

Barriers and facilitators for leading the development of inclusive school cultures in Chile

René Valdés

Inmaculada Gómez-Hurtado

ABSTRACT

A school with inclusive orientation should have a leadership team that works to develop a culture that promotes school inclusion. This is a difficult task, due to the administrative demands and excess of responsibilities that school principals and their educational teams have. This is why, this study aims to identify the barriers and facilitators faced by leadership teams to develop an inclusive culture within schools. Within the framework of a case study with an ethnographic focus, participant observations, document analysis, interviews and focus groups were carried out during eight months in two Chilean schools that exhibit two different levels of development. The main results reveal that the barriers for leadership teams, regardless of the level of development of inclusive cultures, are related to the lack of promotion of student participation and a school leadership focus on the more bureaucratic aspects. However, the school with a higher development of inclusive culture presents less barriers and more facilitators, among which are the commitment of the leadership team to a pedagogical and inclusive focus, appreciation for diversity and promotion of teacher reflection.

KEYWORDS: Inclusive education; leadership; school culture; barriers and facilitators; Chile.

Introduction

International literature accounts for the relevance acquired by school leadership in the educational improvement of schools (Bush, 2016; García-Martínez and Higuera-Rodríguez, 2018; Hopkins, 2018; Weinstein and Muñoz, 2019). **A special acknowledgement is given to the importance of formal leaders in school change and improvement processes** (Hallinger y Heck, 2011; Seashore et al., 2010) **who become main agents for the development of leadership practices that promote an adequate management of diversity** (Booth y Ainscow, 2015; DeMatthews, Serafini, et al., 2020; DeMatthews, Billingsley, et al., 2020; Fernández-Batanero y Hernández-Fernández, 2013; Leithwood, 2005; León et al., 2018; León, 2012; Ryan, 2016; Yildirim, 2021).

The compared analysis of school leadership policies shows that the challenge of leadership teams lies not only on school administration anymore, but in becoming leading agents in the pedagogical decision-making process (Rosales-Yepes et al., 2020; Cancino y Vera, 2017; Vaillant, 2015). If we look at this challenge from an inclusive perspective then, in addition to develop learning, the school must ensure student access and participation, elements that go hand-in-hand with the development of inclusive practices, policies and cultures. This last element becomes especially relevant if we think of inclusive school leadership (Author, 2014; León, Crisol and Moreno, 2018; Ryan, 2017; Authors, 2018).

However, both inclusion and leadership take the form and direction according to their educational systems and geographical contexts (Ainscow, 2020). **In the Chilean case, the situation is especially relevant. Although the Chilean educational system has an explicit commitment with inclusive education with a focus on access, participation and learning of all students at a school** (Ministerio

de Educación [Mineduc], 2015), literature warns us that Chile is an emblematic case of neoliberal rationality and accountability, with a homogenization tendency, a focus on academic performance and that uses high-stakes standardized tests to rank schools and place them in performance categories (Bellei, 2020; Falabella, 2020; Lerena & Trejos, 2015; Sisto, 2018). In this context, the leadership teams are expected to be the protagonists. For example: according to the Guidelines about diversified teaching strategies for elementary education in the context of Decree 83 in Chile (Mineduc, 2015) the following is stated:

The role of leadership and the effective participation and implication of the principal and/or leadership team are necessary conditions in order to assure a successful process, and the implementation of any measure aimed to promote (...) the changes that are required to move forward in the acknowledging of diversity in learning and towards more inclusive curricular processes (p.39).

As it can be observed, the leadership team in Chile must conduct the development of inclusive schools under evaluation and accountability policies, and the excess of roles and responsibilities, which are elements that are barriers for the development of an inclusive leadership (Weinstein y Muñoz, 2019). However, studies on inclusive schools agree on the relevance of developing a culture oriented towards school inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2015; Author, 2014; León, 2012; Morrissey, 2021; Ryan, 2016; Authors, 2018), claiming that: (1) an inclusive culture is both a starting point and a finish line; (2) a school is recognized by the type of culture it promotes; if inclusive, it will promote an inclusive culture, if academist, it will promote an academist culture; (3) the inclusive culture is the starter for the promotion of inclusive schools; every school that moves towards inclusion must necessarily modify their cultural manifestations; (4) the success of inclusive practices and policies will depend of an equally inclusive culture; and (5) an inclusive

culture allows supporting learning of all students. In this scenario, the challenge is to take a careful look to the relation between school leadership and the development of inclusive cultures. (Blandford, 2013; Murillo and Hernández-Castilla, 2014; Ryan, 2006; author, 2020).

