

From urban to rural schools: A case study of Chilean students

De la escuela urbana a la rural: Un estudio de casos de escolares chilenos

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Background

Enrolment composition in rural schools in Chile has changed in recent years due to the admission of students with characteristics different from those historically usual. The rural school no longer only receives children from the territory where it is located, for whom it was originally created, but also receives students from urban establishments. The changes in enrolment are mainly due to two social phenomena. The first, of recent date, relates to families who have come to live in the territory or who come from nearby urban sectors. The second phenomenon has to do with school dynamics of exclusion affecting girls, boys and young people in Chile, despite recent regulations. Rural schools have faced the challenge of receiving urban students who have been excluded from the selection processes allowed prior to the Inclusion Law (2016), as well as those who, having entered an establishment, were subjected to exclusionary practices such as veiled expulsions, in which parents are suggested to change the school student, or suffered bullying from their peers. It is important to note the relationship between institutional policies and inclusive practices of schools, with the evolution of students' school trajectories, since the change from one school to another is a significant milestone.

Aims

In this context, we conducted research on the school trajectory of students who have been enrolled in urban schools and migrated to rural schools, considering the perspectives of children. The objective was to understand and analyze the subjective experience regarding their own school trajectory, considering the change of school.

Method & procedures

We developed a qualitative study during the year 2019 with students who had a recent change from urban to rural school while studying basic education. We worked with case studies, to approach the experience around school trajectories in general and the change from an urban to a rural educational establishment in particular, from the perspective of students. A methodological strategy was designed that combined the development of semi-structured interviews in conjunction with the creation of a collage with images provided by the researchers. Interviews and collages were analyzed based on the principles and procedures of qualitative data analysis, under the method of content analysis and content analysis. From this process, emerging interpretative categories of the trajectories of the participating students are presented as results.

Results & discussion

Two categories of analysis emerge. The first category is named "Seeking recognition of adults in urban and rural schools", and shows a school experience marked by the absence of adults and violent relationships with peers in the urban school, as opposed to the school experience in the rural school with significant and close ties. The second category is called "Change of establishment as a school choice from the perspective of students". In the market education model, where school choice is a fundamental pillar, the children's agency appears at this point, since it is possible to appreciate in the analyzed cases that both students give account of their trajectories as school subjects who have something to say, and that their opinions on lived experiences are part of a family reflection and become relevant elements to decide the change of school.

Conclusion

It is important to highlight the role that Chilean rural schools are playing in the continuity of the school trajectories of many girls and boys, particularly those who have experienced exclusion in urban schools. This is related to the development of highly valued inclusive cultures as opposed to the exclusionary dynamics in urban schools. The results confirm how the particular school trajectories of students are determined by the regulations, pedagogical links and learning opportunities created by schools, that is, from the perspective of inclusion, for its institutional policies, culture and inclusive practices.

Keywords: case study, inclusion, rural school, school paths, social studies of children

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