

## How is care incorporated into education policy? A documental analysis: 1991-2019

### ¿Cómo se incorpora el cuidado en las políticas educacionales? Un análisis documental: 1991-2019

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#### Background

In recent years, education policy has begun to prioritize comprehensive student training and health promotion. In this context, the school has been emphasized as an educational environment that should have a positive impact on students—in their families and territories—, enabling them to develop comprehensively while incorporating health promotion and prevention activities. This perspective has resulted in a number of public policy initiatives, influencing everything from the definition of education to strategies that address various areas of these processes.

This study is theoretically framed within the ethics of care, a concept developed as a way of understanding ethics by associating theory with real experiences and dilemmas. Care is delivered unequally depending on the recipient's gender, race / ethnicity, and class; thus, a field of study can be defined in relation to the Latin American context, taking into account its health and education policies. Thinking about the ethics of care in education reveals teaching-learning processes that entail a human moral encounter; therefore, it is possible to contribute to the development of children and adolescents as people and as citizens.

Given its major impact on society, education has been one of the favorite topics of Chilean policymakers over the last five decades. This process has caused education to acquire a unique structure given its rapid adaptation to the precepts of neoliberalism.

#### Aims

To identify the presence-absence of indicators of an ethics of care in national educational policies, that is, the laws on education promulgated in the last three decades and the local regulations (Municipal Education Plans, [PADEM]) in force in 2018.

#### Method & Procedures

This study is based on the constructivist paradigm, assuming that reality is co-constructed and local. A qualitative research approach was chosen, consisting in the selection, analysis, and interpretation of information in public policy documents. A selection of national educational policies were subjected to documentary analysis, a systematic procedure for reviewing documents that involves eliciting, examining, and interpreting the data to construct a meaning and understand a phenomenon based on empirical information. The non-probabilistic “snowball” sampling technique was—metaphorically—extended by analyzing the first laws found and then using the keywords (indicators) and laws mentioned in them to continue the search. Finally, a thematic analysis was carried out, with a combination of deductive and inductive analysis being used to examine 24 educational laws and 22 Municipal Education Plans (PADEM) of the Santiago Province.

#### Results & discussion

Four central categories were reconstructed: references to care, how care is delivered, who delivers care, and who is cared for, with the following subcategories:

References to care, with the subcategories object of care, purpose of care, and preventive measures and prohibitions associated with care.

How to deliver care, with the subcategories generate psychoeducational activities, regulate with a rights-based approach, and promote good coexistence.

Who delivers care, with the subcategories educational community, the state, municipalities, and psychosocial care networks.

Who is cared for, with the subcategories education professionals and students, specifically people with disabilities.

The core categories, subcategories, and reconstructed properties have different degrees of width and density. For example, regarding objects of care, mention is made of others, oneself, and the environment. However, it seems that greater emphasis is placed on the preventive measures and prohibitions associated with caregiving as explicit examples of what is undesirable in the school context, with non-violence and non-discrimination being highlighted.

With respect to care practices, they are poorly specified. In fact, there is little clarity regarding the forms that care practices adopt in educational contexts: plans and strategies tend to consist in declarations of principles and normative and legal proposals that are neither specific nor concrete.

Teachers tend to stress who delivers care, while students emphasize who is cared for.

## Conclusion

The documentary analysis carried out made it possible to identify implicit or indirect references to the ethics of care. In particular, references that emphasize aspects of school coexistence stand out, consistent with what Gilligan and Noddings assert on the issues of respect, good coexistence, and non-discrimination, which are increasingly mentioned in laws and annual municipal education plans (PADEM). This should result in more specific provisions being incorporated into the documents that guide school management, such as their mission statements and regulations or norms of coexistence.

Focusing on the diagnosis of problems implies ascribing their causes to the subjects who experience them, which in education has led to the creation of individual psychopathologizing and stigmatizing models of students. Unsurprisingly, this situation has reduced the relative importance of the educational approaches, school cultures, and pedagogical actions of each establishment.

At the same time, it is possible to link this issue with the insistent post-dictatorship interest in reducing the segregative inequities of the market logic introduced to the educational field, with public policies being devised to address the social problems described but without questioning the neoliberal model in education.

According to the categorization carried out, the object of care, the objectives of care, and the prohibitions associated with care, including their subcategories and their respective properties, can be interpreted as consistent –although indirectly– with the concepts of an ethics of care.

The article concludes by contextualizing these results within the frame of reference of the neoliberal model prevailing in Chile. Care is stressed by the logics of prohibitive, individualizing, decontextualized, and segregating policies.

**Keywords:** care, education, ethics of care, public policies

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