels of social vulnerability in the specific community in which a particular school is located have normally been associated with poor levels of school effectiveness (Lupton, 2003). Nevertheless, the impact of this contextual characteristic has not been demonstrated to be a factor impeding the success of my atypical schools. Nevertheless, in the case of my typical schools, this aspect has been demonstrated to have significant importance as one of the factors inhibiting the success of these two schools (see section 7.4).

A common finding from all the atypical schools is that the adverse contextual conditions that their student populations face makes students consider these vocational schools to be a good educational opportunity. Actually, as indicated in section 7.1 on ‘high expectation of students’, vocational schools are frequently an option for students from disadvantaged social backgrounds. For example, in the case of Avellano, a significant number of students have decided to come from rural areas to study in this school because they want to get a vocational diploma. Therefore, in a high number of cases, students’ main motivation to study in these



schools responds to the fact that these institutions provide a specialisation. In this way, after finishing school, they can immediately work, or if they want to continue studying, they can have the opportunity to work and pay for part-time higher education, as suggested in the following evidence:

*“Most of the kids here think that the school is good and they also can get a course here. Many students doing specialisation courses don’t want to continue always working on that. They see the course as something useful to work, but they also want to study something else in the future, so they need to have a job to pay for their studies. This school has state funding which means that not all the students have the money to continue studying.” (Student, Canelo School)*

Unfortunately, in Chile higher education courses are not cheap and only the highest achieving students get scholarships (see Chapter 2, section 2.4). Therefore, schools that offer the possibility of a technical diploma and work immediately after having finished secondary education are given a high value. This is especially true in the case of socially disadvantaged communities. In the particular case of these schools, this vocational opportunity seems to have a positive effect in attracting highly motivated students. In the models of school effectiveness proposed by Creemers (1994) and Creemers & Kyriakides (2008), factors such as the social vulnerability of students and their level of motivation have been described as “student level factors”. In this particular thesis, I am including student factors as part of the broader contextual factors because they are not determined by the school systems, but come from outside.

In addition to this, three of these schools have links with higher education institutions which provide scholarships for outstanding students which is another factor that increases student motivation, as indicated in the following comment:

*“Sometimes money is a problem in our homes and it is an additional motivation that this school has links with higher education institutions that give scholarships to good students. If we make an effort, we can continue studying a course in a private college or technical university when we finish high school.”*  
(Student, Araucaria School)

The possibility of winning a scholarship to undertake higher education studies is taken seriously by many students who make a serious effort to achieve good academic results in order to take advantage of these benefits. In a way, this possibility could be regarded as a strategy used by schools to motivate students and increase their level of attainment. However, the good levels of student motivation are not only a consequence of the links that these schools have with institutions that offer scholarships or of the educational opportunity to follow a specialisation provided by these institutions. The higher level of prestige that these four institutions have is also very important for the level of student motivation and expectations, as suggested by a parent:

*“This school is the best in the area, students feel good here because it has more prestige.”* (Parent, Araucaria School)

Positive results in external assessment have given these schools a good reputation in their communities, attracting a high quality school intake. These students are highly motivated to study in one of the most prestigious schools in their communities and this high degree of motivation is demonstrated in their school performance, which contributes to the level of effectiveness of these institutions.

Finally, another important contextual element that has a very significant impact on the greater effectiveness of two of these schools, and which has been analysed and mentioned in previous sections, is the fact that Araucaria and Rauli are

administered by a corporation. The fact that these schools have external intervention from this corporation, which administers the schools in an indirect way through the direct administration of the schools' leaders, can be considered to be a positive external influence or contextual factor. These schools are constantly monitored, supported and receive particular pressures that other schools do not face. External pressures have sometimes been found to be negative for certain schools (especially the pressure from inspections bodies), but in other cases external pressures and support have been considered a catalyst for change (Fullan, 1991), which seems to be the case in these two institutions. In general, the corporation management of these schools has proved to be very influential for the effectiveness of both institutions because the policies implemented by this particular corporation are focused on success and seem to be crucial for the greater effectiveness of these schools (see sections 7.1 on 'strong focus on success' and section 7.2 on 'distinctive features of Araucaria and Rauli School').

#### ***7.4 What are the elements that differentiate these particular institutions from others serving similar student populations?***

In this research, I have included a secondary sample of two schools that demonstrate a lower level of academic effectiveness than the four schools considered in my main sample (see Chapter 4, section 4.5). My intention was to make a comparison between more effective schools (atypical) and less effective ones (typical). From the cross-case analysis (see Chapter 6), it was possible to identify some main factors that differentiate these schools and that can explain the variation in student attainment. These main factors are: school climate, school

practices focused on academic success, school leadership, teachers' professional commitment, and expectations of students' success. In addition to these five factors, I included two additional aspects, which are 'adverse contextual conditions' and 'student motivation'. Adverse contextual conditions also affect atypical schools but they do not have such a negative impact on their effectiveness, as they do in the case of typical schools. In terms of student motivation, there was not enough evidence to link the greater effectiveness of the atypical schools with the level of student motivation. Nevertheless, in the case of typical schools, it emerged from the case studies that the levels of motivation and responsibility of students were particularly low, which negatively influence the effectiveness of these schools. The research evidence has not indicated that these two additional aspects have a significant influence on the effectiveness of atypical schools, but it has emphasised their negative impact on the effectiveness of typical schools. Therefore, it can be argued that these two aspects also differentiate atypical schools from typical ones.

### **School climate**

It has been extensively confirmed by school effectiveness literature that effective schools are often characterised by having a positive school climate (Edmonds, 1979; Taeuber, 1987; Scheerens, 1989; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; and Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). In the case of the present study, the school climate in atypical schools has been considered more positive than in typical schools, especially in terms of discipline. This is an important difference between both types of institutions (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.1). Unfortunately, the higher level of

vulnerability of typical schools seems to have more repercussions on students' behaviour affecting discipline (see section 7.4 on 'adverse contextual conditions'). Muijs et al., (2004, p.156) argued that "In particular in disadvantaged areas, it is crucial to have effective discipline in place". From the following testimony it is possible to infer that for students it is important to have discipline rules and teachers who adopt an authority role:

*"I think that the discipline of the school should be improved. Sometimes teachers do not impose enough authority; they show themselves as relaxed and cool people, so students tend to have relaxed behaviour."* (Student, Lenga School)

In this typical school, students and other school members are conscious that an appropriate level of discipline and respect is necessary to achieve effective student learning, especially inside the classroom. Therefore, it is very important that typical schools work on strategies to improve discipline as a way of increasing their effectiveness.

In addition to the differences in discipline levels between atypical and typical institutions, there are also some problems in terms of relationships, which affect the general climate of the schools. For example, in Quillay School there are some tensions between teachers and also problems in the communication between teachers and school leaders, as this comment demonstrates:

*"I think that the organisational climate can be difficult sometimes. There are some communication problems. More transparency and effective communication between teachers and the leadership team is necessary."* (Teacher, Quillay School)

In a study by Joyce et al., (1999), it was found that a more positive school culture can benefit from ‘open communication’ and ‘supportive leadership’. In Quillay the leadership is not perceived as being especially supportive because the ‘communication problems’ with the headteacher affect the level of feedback he gives to staff.

In Lenga School, some tensions in the relationship between school leaders and teachers characterised relationships in the school for years. Previous leaders were considered very authoritarian by teachers and students. Only recently has a new person assumed the role of headteacher in the school but at the time of this study, she had been in the position for only 2 months. School stakeholders are expecting a change with this new leadership because the previous headteachers were characterised by having an autocratic style that created a difficult climate of interaction in the school. According to the new headteacher, the feeling of tension that a very long period of authoritarian leadership left in the school is evident. Teachers were used to having a very distant relationship with the leaders and she realises this from the formal way in which teachers address her, as the following evidence shows:

*“I think that the school climate is very structured or formal sometimes. We need less tension in our relationships here. For example, teachers address to me in a very formal way.”*  
(Headteacher, Lenga School)

In summary: the lower levels of discipline that typical schools demonstrate and a climate of interactions characterised by some tensions between the schools’ stakeholders affect the general climate of both typical schools. In this particular

research, it is evident from the data that the lower levels of discipline have a significant impact on the academic success of both schools.

### **School practices focused on success**

It has emerged from the data that atypical schools are characterised by having a greater focus on success than typical institutions (see section 7.1 on ‘strong focus on success’ and Chapter 6, table 6.2.2). This particular effectiveness factor is especially significant in the case of the two corporation schools Araucaria and Rauli. Some of the factors that demonstrate a lower focus on success in typical institutions are, for example: less concentration on academic success and external assessment, low optimisation of learning time, lack of lesson planning, extra academic support not taken seriously and less presence of links with higher education institutions that provide scholarships for students.

In relation to the ‘less concentration on academic success and external assessment’, both typical schools have given evidence about this factor. For example, in Lenga School, academic results are not considered to be very important by some teachers in this school, who think that students’ personal development is more important. Levin (2006, p.405), referring to the findings of the study by Riffel & Levin (1986) indicates “many educators in high-need communities give greater focus to the pastoral element of their work, which can cause them to de-emphasise academic achievement”. This seems to be happening in Lenga where many teachers are satisfied with the effectiveness of the school in terms of pastoral aspects, thus they adopt a conformist attitude in relation to

students' achievement levels. In general, teachers do not have high expectations of students' academic performance and their work does not have a strong focus on academic results. In Quillay School, in contrast to the academic emphasis that has been shown to be a core correlate of effective schools (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000), a considerable number of teachers do not perceive academic performance as one of the most important goals of the schools. They think that the school should not be overwhelmingly focused on external examinations, such as SIMCE. In relation to the latter point, it is true that educational outcomes include more aspects than academic results, but it is also true and very important for a school to know how much their students are learning and how effective the teaching strategies are. For that reason, I argue that internal and external student learning monitoring processes are always necessary.

Concerning the factor 'low optimisation of learning time', in both typical schools a lot of time that should be used in teaching and learning activities is used in different ways. For example, in Quillay School teachers and students tend to get very involved in demonstrations and strikes that are very common in the Chilean context (see Chapter 2, section 2.5), as suggested in this comment:

*"There were many students' strikes last year and many hours of classes were not done." (Headteacher)*

In addition to this, in Quillay School, some contextual factors such as high levels of teachers' absenteeism, mainly produced by stress due to teachers' heavy workload, also affect the optimisation of learning time. Municipalities do not send a cover teacher immediately, so students lose many learning hours, which has a negative impact on student learning and consequently on the effectiveness of the



school. In Lenga School time is not sufficiently maximised due to the high number of students who arrive late every morning. The headteacher emphasised this aspect as a very serious problem in the school. She indicated that the first lessons of the morning never start on time, but at least 20 minutes late, reducing considerably the learning time. All these factors demonstrate that on many occasions effective learning time is affected by external emerging factors that cannot always be predicted. Lupton (2005) reported that the ‘unpredictability of the working environment’ is associated with poor educational quality.