Specialized literature states that leadership and the attitudes of management towards diversity are important elements in the process of change and improvement (Author, 2014; León, et al., 2018; Romero, 2021; Author, 2020). In particular, it has been observed that leadership has an impact on student performance (Hernández-Castilla, Murillo and Hidalgo, 2017) but also on the response the educational center has to diversity (Authors, 2019). Therefore, to develop a school culture that is committed to inclusion is a matter on which the school leader has a direct impact. **This is known as an inclusive leadership style** (Mor Bakar et al., 2021; Ryan, 2006; Ryan, 2016; Morrissey, 2021; Harris y Chapman, 2002; Kugelmass, 2003; Muijs et al., 2007; Murillo et al., 2010) **and includes the following: (a) the responsibility does not lie only on the principal, but other leaderships are acknowledged (leadership team, middle leaders, informal leaders, among others) ; (b) all leaders, formal or not, defend inclusion as a model and are committed to its proposals; (c) it seeks to minimize social injustice situations, whether among adults or students; (d) leaders develop an inclusive, democratic and participative school culture and; (e) there is a direct implication on management and care for diversity. This way of understanding inclusive leadership is replicated in studies about good inclusive practices that state that schools that have an inclusive leadership have cultures that are open to diversity, professional support, good school climate, collaborative work, a pedagogical focus with an emphasis on all students, democratic participation and even closing the gaps between policy and practice** (Abawi et al., 2018; Al-Mahdy y Eman, 2017; Morrissey, 2021 ; Francis et al., 2016; Miskolci et al., 2016; Osiname, 2017;; Mor Bakar et al., 2021; León et al., 2018 ; López-López et al., 2021; Thompson y Matkin, 2020; Soto-Mayor et al., 2020). **A**

fundamental element for the development of this type of leadership is the ability of leaders to build an inclusive culture (León, 2012), because inclusion is only a trend until it becomes a matter of values and culture (Booth y Ainscow, 2015).

Inclusive leadership basically seeks to promote an inclusive culture, which is defined as the creation of a welcoming, collaborative and stimulating school community, with the development of inclusive values shared by all the school staff (Booth and Ainscow, 2015). Therefore, efforts are made towards a leadership that is inclusive, where the leader places human relationships at the center of their action, above strategies and resources, and perceives the education community as a system that guides the transformation towards the community, and not only inwards (Leiva, Gairin and Guerra, 2019; León, 2012; Murillo and Hernández-Castilla, 2014; Author, 2020).

Several studies, (Kugelmass, 2003; Murillo et al., 2010; Fernández-Batanero y Hernández, 2013), carried out to describe the characteristics of inclusive leaders conclude that school leaders, beyond the characteristics mentioned in the previous page, are nurtured from different leadership styles, since inclusive leadership is situated and local (Ainscow, 2020). However, the development of a school culture that values diversity and defends inclusion is one of the most reported practices by educational research (Author, 2022).

Although school leadership has become a safe strategy to conduct the development of inclusive schools, there are still barriers that persist and have an effect on the work of the leadership. Some are external (such as teacher education, educational policies, or the dominant economic model), and others are internal (such as school culture, planning and functioning processes within the educational center and classroom practices (Agell, Sala and Torrent, 2013; Booth and Ainscow, 2015; López Melero, 2012; Sekkel, Zanellatto and Brandao, 2010). We understand that the barriers and facilitators that a leadership team displays regarding the promotion of an inclusive school are

mainly related to the context and the relationships that are established between the educational actors where they carry out their work. Because of this, this study goes in-depth into this dilemma, in an effort to get to know first-hand which are the barriers and facilitators that leadership teams present and face in order to develop an inclusive culture within schools.

Methodology

Through a qualitative research design, two ethnographic case studies were performed (Stake, 2005). This implies situating the analysis at the depth of each case, suspending our personal impressions, but making the process public to the participants at the same time. **In addition, having an ethnographic perspective (Diaz de Rada, 2003) allows broader methodological possibilities to inquire in practices and cultural processes that are at the basis of the school's work.**

Study cases and participant selection

For case selection, a validated survey on inclusive practices was applied (Author, 2018) to 65 schools in the region of Valparaíso, Chile. **This instrument was designed and validated for the context of a different study on school climate and inclusive education (Author, 2018) with the participation of 2868 students and 1870 adults from 130 schools from the Regions of Tarapacá, Metropolitan and Valparaíso, Chile.** The specific dimension that was considered was that which measured inclusive culture from the perspective of Booth and Ainscow (2015) and included eight items that relate to the indicators suggested by the inclusion index (see Table 1).

