Inclusion of migrant students in a Chilean school: Challenges for school leadership practices

Inclusión de estudiantes migrantes en una escuela chilena: Desafíos para las prácticas del liderazgo escolar

Sebastián Gómez Chaparro*, Ricardo Sepúlveda
Programa de Magíster en Educación, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile
* sagomez3@uc.cl

Background
Considering the intensification of migration to Chile and the increase in the national enrollment of migrant students, it is necessary to research how public schools are facing the processes of educational inclusion. During the last decade, Chilean studies have been focused on the characterization, prejudice and racism associated with migrants in the school system. Despite these research efforts, little evidence has been reported regarding leadership practices that promote inclusion and how school leaders deal with it.

Aims
This study aims to understand the principal leadership practices in relation to the inclusion process of migrant students and the challenges that a public school must face in one of the areas with a high migrant population.

Method & procedures
According to the nature of the problem, the case study methodology was used, being intrinsic and descriptive. To carry out this research, different data collection techniques were used. Among them, the review of documents, 12 semi-structured interviews and a focus group. The participants were the senior management team (the principal, the counselor, and the social worker), different room teachers, inspectors, members of the school integration team and six parents participated. The school is public and located in Santiago, with a high level of social vulnerability (88%), having the largest number of migrant students in the area and the largest increase of migrant students during the last three years. Thematic analysis was carried out, using the software Atlas Ti. 7.0.

Results & discussion
The main results are grouped into four large dimensions: Leadership in the intake of migrant students, inclusion barriers and solutions, managerial leadership practices linked to the inclusion of migrant students, and support needs around inclusion. These dimensions revealed that although access opportunities are identified, there are various institutional challenges to establish guidelines that allow the monitoring and follow-up of migrant students, focusing the discussion on the relevance of promoting a better inclusive and intercultural education to the entire educational community.

Conclusions
The conclusions of this study highlight the concern of public policies and regulatory entities to avoid violating the right of inclusion of migrant students in the country. From this perspective, the premise of equal treatment seems to be a propitious scenario for the deployment of dynamics that tend to reproduce the invisibility of migrant students towards the rest of the educational community. Therefore, it is proposed that

the state, as a guarantor institution, can reconsider the present guidelines in order to establish clear and mandatory educational inclusion regulations for public and private schools. In this way, further attention from critical intercultural tools may be necessary, advocating for permanent spaces of deconstruction, reflection and accompaniment around migrant children and adolescents.

Keywords: educational inclusion, educational management, intercultural education, migration

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