In relation to the factor ‘lack of lesson planning’, the situation is not particularly negative in Lenga School but it is less efficient in Quillay School, where participants emphasised that planning is not always done. The following testimony emphasises this view:

*“Depends on the teacher, I worked in the library for one year and I noticed that some teachers book their material in advance. Other teachers arrive in the morning to the library, just before their classes, and try to quickly decide what they are going to do.”*  
(Parent)

Effective planning is an element frequently found in effective schools (Henchey, 2001). In the classic study by Rutter et al. (1979), the importance of preparing lessons in advance was stressed. Therefore, special attention should be given to this aspect in schools that aim to increase their levels of student attainment.

Regarding ‘extra academic support’, both schools provide opportunities for students to receive additional help when they have difficulties in certain subjects. Unfortunately, the evidence demonstrated that in these schools these initiatives

are not always considered and taken seriously by students. In both typical schools, it was reported that students sign up to go to additional academic support lessons which they do not attend, demonstrating a lack of interest and responsibility (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.2).

Finally, I considered it important to mention the fact that for both typical schools, there is no evidence of agreements with higher education institutions that provide scholarships for students. In contrast, it seems to be a tendency of the atypical schools (3 out of 4) to have these types of links. In some way, the fact that educational institutions try to find opportunities and issue agreements with higher education institutions indicates a greater concern about the future of students and a high level of expectations of them. Unfortunately, there is not a significant concern or high aspirations about the future of students in typical institutions.

### **School leadership**

The particular leadership styles of Quillay and Lenga are not considered negative, but not positive either (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.3) and atypical schools currently have, or had in the past (in the case of Canelo), headteachers who influence their schools in a positive way, contributing to the greater effectiveness of the institutions. Therefore, the evidence indicates that the leadership is perceived as being more positive in atypical institutions. In fact, leadership is considered as more encouraging, proactive and motivational in atypical schools.

In Quillay School, the leadership is considered positive by a number of teachers. However, other teachers think that there are some problems of communication between the headteacher and the teaching staff. For example, they emphasised that there is a lack of supervision and feedback on the part of the headteacher, in relation to the achievement of teachers' duties. Teachers would prefer to receive more feedback about the way they are doing their job. They think that the autonomy they are given is good to a certain extent, but they believe that some members of the teaching staff need more supervision, as this piece of evidence suggests:

*"The leadership should be more demanding, sometimes leaders think that the teachers are going to do what they are supposed to do, but it is not always like that, so sometimes more supervision is needed" (Teacher, Quillay School).*

To summarise: some teachers consider that the leadership is weak and they believe that this aspect would be much improved if the communication was clear and the rules were less flexible. Classic school effectiveness literature defined effective leadership styles as being far from 'weak', but firm, purposeful and monitoring (Edmonds, 1979; Mortimore et al., 1998; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; Sammons et al., 1997). More recent literature has described good leaders as having transformational and instructional approaches, which are also in opposition to a weak and uncommunicative approach.

In Lenga School the perceptions about the current leadership are not sufficiently informed by evidence because at the time I conducted the fieldwork, the headteacher had been in the position for a very short time. Nevertheless, the evidence demonstrated that the previous leadership styles have negatively

influenced the way in which the leadership is perceived in this school. In the past the leadership was autocratic and distant which affected considerably the climate of interactions in the school. The following evidence emphasises these points:

*“As far as I know, there was a very authoritarian system here. The previous headteacher was more dedicated to lead and make administrative decisions rather than to deal with situations closely related to teachers or students, as for example, teaching and learning processes.”(Headteacher)*

According to Muij et al., (2004), “there has been a move towards a realisation that the most effective means for true improvement lies in a more distributed and democratic form of leadership”. Unfortunately, in this school the tradition of leadership has been more autocratic than democratic. After that period, there were numerous changes over a short extent of time. Therefore, in recent years the leadership has not been stable. Now, however, the new leader seems to be a very approachable and considerate person, but a couple of months in the position were not enough to impact the leadership of the school and influence more optimistic perceptions about it from school members. It is expected that in the future, this school will have a more positive experience in terms of its leadership.

### **Teachers’ professional commitment**

The data from the schools analysed demonstrate that in typical schools teachers tend to have a lower level of professional commitment than in atypical institutions (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.4). This element is particularly negative for students’ outcomes, since learning occurs at the ‘classroom level’ and it is mediated by the teacher. Therefore teacher effectiveness is one of the most important elements for

school effectiveness (Creemers, 1994). Some contextual conditions such as ‘teachers’ workload’, ‘lack of time’ and ‘high number of students in the classrooms’, discussed later in this chapter (see section 7.4 on ‘adverse contextual conditions’), seem to have an impact on teachers’ disposition and commitment. For example, as discussed in a previous section, in the case of Quillay, due to the heavy workload that teachers have, there is a significant percentage of teacher absenteeism caused by stress and depression. This particularly affects students’ learning because cover teachers are not sent to the school immediately, as the following testimony describes:

*“Last year, there were many complaints about the extended medical leave of some teachers. If a teacher doesn’t come, students miss classes because the municipality doesn’t send a substitute teacher soon.” (Parent, Quillay School)*

Harber & Davies (1998) highlighted teachers’ absenteeism and lateness as factors affecting the effectiveness of educational systems in developing countries. Unfortunately, these problems are usually produced by contextual factors associated with teachers’ inadequate working conditions. In the specific context of Chile, excessive workload seems to be one of the main causes, but in other developing countries, where conditions are worse, teachers’ absenteeism or lateness could even be related to problems such as long travelling distances and lack of means of transportation to arrive to schools.

In addition to the problem of teacher absenteeism, another problem that reveals a low teacher commitment in Quillay is the low level of professional vocation demonstrated by some teachers. According to other school stakeholders, some of

them only adopt a position of knowledge transmitters and do not relate to students in a broader sense.

Similarly, in Lenga School, some school stakeholders think that teachers do not always demonstrate a strong professional vocation as this evidence shows:

*“Sometimes teachers are not very worried about all the students, they do their classes and they do not care so much if all the 40 or 45 students understood. They say that they can’t dedicate extra time to particular content because they have a programme to follow and they don’t want to be behind schedule. I don’t mean that all the teachers are like that here, just some.” (Parent, Lenga School)*

It seems that sometimes they are only concerned about teaching, but not about students’ learning and understanding. Probably some of the contextual factors previously mentioned can explain, at least in part, the low motivation of some teachers, which has a negative impact on their vocation. Adverse contextual factors will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

### **Expectations of students’ success**

In both typical schools, school stakeholders tend to have lower expectations of students’ success than in atypical schools (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.5). One teacher from Quillay School emphasised that this problem is not only evident in the school but in the whole community:

*“In this town people don’t have expectations, they don’t have life projects and they live in the present without having projects for the future. This is a generalised problem in this town.” (Teacher, Quillay School)*

In Quillay School the expectations of students, parents and teachers are affected by contextual conditions, especially by the high vulnerability level that characterises the student intake and the community in which the school is located. School stakeholders consider that in this social context it is not realistic to have highly ambitious academic expectations of students. For example, there are some barriers to higher expectations of students' future careers. Students who want to continue in higher education need to move to another city and pay full or reduced fees in higher education, which is very difficult for the majority of the population in this town. Therefore, for them it is more realistic to imagine their futures as workers in the local industries (fishing or mining), as the following testimony suggests:

*“Students don’t see the point in making a lot of effort at school because they think that they can work as miners in the future and make good money. Anyway, not all of them think like that.”  
(Teacher, Quillay School)*

The situation of low expectations is similar in Lenga School, where a number of teachers have a pessimistic view about students' chances of success because of the social vulnerability they face. This point was well described in this comment:

*“Sometimes, as teachers, we also have low expectations because we think... well this is a difficult context, it is difficult to change the adversity that our students face, so why should I make a lot of effort? I think that it is imperative to change this pessimistic view.”(Headteacher, Lenga School)*

Unfortunately, these low expectations seem to influence student motivation. Students feel that even if they put in extra effort, their results will continue to be

the same. Moreover, students believe that teachers are not challenging them enough because they do not trust in their ability to succeed.

In addition to this, parents' expectations are also low which makes the situation worse, affecting students' self-esteem and their expectations of success, as suggested in this comment:

*“The expectations of parents are low; they only want the students to finish their specialisation courses in school and that is enough for them. Since parents' expectations are low, students don't have a lot of aspirations, so they don't make a lot of effort, they just try to get the marks they need to pass. Anyway, I don't want to generalise because there are many exceptions and many students study or work or both things when they finish school.” (Teacher, Lenga School)*

To summarise: the lower level of expectations of teachers, parents and students that characterise these two typical schools differentiate these institutions from the group of atypical ones, where expectations of stakeholders are more positive. It has been extensively documented by school effectiveness literature that schools that have high expectations of students tend to be more effective (Edmonds, 1979; Scheerens, 1989; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Sammons et al., 1995; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000; Henschey, 2001). In contrast, having poor expectations of students has repercussions for students' academic performance and consequently the school's success.

### **Student motivation**

Student motivation is not an aspect that has emerged as a school effectiveness factor in this research. In fact, it can be considered as an external element that



impacts on school processes. Creemers (1994) and Creemers & Kyriakides (2008) have considered the importance of this element for educational effectiveness and they have included it in their models at the 'student level context' (see Chapter 3, section 3.6). In both typical institutions, the level of student responsibility and motivation can be considered low. For example, in Quillay School members agree that students are not responsible enough to do their homework or attend extra academic support lessons. In relation to this point, Sammons et al., (1995) concluded that in effective schools students have 'rights, but also responsibilities'. In general, in this school a high number of students do not make enough effort to achieve better results, even when extra support is offered by the school, in the form of additional lessons. Lack of parental involvement and supervision contributes to decreasing the level of responsibility to do homework. In fact, a significant number of parents in this school do not demonstrate support or interest in school matters, which has evident repercussions on students' performance. In addition to this, the contextual social problems that a high number of students experience affect their personal motivation and responsibility.

In Lenga School the lack of motivation demonstrated by students is considered a generalised problem and teachers have to be constantly fighting against it. In this school students' motivation is also affected by contextual factors, such as high levels of social vulnerability in areas where students live and family disruption problems. Like Quillay, the level of support and involvement demonstrated by many parents is not positive. In this particular research the level of parents' involvement in atypical schools was not considered particularly positive, as has been described in some effectiveness studies (Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Sammons et al., 1995; Cotton, 1995). However, it was not highlighted as a negative aspect

either. In the case of both typical schools this aspect was perceived in a less positive way by participants, mainly due to social contextual problems. In addition to adverse contextual factors, this school faces internal problems, such as constant replacement of school staff. Muijs et al., (2004) have argued that ‘high staff turnover’ is a problem identified in schools characterised by socio-economic deprivation. This factor is negative in terms of student motivation and progression in the specific subject, as the following comment by a student suggests:

*“It is all about the motivation you have. I used to like English a lot in primary school, but my motivation decreased when I arrived here and I saw that teachers were always being replaced. There was not a continuity, nor sequence of content, so the English class ended up becoming a sort of break for us. We had a good teacher with good ideas and initiatives, but he left. (Student, Lenga School)”*

From this testimony, it is possible to infer that sometimes students respond to a subject in a negative way because they are not given what they expect nor are they taken seriously. They expect to learn and progress having the same teacher for at least one year.