Schools were selected according to their position in the frequency of reported practices (1= the school with greater frequency and 65= the school with the least frequency). School 1 presented a high inclusive culture according to parents (10 of 65) and professionals (16 of 65). School 2

presented a low inclusive culture according to parents (43 of 65) and professionals (35 of 65). Both selected schools belong to the north area of the Valparaiso region. This means that schools were selected for their degree of development (high and low) of their inclusive cultures, considering the questionnaire's indicators. School 1 (with high values of inclusive culture practices) is a subsidized school with 30 years of existence. School 2 (with low values of inclusive culture practices) is a public municipal school with 50 years of existence. Both institutions are urban, tuition-free, with no admission selection and have several programs and initiatives for serving diversity, are located in vulnerable neighborhoods, and have declared school inclusion as one of their institutional purposes in their institutional educational projects.

[Table 1 near here]

Field work and data analysis

For data production, 60 participant observations were made in formal (classrooms, meeting rooms) and informal (school yard, neighborhood, and recreational spaces) spaces, and 10 interviews were conducted with both principals, 10 interviews with middle leaders (technical-pedagogical unit chief and general inspector), 10 interviews with teachers, five interviews with families and five interviews with students (40 interviews in total). There were also 8 focus groups held with principals, 6 with teachers, 4 with students and 2 with families (20 focus groups in total). For the development of the different techniques, authorization was requested from school principals, informed consent forms from adults and informed assents from students. All participants decided to be part of the research and signed the corresponding protocols which were endorsed by the sponsoring university. Simultaneously, four key files were reviewed per school

(Institutional Educational Project [PEI, for its name in Spanish], school climate manual, school rules and regulations and the Educational Improvement Plan [PME, for its name in Spanish]). The ethnographic immersion took 8 months in both schools. Between 40 and 42 visits to each one of the institutions were made in a period of 40 weeks. In order to analyze the produced data during the ethnographic stage, thematic-categorical content analysis was used. It is of thematic type, since it is processed in an interpretative and inferential form with topics originating from direct and clear declarations (Vásquez, 1994). *The process was inductive and was carried out as follows:*

- *Organization of the material.* Audio data and field notes were transcribed and read in order to identify the first useful data and reject initial interpretative hypotheses.
- *Open coding.* Through the Atlas.ti mediation software texts were segmented in small units of meaning that refer to barriers and facilitators and a codebook was created. Then, following suggestions by Atkinson and Coffey (2003) common patterns were looked for in order to organize the codes and refine the hermeneutic basis.
- *Categorization.* The treatment of codes allowed to group them in functional work categories, considering fragments that refer to barriers and facilitators. For this purpose, categories with the greater fragment density were prioritized and those with few associated codes were discarded. Therefore, the set of barriers and facilitators that are presented in the results section has a high number of grouped quotes.

According to Flick (2012) qualitative research must guarantee validity and plausibility. In order to achieve this goal, a researcher's triangulation was performed (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). This includes sharing quotes and codes with other researchers with the purpose of minimizing the deviations derived from the researcher as a person. The result of this triangulation revealed a

majority agreement on the quotes that will be presented in the results section. In addition, the validity criteria also imply to highlight the actions that the research has facilitated to promote a transformative agency and empower the educational collectives for action. This criterion is observed in the results and was confirmed after the research through a process of delivery and analysis of results with both schools: In School 1, a meeting with representatives of the educational community was held; in the case of School 2, the meeting was specifically with the leadership team. The barriers and facilitators that are presented next gather the impressions and the value assigned by the participants.

Results

According to the statement in the previous section, the school with a more developed inclusive culture will be labeled School 1, while the school with a lesser developed inclusive culture will be School 2. Table 2 presents the barriers and facilitators found in the analysis process, which will be analyzed later.

[Table 2 near here]

School 1

The barriers for School 1 are three: low student participation, bureaucratic leadership and a poor connection with the community.

