

## The hybridity of the psychopedagogical evaluation model in Special Education policies in Chile

### La hibridez del modelo de evaluación psicopedagógica en las políticas de Educación Especial en Chile

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#### Background

Special Education policies underwent significant changes following the enactment of Decree 170 (2009) by the Chilean Ministry of Education. This decree introduced new procedures under a subsidy law that funds support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including psychopedagogical evaluation, which adopts a comprehensive perspective. This study examines the implementation of the psychopedagogical evaluation model with the aim of identifying tensions between educational policy and the phenomena of school inclusion-exclusion that impact the population with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. These individuals participate in the psychopedagogical assessment processes carried out by the school integration programs in the municipality.

#### Aims

To analyze the implementation of the psychopedagogical evaluation model in Special Education policies in Chile, starting from the enactment of Decree 170 by the Ministry of Education (Mineduc), focusing on municipal schools in the city of Puerto Montt, located in the Los Lagos Region.

#### Method & procedures

The approach is qualitative with a descriptive scope, employing a convenience sample of 31 participants. This sample comprises nine Special Education teachers, thirteen Elementary Education teachers, five Psychologists, and two Speech Therapists, all of whom are affiliated with the Department of Municipal Education Administration of three urban schools of Puerto Montt. These schools were selected based on their longevity in implementing the model and their high level of economic vulnerability. Data collection involved three focus groups, each comprising professionals from the educational centers, organized into three interdisciplinary groups, one for each institution. Additionally, two in-depth interviews were conducted with local educational authorities during the second semester of 2022. The analysis was carried out through a process of coding and categorization with the support of the Nvivo program. The entire procedure was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Granada, Spain, on July 12, 2023, under protocol number 634/CEIH/2023.

#### Results & discussion

The interviewees acknowledge improvements in access conditions to schools; however, the reality within the classroom remains largely unfavorable for diverse students. This reflects an ongoing struggle against exclusion. Decree 170, by classifying students and allocating resources based on these needs, does not promote an inclusive approach. Achieving inclusivity requires a reconfiguration of school culture towards greater inclusion and better resource management to prevent social exclusion. According to the Ministry of Education, psychopedagogical assessment should involve interdisciplinary decision-making to determine the necessary support for students' academic progress. However, in practice, it has operated more as an administrative procedure, generating tensions with classroom reality and prioritizing bureaucratic demands over pedagogical work. This is evident in teachers'

discomfort with the quantity of documents requested and the time spent on administrative procedures instead of providing support to students. Although the diagnosis is partially valued, it is considered extensive and unnecessary in some cases. Furthermore, there is a technologization of the discourse surrounding diagnosis, which reinforces a structure based on accountability. Teachers express dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic burden, which limits time for pedagogical work and student support.

### Conclusion

Comprehensive diagnostic assessment aims to enhance support planning for inclusive schools but is hindered by bureaucratic burdens and biomedical bias. Professionals acknowledge the need to focus on determining supports but note a disconnect between diagnosis and implemented actions, prioritizing control and bureaucracy over pedagogy. A profound transformation in schools and educational policies is required to achieve true inclusion, involving a rethinking of School Integration Programs (PIE) and establishing stable budgets to ensure all schools have necessary resources. While significant progress has been made in accessibility in Chile, constructive criticism and alignment between discourse and practice are essential to promote an inclusive school culture.

**Keywords:** educational policy, inclusive education, medical model, psychopedagogical assessment, school inclusion

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**Conflict of interests:** The author declares to have no conflict of interests.



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