### **Adverse contextual conditions**

Both atypical and typical schools face difficult contextual conditions, especially in terms of the social vulnerability that characterise a high percentage of the student populations of these schools. Nevertheless, typical schools seem to be more affected by contextual factors, which have a significant impact on students’ motivation and expectations and on the teachers’ and parents’ expectations of pupils’ performance (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.5). One of the reasons that can explain this is the fact that both typical schools demonstrate a higher level of

social vulnerability than the other four schools. For example, Quillay School is affected by a strong contextual vulnerability, as indicated by the headteacher:

*“The level of students’ vulnerability here is really high. Last year, it was 81.9%. Students come from very deprived socio-economic contexts.”*  
(Headteacher, Quillay School)

Research conducted by Lupton (2003) and Harris et al., (2006) has found substantial evidence about the negative effect of social disadvantage and poverty on students’ outcomes and aspirations. Quillay School is located in a very deprived community which is very isolated and far from cities where students would have the opportunity to access higher education. In this community, people do not place a high value on education, it is more important for them to have material things, as indicated by a teacher:

*“In this town you see people that do not know how to read but they have a huge car. We think that in this town people prefer to have things rather than to be someone in life. Students see that many people do not have a lot of education but they have managed to make money.”* (Teacher, Quillay School)

The expectations of students and their families are focused on working-life rather than on continuing with their studies in the future. A high percentage of students know that after school they will become fishermen or they will work in the mining industry which are the main industries of this town. Therefore, they do not place a lot of importance on their school performance.

Additionally, there is also a high level of teenage pregnancy in this town. According to teachers, one of the reasons that can explain the high number of pregnant adolescents is the fact that many students experience difficult family

problems, which make them look for affection and security, as this comment suggests:

*“In this town there is a high vulnerability level and lots of cases of teenage pregnancy. Kids want to satisfy their need for affection by having a partner.” (Teacher, Quillay School)*

Unfortunately, the social contextual conditions that characterise this town affect the aspirations and motivation of students and, in consequence, the effectiveness of the school.

The other typical school is also considerably affected by a high level of social vulnerability that is mainly associated with the type of families that students come from. In Lenga, a significant percentage of students have broken families or face very difficult family problems, which affect their social behaviour, responsibility and motivation. In addition, the expectations of the students and their families are not high (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.5). The following evidence illustrates well the perceptions of teachers about the previous points:

*“They have a lot of emotional problems and they bring these problems from their homes. In general, we have families with a lot of problems here. The expectations of parents are low, they only want the students to finish their specialisation courses in the school and that is enough for them. Since parents’ expectations are low, students don’t have a lot of aspirations, so they don’t put in a lot of effort, they just try to get the marks they need to pass. Anyway, I don’t want to generalise because there are many exceptions and many students study or work or both things when they finish school.” (Teacher, Lenga school)*

In summary, both typical schools are characterised by a higher level of social vulnerability and a weaker capacity to overcome adverse conditions. This fact has clear implication on the value-added effect of their educational processes. On the

contrary, atypical schools, that are also characterised by vulnerable student intakes, demonstrate more resilience to the adverse contextual conditions, probably because these schools have other combinations of factors that increase the level of motivation of students, such as higher commitment of teachers, better climate of relationships in the school, appropriate level of discipline that facilitate teaching and learning, educational processes focused on success, higher expectations of students success and better aspirations for their future (see Chapter 6, analytical tables). From these particular factors, one of the most distinctive one is the greater focus on success that characterised atypical schools. This aspect has been influenced by contextual and historical elements that have shaped school practices, in order to effectively satisfy the expectations of the communities in which these schools are inserted. These communities regard these schools as prestigious institutions that provide a good educational opportunity.

In addition to the social vulnerability factor affecting the effectiveness of typical schools, there are other contextual elements causing problems in these types of institutions that do not necessarily depend on the internal school disposition, but on macro administrative levels, such as local municipalities or the Ministry of Education. These problems are mainly associated with the insufficient financial and human resources available for schools. In the models of school effectiveness proposed by Creemers (1994) and Creemers & Kyriakides (2008), the macro administrative levels are included within the 'context level' variables influencing educational effectiveness. However, these variables have more to do with educational policies, curriculum, supervision, support system, etc., than with the allocation of resources to fulfil the schools' needs. This can probably be explained

by the difference in the contextual setting of this research which has been conducted in a Latin American country. The work by Creemers and Kyriakides has been informed mainly by findings from developed countries, where the lack of resources given to schools is not a matter of concern. In the Latin American context, we can find many problems affecting the motivation of teachers, such as the insufficient resources allocated to schools and the low teachers' salaries (Murillo, 2007).

The previous point can be corroborated by the findings that emerged from both typical schools, where for financial reasons, there are not enough teaching staff and consequently teachers have a very heavy workload which affects the quality of their work and their commitment (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.4), as this testimony describes:

*“If we were able to provide an individual treatment to students, to have interviews with them and with their parents, I’m sure that our progress would be better. Unfortunately, we have to work many hours. A teacher with 44 hours of contract is teaching 42 hours. Therefore, it is very difficult to find the time to interview students, to plan classes, to do professional development courses, to plan lessons, etc.” (Teacher, Quillay School)*

This situation is very common in the Chilean municipal and private-subsidised educational sectors (see Chapter 2, section 2.2), so even if school staff have the motivation to do more to contribute to the improvement of the schools, it is difficult to materialise those intentions due to the lack of time. From this comment of a teacher from Quillay, it is possible to realise how negative this situation can be in terms of teachers' motivation:

*“In each class there are around 40 students and I have 15 different classes, so it means that I have 600 students to teach per week. All the planning and preparation of evaluation instruments has to be done at home.” (Teacher, Quillay, School)*

Considering these aspects, it is hardly surprising that there is high teacher absenteeism generated by high levels of stress and low motivation, as mentioned in a previous section of this chapter. A teacher should be able to divide their contract hours between time used in activities, such as planning and marking, and actual teaching time.

This problem is often a consequence of the insufficient funding that municipalities (frequently poor ones) have or use to run schools (see Chapter 2, section 2.5). Municipalities administer schools in their districts with public funding but they have a lot of other districts' matters to attend to. Therefore, sometimes the budget they allocate to schools is not enough to hire more school staff. In the private-subsidised schools, this situation could be a consequence of the bad administration of resources given by the government or by families through school fees. In fact, the contributions of parents in private-subsidised schools are considerably lower than in private-paid school. In addition to this, an important percentage of students do not have to pay anything because their socio-economic conditions are very difficult. In the specific case of this research, the only private subsidised school is the typical school Lenga and this institution receives students with a high level of social vulnerability, so the fees are very low and many students do not pay. Therefore, the main source of funding is through government subsidies for students.

It could be argued that the public funding given by the Government to municipal or private subsidised schools is unlikely to be enough, considering the fact that Chile is not a rich country. Nevertheless, there are a lot of controversies about this issue and it has been extensively argued (Hopkins, 2006; Arango, 2008) that public education should not necessarily be administered by local municipalities because they have many other matters to attend to and they are not necessarily giving enough material and human resources to schools. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that many private subsidised schools have become for-profit schools because even though they receive two sources of funding (public, private), they still demonstrate problems of hiring enough teachers or providing better facilities to students, which means that the financial resources are not necessarily being used for these purposes.

One cannot be sure that the previously discussed points apply to the case of Lenga School. In fact, I do not have enough evidence to affirm that Lenga is a for-profit school. However, what is true from the evidence is that teachers have insufficient time to plan classes or undertake professional development courses, which affects their motivation, as this evidence suggests:

*“We need to make a big effort if we want to do professional development courses because it means going to classes on Saturdays, to do homework in the evenings, etc. We have the intention of doing it, but then we realise the big effort it implies. We reflect: ‘Well, we are going to have less time to plan now’. We don’t have the proportion of hours of the developed countries to prepare classes.” (Teacher, Lenga School)*

Problems of administration or funding also affect the capacity of the typical schools and also of two of the atypical ones to successfully implement a good plan



of incentives and rewards for school staff and a system of student follow-up to evaluate the effectiveness of the school in the long run and elaborate improvement plans.

Finally, another adverse contextual factor associated with educational facilities and funding is the problem of the high number of students per class, which characterises the Chilean educational system. Chile has the second highest number of students per classroom of all OECD countries, with only China having more students per classroom (OECD, 2011). This particular problem affects both typical schools. However, it is also present in the atypical schools, but teachers in these schools seem to manage this issue better. In my view, the main reason that can explain this is the better level of discipline demonstrated by students in atypical schools (see Chapter 6, table 6.2.1). A class can have many students, but if they behave in an appropriate way, teachers are less tired and demonstrate more willingness to do their work.

## **7.5 Summary**

In this chapter I have attempted to discuss the findings of my study, by addressing each research question. I have started the chapter with a reflection about the common characteristics of effective schooling found in my sample of four atypical schools. In the second section of this chapter, I have addressed the distinctive elements of each school that make them different from other institutions. These special characteristics are related to the greater effectiveness of these institutions. In the third section of this chapter, I have looked at some historical and contextual aspects of these schools that influence their effectiveness. Finally, in the last section, I have discussed the main differences between atypical and typical schools in order to achieve an understanding about the specific characteristics that make schools more or less effective. In the next chapter, I will draw some main conclusions from this study, as well as reflect about the main implications, contributions and limitations of this study.

# CHAPTER 8

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## 8. Conclusions and Implications

### 8.0 Introduction

As presented and discussed in the previous chapters, the results of this study demonstrate that certain factors that have a significant presence and importance in atypical schools have an impact on the academic effectiveness of these institutions. However, some of these factors are also present in typical schools but their impact on the effectiveness of these institutions is less significant, which is frequently a consequence of adverse contextual conditions affecting typical schools.

The research question that guides the first part of this chapter is: *What are the lessons that can be learnt from these schools and the recommendations for practitioners and policy makers?* I start this concluding chapter by describing the lessons that can be learnt from this research. After the presentation and discussion of the research findings, in the previous chapters, I summarise those findings, presenting them as “messages” that could be useful for practitioners, school leaders and policy makers. The outcomes of this research communicate that this group of academically effective schools in deprived contexts are characterised by the following aspects:

- Having a greater focus on academic success.
- Having teachers who demonstrate a particularly high level of professional commitment.
- Having proactive and encouraging leaders, who are key elements in the school's success.
- Having a positive school climate.
- Having high expectations of their students.