In regard to the low participation of students, one of the elements that emerged from the application of the survey when selecting the schools, and later in the case study, is the evidence of

an outlying participation of students in key decisions of the school organization. This means, students may want changes, but cannot demand them. Their presence is not required by the school for important decision-making. The school council, which gathers students and other adults at the school, takes place in order to inform about previously made decisions, but not to consult them or work together.

These meetings [the school council] as formal meetings, most of them are not held very formally. I mean, it seems they are held because they are supposed to and because they have a goal to fulfill, but the school council is more like an obligation (Head of Studies, School 1).

The second barrier is the strong bureaucratic leadership found in this school. One of the important aspects, and even well-valued by people at the school, is the administrative role of the principal. In several interviews and conversations with school staff the phrase ‘the principal is a very good person and administrator’ appears repeatedly. However, the responses of the school about the pedagogical role of the principal are not as strong. The leadership style of the principal is oriented more towards bureaucratic and administrative management than to the pedagogical aspect. Although the principal focuses on the hiring of good teachers and fosters some leaders within the school, she mostly performs a derivation of roles, at times distancing herself from the pedagogical and technical role of her position. These tasks are taken over by the Technical Manager.

Finally, the third barrier found in School 1 refers to the poor connection to the community. The necessary articulation between family, school and neighbourhood represents a co-responsibility principle that is essential for the observance of the rights of girls, boys and youth; in

particular, of the right to an inclusive education. Although School 1 is an institution where families seem to be happy, there is no observation of actions from the leadership and the school in general to move towards a stronger relationship with the surrounding community with the purpose of strengthening the identity of the school.

I feel that the bond with the neighbors could continue to develop, not with neighbors who have enrolled their children in this school, but with neighbors in general. I don't know, there is a soccer court and maybe someone wants to rent it to hold soccer games, with the perspective of moving towards a focus on community (teacher focus group, School 1).

The facilitators for the promotion of an inclusive culture in School 1 are six: cultural markers, pedagogical focus, a reflective team of teachers, the good relationship between adults, a high value assigned to the PIE and the stability of the leadership team.

The first facilitator observed are cultural markers. This is a group of people that, while not being institutional leaders, have a role of influence within the schools. These types of individuals will be referred to as cultural markers, since they mark the culture, they remind us of it, they highlight it and place it at the center of the discussion when decisions need to be made. Cultural markers remind the rest of their colleagues of the purpose of the institution and the reason they are there. In the case of this school there are three people identified as cultural markers: 2 teachers and 1 patio inspector. All of them are leaders and are present at conversations and interviews as key agents of the school center. Cultural markers are relevant people when orientation is needed; they allow to come back to the goal that initially attracted various peers and collaborators. This is how the principal describes one these markers:

The general inspector is not a teacher, she interacts with students wonderfully, notice her characteristics, I think she is a vital element for the success of the relationships we have (principal, School 1).

In regard to the pedagogical focus as a facilitator, we can say that one of the key characteristics of this school and one that gives it a high inclusive orientation is the pedagogical focus based on context and not on the deficit. The school makes its purpose to develop learning in every student, paying special attention to what teachers and leaders can do with students and not rely on a static discourse that says that some students are “lacking”, “poor kids” or discourses such as “they must change” or “they must adapt”, referring to students with behavioral or academic difficulties. On one hand, the facilitator encourages teachers in their pedagogical path, and on the other, it pays attention to school practices and not only to the student or their context. This makes the role of the teacher (or school) visible, and places the responsibility in the classroom practices, and not only in the life of the students; “today we are 100% focused on the pedagogical”, states the Head of Studies of the school.

Without a doubt, another facilitator is the existence of a reflective team of teachers. The exercise of reflection by teachers is an element that is identified both in formal and informal spaces. From the conversations in the school yard (where teachers talk with one another and share visions about the school and the students), to teacher councils (where a seldom seen self-criticism takes place) where teachers, always with a permanent dose of humor, engage in dialogue seeking to find solutions to the problems of the school. Reflection in this school is developed with constant encouragement, flexibility of teaching and the permanent demand and self-criticism of teachers.

Another key element is the good relationship between teachers, leaders and non-teacher professionals. This is seen mainly in three areas: a) between teachers and school yard inspectors, b) between family members (parents' leadership) and the principal of the school and c) between teachers of different subjects and levels. In addition, having unified relations within an institution not only facilitates smooth communication processes, but also makes everything mentioned in the previous sections evident and becomes a promoter to fulfill the objectives of the institutional education project.