In the following sections of this chapter, I firstly, give some recommendations to practitioners and policy makers which are expressed in the form of ideas or initiatives to encourage the development of factors associated with school effectiveness in less effective schools. Secondly, I state the contributions of this study, which are especially valuable for the development of school effectiveness research and school improvement research in the Chilean context or in other developing societies. Thirdly, I address the limitations of this research. These are mainly related to generalisation issues and lack of theoretical models and frameworks that fit this research. In addition to this, I make suggestions for further research in the area which, in my view, should be focused on establishing links between school effectiveness research and school improvement initiatives. In the Latin American context, where social inequalities are huge, it is necessary to implement school improvement programmes with special attention to the most disadvantaged student populations. In addition to this, further research in the area should consider studies with a greater likelihood of drawing generalisations and more use of student background information and attainment data, in order to better assess the value added dimension of the education provided by particular

institutions. Furthermore, more research on teacher effectiveness is suggested, since this research has corroborated the fundamental role of teachers as contributors to students' outcomes and school success. Finally, this chapter comes to an end with some personal reflections about my PhD journey.

## **8.1 Lessons from atypical schools**

### ***Message 1: More effective schools have a greater focus on academic success***

This greater focus is demonstrated by the higher importance given to aspects such as, 'planning for success'; 'teacher evaluation'; 'use of incentives'; 'high relevance given to teachers' professional development' and 'high importance given to external assessment'.

### ***Message 2: In effective institutions teachers demonstrate a particularly high level of professional commitment***

This aspect is demonstrated by factors such as, the greater disposition of teachers to take part in professional development courses; the dedication and time invested in the preparation of students for external assessment; the collaboration between departments in pedagogic work and preparation of students for external assessment and the significant teachers' involvement in students' personal and social development.

***Message 3: Effective schools are frequently characterised by having proactive and encouraging leaders, who are key elements for the school success***

These institutions have leaders who are always interested in getting their schools involved in different projects or who support any initiative that involves a possibility of improvement. They are also characterised by a constant encouragement to teachers to update their professional knowledge. These headteachers are very interested in the academic results of their students and they support the initiatives orientated towards the preparation of students for external examinations. In addition to this, they have high expectations of teachers and students. Finally, it is important to mention that they are experienced professionals and have been in the leadership position for many years (the leadership of the previous headteacher has been considered in the analysis of Canelo School).

***Message 4: Effective schools are frequently characterised by having a positive school climate***

The relationships between the different stakeholders are frequently positive, especially in the case of the relationship between teachers and students. Teachers care about students and students respect teachers, which has implications in terms of student motivation and also in relation to the level of discipline, responsibility and work disposition that students demonstrate. In addition to this, in all these institutions, the level of discipline is good and appropriate for effective teaching and learning processes taking place in the classroom.

***Message 5: Effective schools are institutions that believe in their students and the school's stakeholders have high expectations of them***

Teachers believe that their students can do well in the school despite the adverse contextual conditions that may affect their motivation. They challenge them and do not assume that due to their personal circumstances and contextual barriers, they will not be able to succeed. In general, in these institutions school leaders, teachers, parents and also students do not have a pessimistic view about their future opportunities. School members and parents' high expectations of students have positive repercussions on the levels of motivation demonstrated by students.

## **8.2 Recommendations for practitioners and policy makers**

Considering the findings of this study, I can conclude and recommend to educational authorities, private school owners, school leaders, practitioners and policy makers to take into consideration some recommendations that I make in this section.

One of the main findings of this research states that **a greater academic focus is associated with academically effective schools**. This greater focus on success is demonstrated in many practices, such as the provision of extra academic support, planning for success, teachers' professional development and the evaluation and use of incentives (see Chapter 7, section 7.1). The general recommendation for school practitioners, school leaders, private school owners, educational authorities and policy makers is the implementation of the practices that have been successful in my sample of atypical schools.

Concerning extra academic support, schools should offer effective and robust extra academic support programmes for students. Firstly, it is necessary to provide additional academic support for new students who have yet to attain a good level of achievement. It is important that they reach a similar level to other students in their grade, in order to create a more homogenous group in which learning and progression can be more efficient. Secondly, it is also important to offer systematic extra academic support for students who have academic difficulties and not only when they start their studies in the school. Thirdly, it is important to offer preparation for external examinations. In fact, this type of support was the most emphasised in the atypical schools and the most linked with their effectiveness. Many people disagree with the provision of special preparation for external assessment, but I argue that it is necessary because students need to become familiar with the type of questions, the length of the exam and they also need to refresh some content (for more discussion on external assessment, see Chapter 7, section 7.1).

The academic support initiatives that take place after the normal school day have to be well designed and implemented. For example, practitioners should include activities that are attractive for students and different to the ones students normally do in their normal lessons. The objective of this is to engage students in these extra lessons and improve their motivation and responsibility to attend. One of the problems that both of the typical schools have in relation to the extra support classes is that many students sign up to go, but they do not attend regularly (see Chapter 7, section 7.4). Another important aspect to consider is to have the necessary conditions and resources for this aim. School leaders should be



involved in the organisation of these additional classes, especially in terms of the administration of the time, material and human resources. Nevertheless, practitioners or school leaders are not the only key elements that should be involved in the implementation of extra academic support in schools. It is very important that the local educational authorities and private school owners understand the importance of this type of support for students and allocate resources to undertake these classes in an effective way. In relation to this, policy makers need to be aware of the need that local educational authorities have in terms of resources to implement these initiatives in schools. It is also very important to evaluate the real use and efficiency of the resources allocated.

Additionally, it is important to consider that the implementation of these extra support classes depends on the importance that the specific school places on academic success. Each school sets its own priorities and a school which has a 'particular focus on success' has a collective belief about the high importance of academic results. For example, some schools are more interested in being effective in terms of the personal and social development of students and they believe that academic development is not among the top priorities of the school. In Lenga School, for instance, a high number of teachers think that an effective school is not the one that has better academic results, but one that gives students a solid moral education and promotes the social and personal development of students (Riffel & Levin, 1986). Nevertheless, the opinion of the headteacher of Lenga is controversial. She indicated that this view is just an excuse to justify the insufficient academic effectiveness of the school (see Chapter 5, Lenga School portrait).

In relation to the previous point, I argue that an effective school is one which gives high importance to both academic and personal development. An effective institution aims for the holistic development of the students and in the case of my atypical schools; they all consider the personal and social development of students, as well as their academic attainment. In this research I consider academic results in my conception of effectiveness, but I also include information about the provision of education targeted at the personal and social development of students which I consider necessary to achieve a better understanding of schools and their internal educational processes (see Chapter 5, school portraits). In conclusion, I would add that ‘academic effectiveness’ is very difficult to achieve in a school where school members are not convinced of its importance. A school ‘focused on success’ has to have a vision and mission addressing academic success and members who agree with that vision and mission.

Another important aspect associated with schools that have a strong ‘focus on success’ is ‘planning for success’. In all the atypical schools planning is given high importance, especially in the case of Araucaria and Rauli, institutions administered by a corporation (see Chapter 7, section 7.1). One of the important corporation policies, associated with the greater effectiveness of these institutions is the production of a ‘strategic plan’. Following the example of these institutions, it would be a good first step for any school which aims to be successful, to have a clear ‘strategic plan’ of actions to be undertaken in order to achieve the desired success. It is also important to evaluate the progression towards the goals described in that plan on a regular basis and update it in the light of the results of the evaluation. Accountability is an essential concept that has to be introduced

into schools that aim to be effective and the realisation of any school plan has to consider a serious evaluation process of all the school components, including the evaluation of teachers, which has to be rigorous, as it is in Araucaria and Rauli.

Teacher evaluation has been highlighted as one of the elements associated with a greater 'focus on success.' This process should consider the opinions of students, colleagues, school leaders and also a self-evaluation of teachers about their own professional performance. It should also be associated with incentives, which should range from public acknowledgement to economic incentives. I argue that the recognition of an outstanding professional effort in any field should be associated with incentives, as a way to encourage the person to continue doing well or encourage colleagues to follow his or her example.

In Chile, there is a lot of criticism of teachers which is mainly associated with the lack of vocation that, according to some sectors of the society, a high proportion of teachers demonstrate. As an ex-practitioner and having experienced many of the difficulties that teachers face, I argue that the genuine vocation of many teachers is affected by many factors that influence their motivation, such as the ones presented and discussed in this thesis, in relation to typical schools (see Chapter 7, section 7.4). Some of these factors are: the high vulnerability of students; teachers' heavy workload and insufficient time to undertake their professional duties; low levels of discipline; the high number of students per class; low expectations of students and their families; low motivation of students. In addition to these demotivating factors, even teachers who are committed to their

vocation might experience low motivation when their professional effort is not recognised.

The Chilean Government has been gradually addressing this issue since the promulgation of the Teachers Statute in 1991, which established improvements in teachers' salaries depending on the number of years teaching, level of professional update and the degree of difficulty of working in a specific social context. Moreover, in 1995 and 2000 some modifications were made to the Teachers Statute, giving teachers the opportunity to receive prizes for their individual professional performance or for the collective performance of the teachers in a specific school. In 2003, a modified national system of teachers' evaluation, which is also associated with incentives, was promulgated. Nevertheless, even considering what has been done in recent years, I believe that the conditions and incentives for teachers need constant restructuring and improvement, especially in the case of more effective teachers. Teachers' salaries have been improved in recent years, but they are still far from the salaries that they should receive considering their workload and degree of responsibility. In addition, it is important that teachers are constantly offered opportunities to update their professional skills.

Finally, it is important to state that schools that aim to be successful should not restrict their accountability practices to the evaluation of teachers or school departments. Two of the atypical schools, Araucaria and Rauli, undertake a follow-up process of their students. In this way, they analyse the effects of the school in the long term. They look at how the school has influenced the academic

or working choices of their students. The objective of this process is the constant revision of the school in all its aspects and the implementation of the necessary changes in the school strategic plan.

The second main finding of this study is that **in effective institutions, teachers demonstrate a particularly high level of professional commitment** (see Chapter 7, section 7.1). In relation to this point, the recommendations for school leaders, private school owners, local educational authorities and policy makers are related to the implementation of better systems of teacher selection. In the public sector (Municipal Schools, see Chapter 2, section 2.2), for example, teachers are sent directly from the municipalities and due to other duties that a municipality has to address, frequently, there is not careful selection of staff. In addition to this, municipalities do not have enough information about the types of needs or requirements of specific subjects or classes.

In relation to this previous point, I argue that schools should be given more autonomy to select their teachers because they know their own particular needs. In addition to this, it is important that teachers are gradually offered better conditions in Chile, especially in the municipal and private-subsidised sectors (see Chapter 2, section 2.2). Historically, teachers' salaries have been considerably lower than the salaries of other university graduates, even though their responsibilities and workload could be similar or heavier than the ones of other professionals. Therefore, it is important that education policy makers recognise that if the country wants better and more committed teachers, it is necessary to have higher investment in education which also targets teachers' salaries, as well as more

professional development opportunities, as an effective way to encourage teachers to increase their level of motivation and commitment (Murillo, 2007).

A third important finding of this study is that **effective schools are frequently characterised by having proactive and encouraging leaders** (see Chapter 7, section 7.1). In relation to this point, it is essential that leaders are carefully selected by local educational authorities. Being a school leader should not be a position almost exclusively assumed by people who have had a very long career in education or an impressive curriculum vitae. Whilst recognising that experience matters, as this research has demonstrated, younger educators should not be prevented from assuming leadership positions.

This research has demonstrated that the most effective leaders are characterised by being able to assume challenges; being proactive; getting involved in improvement initiatives; encouraging teachers to get more involved and update their knowledge and demonstrating interest and their involvement in teachers and student issues. These characteristics should be present and desired in those aiming to assume a leadership position and, in my view; they should be given more importance than the number of years' experience a candidate possesses. This particular research can contribute only in a modest way by giving insights about characteristics of effective leaders because it is not a study exclusively focused on leadership. However, the findings of this research complemented with the findings of more specialised studies on leadership (Weinstein et al., 2011; Muñoz & Marfán, 2011) can give valuable knowledge to Chilean educational authorities

and policy makers to bear in mind when defining the type of individual that the country is seeking to lead its schools.

A fourth main finding of this study states that **effective schools are frequently characterised by having a positive school climate** (see Chapter 7, section 7.1).

In relation to this insight, my recommendation for school leaders and practitioners is to create and promote a positive atmosphere in their schools in that they try to avoid tension and resolve disagreement. A harmonious climate characterised by respect will facilitate interaction and will increase teachers' and students' motivation to work. In terms of school climate, it is also important that the level of discipline of a school is acceptable. Students need to learn in a quiet atmosphere; hence positive behaviour in the classrooms is essential. Therefore, it is important that the schools have clear rules and sanctions for students' misbehaviour. In relation to this point, it is important to mention that in recent years, it has become a requirement for schools in Chile to have a 'Code of behaviour.'<sup>65</sup> This document has to describe students' rights, students' responsibilities and sanctions for student misbehaviour. It is essential that the rules described in this code are respected and sanctions are applied. However, this does not mean that the school should be a very oppressive place where students are being constantly repressed.

A school is a place where students not only acquire knowledge, but also learn how to behave socially and respect others. Considering that they are adolescents who are shaping their social behaviour, certain flexibility and tolerance is expected, as

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<sup>65</sup> 'Reglamento de Convivencia Escolar' (Regulations for Congenial Relationships in the School).

indicated by the headteacher of one of the atypical schools (see Chapter 5, Avellano School portrait). However, it is also necessary that schools have an acceptable level of discipline and that its level of flexibility is limited because the evidence from this research demonstrated that the low level of discipline in both typical schools affected their effectiveness. In Lenga School, for example, students indicated that discipline sometimes tended to be very flexible and they expressed criticism of this (see Chapter 5, Lenga School portrait). Summarising this point, I argue that having clear rules and sanctions in a school is essential because discipline is a very important element that impacts positively on student learning and promotes the development of more positive student self-esteem, due to the respect that characterise relationships in an orderly environment. Practitioners, school leaders and policy makers should be very aware of this, especially when we are constantly witnessing how psychological and even physical violence is becoming almost the norm in our schools.

Serious cases of bullying and harassment have been taking place in schools in recent years and teachers have dramatically lost authority in schools. In this scenario, some effective measures to stop such situations are essential. Chilean educational policy makers seem to have understood this message and recently, in 2011, a law that prohibits bullying in schools was promulgated. This law obligates schools to assume serious responsibilities to stop the anti-social behaviour of students in schools. Therefore, it is imperative that school leaders implement measures to improve the levels of discipline in their schools, in order to avoid serious situations that might involve a sanction for the school. In addition to this,



it is recommended that schools work with students, parents and teachers in the prevention of these types of behaviours.

A fifth finding of this research states that in effective schools, **school stakeholders have high expectations of students** (see Chapter 7, section 7.1). Considering this, I would recommend that practitioners make it one of their priorities to ‘give an opportunity’ to students whose contextual circumstances make it difficult for them to aspire to a bright educational or professional future. Adverse conditions should not be a barrier for human development and teachers have to be conscious of this and believe that their students are able to change their circumstances, as Levin (2006, p.406) suggests: “We should never give up our efforts at improving outcomes for students no matter what the context”. This particular study has demonstrated that an important number of teachers from typical schools do not believe that their students are able to succeed because of the contextual conditions they face (see Chapter 7, section 7.4). Unfortunately, this pessimistic view does not help students because they perceive that some of their teachers and also their families do not believe in their capacity to succeed, and hence their motivation is adversely affected. As indicated by the headteacher of Lenga School, in relation to ‘the low expectations of students,’ *“it is imperative to change this pessimistic view”* (Chapter 5, Lenga School portrait).

The problem of raising teachers and parents’ expectations of students is complex because it has to do with a change of mentality. Moreover, it is not a problem restricted to the educational field. It involves society in general because it concerns social opportunities and equity. In a country where higher education is

expensive (see Chapter 2, section 2.4), many students assume that they will not have the resources to continue their studies in the future, so they do not see the point of making an effort in school. In addition to this, many of them face family problems or problems of adaptation associated with the marginal social contexts where they live, which are commonly characterised by delinquency, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse. Therefore, raising expectations is not only a responsibility of school leaders, practitioners or families. It is an issue that has to be addressed by the Government, using strategies to improve conditions and opportunities for young people living in more vulnerable contexts. In relation to this point, Levin (2006) argued that schools are not the only place where changes have to occur. In his view, in vulnerable communities, sometimes it is even more important to change some contextual non-school issues.

A good measure which could be taken to raise students' expectations and aspirations is to improve the benefits for students who want to continue in higher education and who come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It is true that in the last few years, due to a number of students' demonstrations and the considerable organisation of initiatives on the part of students to negotiate more benefits and to modify the laws that privatised education in Chile (see Chapter 2, section 2.5), significant results have been achieved. The investment in education has grown and more poor students have benefited from scholarships to fund their studies. Nonetheless, it is important to continue making efforts to achieve a more equitable access to higher education because the evidence demonstrate that this aspect of the Chilean educational system presents evident inequalities (Matear, 2006; OECD & World Bank, 2009)

Additionally, schools which have a significant student intake from vulnerable backgrounds should receive additional support from the Government. In fact, in the last two decades there have been great efforts focused on the improvement of the educational results of the most vulnerable schools in Chile (P900 Project, JUNAEB Scholarships; Preferential Subvention Project). Nevertheless, there is still a lot of to do, in order to improve the equity of opportunities for students from the most disadvantaged sectors. In Chile social inequalities are very significant and it is imperative to continue improving the benefits and investment in education.

### **8.3 Contribution to knowledge**

This work is an original contribution to the development of school effectiveness research (SER) in Chile. This is not the first study in the area which focuses on the effectiveness of secondary schools, but it is one of the few focusing on the effectiveness of secondary schools in disadvantaged contexts. For example, Zárate (1992) conducted research in secondary schools to identify factors related to successful school practices. However, his research did not focus on vulnerable schools and he only considered the testimonies of the headteachers of effective schools in his study. In my particular case, I have used data from headteachers, teachers, parents and students. Therefore, this research could be considered a comprehensive approximation to the study of school factors that contribute to the effectiveness of a group of secondary schools with disadvantaged student populations.

In Chile, the majority of effectiveness studies of schools in challenging contexts have looked at the effectiveness of primary schools (Bellei et al., 2004; Raczynski

& Muñoz, 2004; Henríquez et al., 2009). Taking this fact into account, this study could be considered a real contribution for the understanding of the school processes that enhance the effectiveness of secondary schools in challenging contexts. The fact that this research has focused on schools with socially disadvantaged student populations is contributing to the generation of evidence about the educational processes that really work in more challenging contexts, which is very relevant for the Chilean context. Research evidence from Chile has informed us of the big differences in school effects between low-income and high-income students (McEwan & Carnoy, 2000; Bellei, 2001; Hsieh & Urquiola, 2006; Carnoy, 2007; OECD, 2002 and 2007). For that reason, educational research with a special emphasis on disadvantaged student populations is a priority.

Another contribution of this research is the fact that it evaluates the effectiveness of vocational secondary schools. The inclusion of solely vocational schools in the sample was completely coincidental (the typical school Quillay is the only one which also provides an academic route). However, it is relevant to have evidence about the working systems of schools that aim to prepare students for working life and to know to what extent they are different from schools that only have an academic pathway.

Additionally, it has emerged from this study that the two schools administered by a corporation are characterised by school processes that are particularly effective and strongly focused on academic success. Considering this finding, it is possible

to indicate that this study provides some evidence about the way in which schools with an ‘atypical’ type of administration work.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (see section 2.5), the education reforms that took place in Chile during the 1980s, as a consequence of neoliberal policies promoted by the military government, changed the structure of the school system. Until that time, the majority of schools were administered and funded by the state. Under the privatisation and decentralisation reforms (see Chapter 2, section 2.5) three main types of schools were created: municipal, private-subsidised schools and private-paid schools. The administration of state schools was decentralised and given to municipal governments who started to fund the schools with municipal budgets. Private-subsidised schools have a private administration and are funded by government subsidy and parental contributions and private-paid schools have a private administration and are funded with parental contributions. Corporation schools can be considered a special type of institutions with a very similar type of administration to the private-subsidised schools. These schools are administered by corporations, but are mainly funded by the government. As indicated in Chapter 7 (section 7.2), the privatisation and decentralisation reforms that took place in the 1980s also intervened in the vocational schools system and the administration of a number of vocational schools was transferred from the state to non-profit educational corporations that represented different sectors of the Chilean industry. The main idea was that educators and representatives of the main productive sectors work in collaboration to adapt the vocational curriculum to the needs of industry and improve the quality of the educational programmes offered by vocational schools.

The privatisation of schools, decentralisation of school system or rise in the number of independent state schools with more focalised types of administration is not an isolated phenomenon of a country such as Chile, but an increasing international tendency present in many educational systems around the world. Some examples are the 'school academies' and 'free schools' in England; 'charter schools' in America, New Zealand and Alberta (Canada); free schools with voucher funding systems in Sweden, etc. Similar to Chile, all these types of schools receive public funding, but they also receive additional funding and contributions. These schools may be administered by charities, corporations, sponsors, businesses, parents, teachers, etc. The main reason for the proliferation of these types of institutions is that they seem to achieve better results than schools with more centralised administrations. In England, for example, many schools that were failing were transformed into academics and they have demonstrated a gradual improvement (e.g. levels of attainment at GCSE). Academies enjoy many of the freedoms of private schools in terms innovation and curriculum, but they are still socially comprehensive. In general, these schools have introduced new managerial styles and intervention strategies that seem to improve their effectiveness. However, it is important to have more evidence about the type of administration of these institutions in order to make substantial claims about their real effectiveness. It is also important to take into account in the analysis of these schools to what extent this type of school administration may be affecting the equality of the educational systems.

This research has contributed to providing some evidence about the administrative strategies used by a corporation in Chile that positively influence the educational

processes of vocational schools. Particularly, some practices that demonstrate a focus on success, such as strategic planning make a difference between these schools and other vocational institutions run by the government (see Chapter 7, section 7.1). In Chile only a low percentage of vocational schools are administered by corporations (12% in 2009), thus this sort of administration is not very common. This particular research has only given evidence about one particular corporation, so it is not possible to claim that schools run by corporations tend to be characterised by more effective working systems. Nevertheless, this research has given initial insights that could be complemented with more research about corporation schools' management strategies in international and national contexts.

It is important to state that the contribution of this work is particularly illuminating and relevant for the Chilean educational context. In addition, this study could be also useful for other Latin American countries and for other developing societies that share some common contextual characteristics with Chile. The school processes taking place in these contexts are not necessarily similar to the ones happening in developed societies. Even considering the fact that this research has found similar 'key factors' to the ones highlighted by the mainstream literature in the school effectiveness field, characteristics of schools can only be explained by an understanding of the particular contexts. This thesis contributes by giving evidence and recommendations to practitioners and policy makers about the specific factors that it is necessary to enhance in order to improve schools with similar characteristics. However, these recommendations can be only implemented if certain contextual characteristics are taken into

account and certain conditions are given (e.g. better conditions for teachers, less students per classroom, more material and human resources and higher investment in education). The recipes or prescriptions from the research conducted in developed countries will not necessarily give solutions to improve the educational system in developing countries as Harber & Davies (1998) and Murillo (2007) have suggested. Additionally, this study should be also regarded as a reference for international researchers working in school effectiveness and conducting comparative studies of different educational systems.

Finally, this study can also be considered to provide a contribution on methodological grounds because it evaluates the effectiveness of these institutions using a mixed methods design, in which I have used some strategies of data transformation (qualitizing and quantitizing strategies) and data integration. The use of these techniques is not new, but it has not been used extensively in the school effectiveness field. In fact, SER is an area which has been traditionally characterised by the use of quantitative methods. Only in recent years, has it incorporated the use of mixed methodologies. In addition to this, this could be considered a new and innovative methodological approach for educational research in Chile, where the use of mixed methods has been very limited. This study is an example of the use and integration of diverse sources of information to conduct six school case studies. The quantitative element used was the questionnaire-survey whose results were combined with the qualitative results of the focus groups and interviews and integrated in the school portraits presented. Both qualitative and quantitative elements were also integrated and presented in analytical tables in Chapter 6.



#### **8.4 Limitations of the study**

In relation to the limitations of this study, I believe that the problem of ‘generalisation’ is one of them. A study which has included only six schools in the evaluation of school effectiveness factors does not attempt to be a faithful representation or account of the educational reality in Chile. Therefore, the possibilities of generalisation are reduced. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some moderate generalisations of the findings, especially in the case of similar schools. For example, I can make moderate generalisations in the context of Chilean secondary schools which have a significant student intake from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It is evident that there are more possibilities of generalisation in studies which include a bigger number of schools as a sample, as is usual in school effectiveness studies that are purely quantitative or use a mixed methodology with an emphasis on the quantitative element of analysis. In this particular research, I have employed case studies, which means a more in depth exploration of each school. Therefore, the use of a bigger sample of schools was not appropriate, due to time restrictions and the fact that I was acting as a lone researcher. School effectiveness studies that intend to make more generalisations usually have large samples, employ more sophisticated statistical techniques and are conducted by a team of researchers.

I consider that another limitation of this study is the lack of a theoretical model or framework that can support my research findings. In fact, a criticism that has been frequently made of the school effectiveness field is its lack of theorisation (see

Chapter 3, section 3.10). I did not find any particular theory that could help me to make more sense of my research. Moreover, in most of the school effectiveness research literature consulted, I did not find enough evidence of theories employed in the area. From the scarce evidence found (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Creemers et al., 2000) there were not clear explanations of the application of these theories to school effectiveness research (Contingency, Compensatory and Chaos Theories). These theories were presented in a very conceptual manner, but with no illustration of the real use in school research. Moreover, some of the vague links that were made by the authors to school effectiveness research, especially in the case of Contingency Theory, referred to the similar logic of this theoretical approach with the multi-level school effectiveness models. In this research, I did not test any of the school effectiveness models available due to the unsuitability of my research objectives, samples size, data and analysis procedures with these models. This particular point is explained in Chapter 3, section 3.6. Nevertheless, I have used some of the elements of these models in the discussion of my findings, where I also included evidence from my literature review to support my findings.

### **8.5 Recommendations for further research**

The results of the present study have made me aware of the necessity of conducting studies that can use these findings in the design of school improvement projects, especially in the Chilean context. This research informs and provides a reflection upon the factors influencing the greater or lesser effectiveness of schools characterised by a vulnerable school intake. However, it does not provide solutions, work strategies or plans to encourage the development

of those factors in schools. Therefore, further research should be focused on using these particular findings and complement them with findings from other studies to create school improvement initiatives that can change schools and make them more successful.

For educational researchers, especially from countries that do not have a vast tradition of educational effectiveness research and who intend to continue focusing on the study of school effects, teacher effects or effective school processes, I would recommend the use of bigger samples of schools. In this way, they would have more opportunities of generalisation and consequently a bigger impact with their research, especially in their local educational contexts. In addition to this, I think that a good initiative for further research in school effectiveness, especially in the Chilean context or in other developing countries, would be to analyse students' educational trajectories. In this way, it would be possible to assess how a particular school influences students' educational outcomes during the years they spend in that particular school. For those purposes, it would be necessary to have longitudinal attainment data. Furthermore, as has been noted by Thomas et al. (2012), it is important to conduct research that improves the way we analyse the results of the standardised examination SIMCE. It is necessary to start using value added data and contrast students' results of one year with previous years' results and use contextual data to adjust those results. A forthcoming study of Muñoz-Chereau will contribute to this objective, but more research of this type is certainly needed.

This particular study has not generated models that might help to explain the school processes that characterised the types of schools that were addressed with this research. Probably, this was a consequence of the small number of schools analysed which, in my view, is insufficient to establish school typologies. Nevertheless, the findings of this study in combination with the findings of other similar studies could be used to formulate some further elaborations of models or explanatory frameworks that might help to categorise secondary schools in challenging circumstances in Chile. Personally, I would be keen to expand this research with the development of these frameworks.

Some of the key dimensions identified in this research that should be considered in the elaborations of these models are: ‘macro contextual factors’ (education authorities, education administrators, human and material resources); ‘students contextual factors’ (socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, family composition and characterisation, expectations and motivation); ‘school processes’ (leadership, stakeholders’ interactions, teaching and learning processes, curricular expectations, discipline); ‘school outcomes’ (school based assessment, external assessment, participation in tertiary education, future life choices). Many of these factors interact with each other in a reciprocal way, especially in the case of ‘school processes.’

The type of explanatory frameworks that could be elaborated in further research would have a similar dynamics to the educational effectiveness models that have been developed in the last two decades (Creemers, 1994, Creemers & Kyriakides,

2008). These models consider different levels in the educational systems and different types of interactions between these levels.

In relation to the previous recommendations, it is pertinent to emphasise that they are especially targeting the Chilean context or other developing countries because I am aware that this type of research has been done for many years in some developed countries (i.e. America, United Kingdom, Netherlands, and Australia).

Finally, it is important to mention that my research findings have emphasised the ‘teacher’s role’ as one of the most important pieces of the ‘effectiveness puzzle’. Therefore, I believe that more research is needed concerning the teacher-pupil relationship and the effect of this relationship on students’ educational outcomes, with special attention to the classroom interactions and the effect of this on the teaching and learning processes. In addition to this, it would also be very interesting to investigate the links between teachers’ lives and their professional effectiveness, as has been done in the UK by Day et al. (2007). This thesis has demonstrated that many contextual conditions can affect the professional vocation and commitment of teachers and consequently their effectiveness. For this reason, research looking at the connections between teachers’ lives and their effectiveness would be very interesting and useful in the particular context of Chile.

## **8.6 Final words**

More than four years ago, when I was thinking about my PhD proposal topic, the only thing that was clear for me was that I wanted to do research in the educational area, mainly motivated by my academic background in education and my personal interests. Nonetheless, I was not sure about which specific area to explore. During my process of introspection and reflection, some main interests emerged clearly in my mind. Those were educational quality, educational equity, educational opportunities for the most disadvantaged groups and resilience in education. When I was trying to make a decision, I remembered one module that I completed when I was doing my Master's in Education which was called 'The Effective School'. I realised that in that module I had studied many of the topics that I was interested in by exploring the main trends of the educational effectiveness field. I discovered that this particular research area brings together topics such as educational quality and equity in education; therefore it presented itself as an interesting and attractive area to research. In addition to that, this field provided an opportunity to investigate an area of pragmatic interest for an educational researcher from a developing country, considering that educational effectiveness is an essential area for the development of a country. Taking into account all these elements, I decided that an exploration of effective schools in disadvantaged contexts was what I wanted to do.

Today, after having reached the end of my PhD journey, I can say that I feel proud of this great achievement. I look back and realise that what started as a research proposal has become a thesis that will contribute to the development of school effectiveness research in the Chilean educational scene, but also with many

possibilities to be used as a reference in international educational research, especially in developing countries.

This research journey has not been easy, and on my way I have found many obstacles. However, after having overcome all those difficulties that made me feel unfocused and insecure many times, I can happily say now that this experience has been worthy in every sense. Sometimes, the most difficult things are the ones we value more and I am convinced that my effort will reap many rewards. This PhD has been a personal growing and learning experience and I am sure it will be a valuable contribution for educational research in Chile, particularly in the school effectiveness field.

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# Appendices

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## **Appendix 1: Example of participant consent form (teachers)**

### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (Teachers)**

**Project title: Exploring effective secondary schools in challenging contexts: A study in two Chilean regions.**

**Researcher's name: Roxana Balbontín**

**Supervisor's name: Pamela Sammons**

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the focus group session.
- I understand that data will be kept in a secure location and no-one other than research colleagues, supervisors or examiners will have access to any of the data collected.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a comment or complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

**Signed** ..... (Research participant)

**Print name** ..... **Date** .....

**Contact details**

Researcher: [ttxrbp@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ttxrbp@nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor: [pam.sammons@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:pam.sammons@nottingham.ac.uk)

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: [roger.murphy@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:roger.murphy@nottingham.ac.uk)

## **Appendix 2: Example of research information sheet (teachers)**

### **Information Sheet (teachers)**

#### **Project Title:**

**Exploring effective secondary schools in challenging contexts: A study in two Chilean regions**

#### **Project aims:**

To gain greater understanding of the particular characteristics of more effective schools in areas of social deprivation and the influences of these particular features on the students' social and academic outcomes.

#### **Nature of Involvement:**

- The schools selected for the pilot study have been previously informed about the research and they have agreed to take part in this study.
- Teachers from the two schools will be asked to participate in the research with the right to withdraw at any time.
- Teachers will be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding effective schooling.
- The questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.
- Teachers will be also asked to take part in a focus group session.
- The focus group will take approximately 30-45 and it will be recorded onto an audio-recorder.
- The researcher will make some notes during the focus group session.
- This data will be securely kept in a locked filing cabinet and no-one other than the researcher and her supervisors will see this data.
- The names of the schools and participants will be kept anonymous.
- No further involvement will be required of the teachers, but if they would like to receive some feedback or the overall findings from the study, the researcher will make this available to them.

#### **Researcher**

Roxana Balbontín is a research student in the School of Education, University of Nottingham, UK. She is sponsored by the Chilean Ministry of Education. She is currently undertaking her PhD research project about School Effectiveness and Improvement. She has five years of experience working in the Chilean Educational System.



## Contact details

***Researcher:*** [ttxrpb@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ttxrpb@nottingham.ac.uk)  
***Supervisor:*** [pam.sammons@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:pam.sammons@nottingham.ac.uk)  
***Ethics coordinator:*** [roger.murphy@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:roger.murphy@nottingham.ac.uk)

### **Appendix 3: Example of questionnaire-survey (teacher version-English)**

#### **School Effectiveness Questionnaire**

##### **Teacher version**

This study intends to contribute to the field of School Effectiveness through the study of some secondary schools that have demonstrated to be more effective in terms of students' outcomes than institutions with similar characteristics.

The main aim of this research is to gain greater understanding of the particular characteristics of more effective schools in areas of social deprivation and the influences of these particular features on the students' social and academic outcomes.

#### **Instructions**

Read each statement carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with what it says about your school. This will take you about 20 minutes.

If you strongly agree with the statement, you should circle the number '5'. If you strongly disagree with the statement, you should circle the number '1'. If you mostly disagree, you should circle the number '2', and if you mostly agree, you should circle the number '4'. If you agree as much as disagree with the statement, you should circle the number '3'. If you are not sure about what to answer, you should circle '?'. Remember that there are not right or wrong answers.

|  |          |  |
|--|----------|--|
|  | <i>1</i> | <i>I strongly disagree</i>                   |
|  | <i>2</i> | <i>I disagree</i>                            |
|  | <i>3</i> | <i>Neutral (I agree as much as disagree)</i> |
|  | <i>4</i> | <i>I agree</i>                               |
|  | <i>5</i> | <i>I strongly agree</i>                      |
|  | <i>?</i> | <i>I don't know</i>                          |

Please answer every statement and choose only one answer.

**Thank you for your cooperation!**

|                     |            |   |         |                  |                 |
|---------------------|------------|---|---------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1                   | 2          | 3                                       | 4       | 5                | ?               |
| I strongly disagree | I disagree | Neutral (I agree as much<br>I disagree) | I agree | I strongly agree | I don't<br>know |

### **I. School Leadership**

1. We are encouraged to participate in decision making in the school. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
2. We have the possibility of being agents of change in our school. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
3. The head teacher is perceived as a guide or person who has an influential leadership in the school. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
4. We rarely get support from the head teacher when we have to solve problems with parents or students. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
5. The leadership in the school tends to be democratic. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
6. I feel represented with the kind of leadership of our school. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

### **II. Visions and Goals**

7. There is a constant vision building in the school. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
8. Staff work in unity to achieve the school's goals. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
9. The school's vision and goals are not clear for the teachers. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
10. The members of the schools know the vision and goals and share them. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
11. The main goal of the school is that the students achieve good academic results. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

### **III. School Climate**

12. The school has a positive ethos 1 2 3 4 5 ?
13. There is an orderly and secure school atmosphere 1 2 3 4 5 ?
14. The school climate is positive and collaborative. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
15. There are frequent disagreements between colleagues. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
16. Relationships between teachers and pupils are in general positive. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
17. There are tensions between teachers and school's administration. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
18. Relationships between teachers and parents are in general

positive. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

#### **IV. Teaching and Learning**

19. There is a clear organisation, and planning  
of the lessons. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

20. The learning time is maximized. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

21. We are willing to adapt our practices and use innovative  
teaching methodologies. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

22. Frequently, we use a wide range of learning resources and material. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

23. Usually, we encourage a collaborative behaviour between students:  
some students help others in doing some activities. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

#### **V. Expectations of students' success.**

24. In this school, students' well-being is important, but not  
as much as students' academic success. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

25. Any student in this school is able to do well if she or he works  
hard for that. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

26. Frequently in this school, students' parents are unsupportive  
because they do not have many expectations about the academic  
success of their children. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

27. A small number of students believe they are capable of getting  
good educational results. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

#### **VI. Professional Feedback**

28. There is regular feedback from school administration about our  
work. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

29. There is recognition of our initiatives and effort. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

30. There is use of rewards for teachers who are successful  
in achieving schools' goals. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

#### **VII. Evaluation of students' learning**

31. The evaluation criteria of students are clear and there is

- a regular review of them and necessary adaptation. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
32. There is frequent monitoring of students' performance. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
33. There are enough evaluations of the students' progress. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

### **VIII. Home-school partnership**

34. In general, parents are interested in the educational development of their children. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
35. Only a small number of parents demonstrate involvement in the school's issues. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
36. There is collaboration between teachers and parents and constant feedback about the progress of the students. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

### **IX. School Discipline**

37. The school discipline is good. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
38. Students receive sanctions if they misbehave. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
39. Students usually behave well in the classroom. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
40. Parents collaborate with school discipline and encourage their children to behave well. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

### **X. School Curriculum and planning.**

41. The quality of the curriculum is considered to be the most important element to assure an education of quality. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
42. The design of the learning units is based on the national curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
43. We usually cover the aspects of the curriculum that we consider the most important. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

### **XI. Teachers' competence.**

44. I consider myself opened to change and able to adapt to particular new methodologies to teach. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
45. The classroom's management is sometimes a problem for me. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
46. Many teachers in this school are frequently enrolling in new

professional development courses to improve their knowledge  
and teaching skills.

1 2 3 4 5 ?

47. I agree to be evaluated in my practices and received  
feedback.

1 2 3 4 5 ?

**XII. Students' motivation and responsibility.**

48. A big number of students in this school seem to be motivated  
about their studies.

1 2 3 4 5 ?

49. A big number of students show responsibility and  
involvement in their own processes of learning.

1 2 3 4 5 ?

50. Many students have high important aspirations for their future.

1 2 3 4 5 ?

**Fill in with the personal information requested.**

**Gender:** Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Religion (optional):**

Catholic \_\_\_\_\_

Protestant \_\_\_\_\_

Agnostic \_\_\_\_\_

Atheist \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Educational qualifications:**

Undergraduate degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Postgraduate degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Diploma: \_\_\_\_\_

**Numbers of years working in this school:**

1-3: \_\_\_\_\_

3-6: \_\_\_\_\_

6-10: \_\_\_\_\_

More than 10: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your cooperation!**

## **Appendix 4: Example of questionnaire-survey (student version-Spanish)**

### **Cuestionario**

### **Efectividad Escolar**

### **Versión estudiante**

Este estudio pretende contribuir al área de efectividad escolar a través del estudio de establecimientos secundarios que han demostrado mayor efectividad en cuanto a resultados académicos en comparación a otras instituciones que tienen estudiantes de similares características.

El objetivo principal de esta investigación es adquirir mayor conocimiento sobre las características particulares que tienen este tipo de instituciones y la influencia de estas en el rendimiento y el desarrollo social de los alumnos.

### **Instrucciones**

Lea atentamente cada afirmación e indique en que medida esta de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con lo que se plantea acerca de su escuela o colegio. Este cuestionario tomará aproximadamente 20 minutos.

Si usted esta totalmente de acuerdo con el enunciado, encierre el numero 5. Si se esta totalmente en desacuerdo, encierre el numero 1. Si esta medianamente de acuerdo con el enunciado, encierre el numero 4 y si esta medianamente en desacuerdo, encierre el numero 2. Si el nivel de acuerdo y desacuerdo que tiene frente a la afirmación es similar o sea su opinión es neutral, encierre el numero 3. Finalmente, si no conoce la respuesta, marque la alternativa?

|  |          |                                   |
|--|----------|-----------------------------------|
|  | <i>1</i> | <i>Totalmente en desacuerdo</i>   |
|  | <i>2</i> | <i>Medianamente en desacuerdo</i> |
|  | <i>3</i> | <i>Neutral</i>                    |
|  | <i>4</i> | <i>Medianamente de acuerdo</i>    |
|  | <i>5</i> | <i>Totalmente de acuerdo</i>      |
|  | <i>?</i> | <i>No conozco la respuesta</i>    |

Por favor responda todas las preguntas y elija solo una opción para cada una de ellas.

**Muchas gracias por su cooperación!**



| 1                        | 2                          | 3       | 4                       | 5                     | ?                       |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Totalmente en desacuerdo | Medianamente en desacuerdo | Neutral | Medianamente de acuerdo | Totalmente de acuerdo | No conozco la respuesta |

### **I. Liderazgo Escolar**

1. El liderazgo en esta institución es considerado positivo y cercano. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
2. No tenemos muchas oportunidades de interactuar con los directivos del establecimiento. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
3. El director o directora del establecimiento es considerado como un guía o líder. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
4. El liderazgo de los directivos de nuestra institución tiende a ser democrático. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
5. Nuestras opiniones nunca son consideradas cuando se toman decisiones en el establecimiento. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

### **II. Visión, Misión y Objetivos del Establecimiento**

6. Tengo claro la visión, misión y los objetivos de nuestro establecimiento. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
7. Los miembros de la institución (profesores, estudiantes y directivos) trabajan en conjunto para alcanzar los objetivos de esta. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

### **III. Clima Escolar**

8. Nuestra institución posee mística y tradición. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
9. El ambiente escolar se caracteriza por ser ordenado y seguro. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
10. El clima escolar no es siempre positivo o colaborativo. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
11. Me gusta estudiar en este colegio. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
12. En general, las relaciones entre los profesores y estudiantes son positivas. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
13. Existen frecuentes diferencias de opinión entre padres y personal del colegio. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

#### **IV. Enseñanza y Aprendizaje**

14. Uno de los principales objetivos de nuestra institución es la adquisición de conocimiento por parte de los estudiantes. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
15. Las clases son estructuradas y se planifican. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
16. La mayoría de las lecciones comienzan con una descripción de los temas a discutir y de los objetivos. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
17. El tiempo de aprendizaje se aprovecha al máximo. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
18. Los profesores demuestran interés acerca del bienestar de los estudiantes. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
19. La mayoría de los profesores son comprensivos y accesibles. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
20. Los profesores utilizan diferentes tipos de materiales y recursos de aprendizaje. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
21. Las lecciones son dinámicas y comúnmente plantean desafíos. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
22. Los profesores frecuentemente promueven un comportamiento colaborativo entre los estudiantes: algunos estudiantes ayudan a otros a realizar algunas actividades. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
23. Pienso que puedo aprender de algunos compañeros. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
24. La mayoría de las veces, prefiero trabajar de manera individual. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

#### **V. Expectativas de Éxito Escolar**

25. En nuestro colegio, se espera lo mejor de nosotros. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
26. Somos capaces de rendir bien si trabajamos duro para ello. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
27. Mis padres esperan lo mejor de mí. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
28. Confiamos en nuestras capacidades para obtener buenos resultados educacionales. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
29. Tengo muchas aspiraciones para mi futuro. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
30. Pienso que mi desempeño es una de las cosas más importantes para alcanzar mis aspiraciones futuras. 1 2 3 4 5 ?
31. Los alumnos que son exitosos en sus resultados académicos

obtienen recompensas y reconocimiento por ello en el establecimiento. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

## **VI. Evaluación de los Aprendizajes**

32. Tengo claro los criterios de evaluación. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

33. La cantidad de evaluaciones para medir los contenidos vistos es suficiente. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

34. Los profesores evalúan todos los contenidos vistos en clases. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

## **VII. Disciplina Escolar**

35. La disciplina del colegio es buena. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

36. Recibimos sanciones si violamos las reglas de disciplina del colegio. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

37. Mis padres piensan que la disciplina es responsabilidad del colegio. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

38. Usualmente, nos comportamos bien en la sala de clases. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

39. Los profesores siempre aplican las medidas disciplinarias del colegio. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

40. Considero que puedo aprender más en un ambiente disciplinado. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

## **VIII. Curriculum Escolar**

41. Considero que los contenidos que se nos enseñan no son muy relevantes o prácticos para nosotros. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

42. En la mayoría de nuestras clases, se utilizan ejemplos de la vida real para ilustrar los contenidos. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

## **IX. Competencia Profesional de Profesores**

43. Nuestros profesores parecen interesados en lo que hacen. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

44. Pienso que mis profesores tienen una buena preparación en las asignaturas que imparten. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

45. La mayoría de los profesores en este colegio tiene algunos problemas para controlar el trabajo en la sala de clases. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

46. Los profesores utilizan interesantes metodologías de enseñanza. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

47. Algunos profesores utilizan recursos tecnológicos en sus clases. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

**X. Responsabilidad y Motivación de los Estudiantes**

48. Me siento motivada o motivado acerca de mis estudios. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

49. Me gustaría continuar estudiando después de finalizar mis  
estudios secundarios. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

50. Pienso que muchos estudiantes en este colegio demuestran  
responsabilidad y compromiso con sus estudios. 1 2 3 4 5 ?

**Complete con la información requerida.**

**Sexo:** Masculino \_\_\_\_\_ Femenino \_\_\_\_\_

**Edad:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Religión (opcional)**

Católica (o) \_\_\_\_\_

Evangélica(o) \_\_\_\_\_

Agnóstica (o) \_\_\_\_\_

Ateo (a) \_\_\_\_\_

Otra \_\_\_\_\_ (Especificar) \_\_\_\_\_

**Numero de años en este establecimiento:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sector de la ciudad en donde vives** \_\_\_\_\_

**Muchas Gracias por su Cooperacion!**

## **Appendix 5: Example of semi-structured interview schedule (headteachers)**

### **Semi-structured interview schedule for headteachers**

(questions are only examples, since it is a semi-structure interview)

**1. Introduction of the researcher (information about the study and its aims)**

**2. Introduction and background information of the participant**

**3. History of the school**

- When was the school founded?
- Can you tell me about the beginnings of the school? (first aims, number of students and teachers, funding system, etc.)

**4. General information about the school (school population, number of teachers, system of funding, etc.)**

- What is the total number of the students now?
- How many classes are there in the school?
- Around how many students are there per class?
- What is the maximum number of students per class?
- How many teachers are there in the school?
- What is the system of funding now?

**5. Results in national examination SIMCE**

- How do you explain or justify the positive results in SIMCE?
- Is the school very SIMCE oriented?
- Does the school provide additional preparation for SIMCE?
- Is there any system of rewards for classes and students that do well in SIMCE

## **6. Effective school conditions**

### **6.1 School leadership**

- What do you think about your kind of leadership in the school?
- Is there participation of other members of the school (teachers, students, parents) in the decision making?

### **6.2 Vision and goals of the school**

- Are the school vision and goals clear for teachers, parents and students?
- Do teachers, pupils and parents share the vision and goals of the school?

### **6.3 School climate**

- How can you describe the quality of interaction you have with teachers, parents and pupils?
- How can you describe the general climate of the school and the kind of relationships between the different members of the school?

### **6.4 Teaching and learning**

- How do you evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in the school?
- Are the lessons well planned and organized?
- Do teachers use different and innovative methodological resources?
- Do teachers focus on SIMCE preparation?
- Do teachers prepare useful material for the classes?
- Do teachers give additional help to students who are a little behind?

- Are there any support learning programmes for students who require additional academic support?
- How is students' workload in this school?
- Is there a system of rewards for students who have a good school's performance?
- Are there educational projects in the school in which students have participation?

### **6.5 Expectations of students' success**

- Do school members and teaching staff have many expectations about the results of students?
- Do parents have expectations about the professional future of their children?

### **6.6 Professional feedback**

- Do you give regular professional feedback to teachers?
- Is there a system of evaluation for teachers?

### **6.7 Evaluation of students' learning**

- Is there a frequent monitoring of the evaluation criteria of student learning?

### **6.8 Home-school partnership**

- In general, how is the relationship between parents and school leaders?
- How can you characterize the relationship between parents and teachers?



### **6.9 School discipline**

- How is the school discipline?
- Are there clear discipline rules in the school?
- Do students receive sanctions if they misbehave?

### **6.10 School curriculum and planning**

- Do teachers make regular lesson plans for the subjects they teach?
- Is the planning always based on the curriculum proposed by the Ministry of Education?

### **6.11 Teachers' competence**

- How is the degree of specialization of teachers in the subjects they teach?
- Do teachers frequently enrol in specialization and professional development courses?

### **6.12 Student motivation and responsibility**

- How are the levels of lateness and absenteeism of students?
- How can you describe, in general terms, the degree of motivation and responsibility of students in the school?
- Do students motivate more when they are given rewards for their good academic performance?
- Do the school leaders and teaching staff try to motivate students to do their best in SIMCE?

### **6.13 School links with community and external institutions**

- Does the school have any link with external institutions that provide some kind of support regarding educational processes?

### **6.14 Follow up process**

- Does the school have a process of follow up of students?
- What is the percentage of students who enrol in higher education after school?

## **Appendix 6: Example of focus group topics checklist (parents)**

Focus Group Schedule (Parents)

45 minutes

The focus group will be recorded

### **Checklist of the topics**

1. Introduction of the researcher (information about the study and its aims)
2. Introduction and background information of the participants.
3. The participants will be asked about their perceptions and opinions in relation with the following effective school conditions.

- a. School Leadership
- b. Vision and goals of the school
- c. School Climate
- d. Teaching and learning
- e. Expectations of students' success
- f. Evaluation of students' learning
- g. Home-school partnership.
- h. School discipline
- i. School curriculum and planning.
- j. Teachers' competence
- k. Student motivation and responsibility.

5. Additionally, the participants will be asked about:

- Satisfaction with the school
- Expectations and aspiration for their children
- Emotional attachment with the school.
- General opinion about the school's success.
- Things that the school can improve.

## Appendix 6: Example of NVivo interview coding in tree nodes

### Tree Nodes

| Name                         | Sources | References | Created On       | Created By | Modified On |
|------------------------------|---------|------------|------------------|------------|-------------|
| Academic performance fo      | 1       | 2          | 30/04/2010 19:09 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |
| Additional preparatio        | 4       | 5          | 30/04/2010 19:14 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Academic, social and emo     | 3       | 7          | 30/04/2010 17:52 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Academic extra supp          | 3       | 4          | 05/05/2010 18:50 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |
| Academic foundation          | 1       | 2          | 05/05/2010 15:50 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Immersion and work           | 3       | 3          | 30/04/2010 17:53 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| School extracurricula        | 2       | 3          | 30/04/2010 17:56 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Social, emotional and        | 6       | 9          | 30/04/2010 17:54 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Vocational support           | 2       | 2          | 05/05/2010 20:28 | RB         | 06/05/2010  |
| Chilean Educational Cont     | 2       | 3          | 05/05/2010 19:20 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |
| Educational opportunity fo   | 1       | 1          | 05/05/2010 19:14 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |
| Excellence in Education A    | 1       | 2          | 05/05/2010 19:44 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |
| Exceptional students' inta   | 1       | 1          | 05/05/2010 15:39 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Expectations of Students'    | 3       | 10         | 30/04/2010 19:24 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Family support               | 3       | 3          | 05/05/2010 16:38 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Head Teacher profession      | 4       | 9          | 29/04/2010 11:52 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Incentives for staff         | 3       | 6          | 30/04/2010 19:43 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| lack of teachers to cover c  | 1       | 1          | 05/05/2010 23:44 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |
| Leadership style             | 5       | 12         | 30/04/2010 19:05 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Leaders' encourage           | 2       | 5          | 05/05/2010 10:49 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Low achievement student      | 1       | 1          | 05/05/2010 23:37 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |
| National Quality Certificati | 1       | 1          | 05/05/2010 19:31 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |
| Parents' interest and invol  | 5       | 8          | 30/04/2010 19:33 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Parents-School Relations     | 5       | 8          | 02/05/2010 21:00 | RB         | 13/05/2010  |
| Perception of Educational    | 1       | 1          | 05/05/2010 20:51 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |
| Perceptions of SIMCE res     | 2       | 4          | 05/05/2010 20:30 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |
| Quality education            | 1       | 1          | 05/05/2010 19:36 | RB         | 05/05/2010  |