It is different when you stand in front of a class and say 'kids', work as a team, but you and your colleagues don't, they see that during recess, they see jokes and hugs, they see unity, they don't see teachers insulting each other from one corner to another, which I have seen in other schools. You don't see that here. Therefore, we can ask our kids to become what we are, a team, and a team has strengths and weaknesses in the same way they do (teacher focus group, School 1).

A fundamental facilitator is the high value assigned to the PIE. The School Integration Program (PIE, for its name in Spanish) is the program that attends to diversity in the school. It is a strategy of the Chilean educational system that provides educational answers to students with need for support. In the case of this educational center, the program is highly valued and considered a facilitator for the various objectives of the school related to school learning. In the last school council we attended, the PIE professionals were rewarded for their work in serving diversity and the promotion of a work culture that is orientated to inclusion.

The PIE has been the most important program, since it is fundamental to what we do regarding these issues and allows teachers to empower themselves and feel valued and that they are given responsibility for this class (Head of Studies, School 1).

The last facilitator is a classic within the literature on school leadership, stability of the leadership team. Stability of the positions of people that compose the leadership team appears as a facilitator according to the various voices in the school. The leadership team has been comprised by the same members during the last five years. This allows to set a leadership with certain characteristics and functions. The leadership team is highly valued by this, but also because it sets a precedent in terms of inclusion in relation to the previous team.

School 2

School 2 appears to have a higher number of barriers, which are five: low student participation, imprecise roles and functions, bureaucratic leadership, low value assigned to the PIE and an unstable leadership team.

As in the case of School 1, School 2 also displays low student participation, however in different form, since although this is a concern for the principal, it is not necessarily resolved in concrete actions. One of the signatures of the educational project of School 2 is promoting participation of all actors, including students. Although this is positive, it does not translate into practice. Both in meetings and comments, teachers point out that in the day-to-day reality of the school, students are only informed about decisions, but not consulted on them.

The school council is supposed to be consultative, but according to my participation is more informative than consultative. It has shown some consultive features for a specific project, but students are only informed of the decisions made by the school (School Climate Coordinator, School 2)

The imprecision of roles and functions is an important barrier in school 2. One of the more frequent expressions during our stay in School 2 for the case study was '*we are a little messy. Get used to it*'. This phrase was repeated by teachers, education assistants and school leaders. The lack of precision in roles and functions of the different actors in the school is manifested in some of the improvised practices in school management, for example, in those who take on leadership in certain meetings, in the coordination for cleaning certain school facilities, in executing welcome protocols for newly arrived students, in the execution of regular workflow when authorities visit the school and in other minor tasks such as class book reviews or various types of information communications for parents. This discrepancy of actions turns into a barrier insomuch that the school cannot fulfill its institutional purpose due to the unnecessary waste of time in solving problems that are more of form and not of substance.

Another evident barrier is the bureaucratic leadership. One of the first things the principal said to us was: '*my leadership style is permissive, I don't generate more problems that those we already have, I only administrate*'. Although the principal defined himself in such a way on that occasion, the truth is that this is the opinion of the rest of the school, who does not see a leader in the principal, but an administrator. Therefore, the leadership style that can be observed in this school is more of an administrative one than pedagogical. This is a barrier to the extent to which the principal does not get involved in the cultural changes of the school. Opposite School 1, in

which the pedagogical aspect is compensated by the Head of Studies, in School 2 nobody purposefully takes on the role of pedagogical leader.

Because I think that principals still think that their role is to be an administrative leader. They still have not been empowered to think the principal is a pedagogical leader, not the administrative leader, not there to request schedules. Neither is the Technical Pedagogical Coordinator, in order to see if they complied or not. They need to be working with the teachers, pedagogically, not only supervising. That is not leadership work, doing things because it is mandated (Interview to PIE team, School 2).

The low value assigned to the PIE is another barrier in School 2. An element that characterizes schools with inclusive orientation in Chile is the core role of the School Integration Program (PIE) and the collaborative work among teachers. In the case of School 2, the PIE team adopts a passive role with low incidence in key decisions of the school and with a weak emphasis in classroom work. Regarding co-teaching work, it also becomes a low facilitating element if the relationship between the PIE and teachers is complicated. The Head of Studies is very critical of the PIE and does not hesitate to mention that the program needs a turn in regard to its classroom work. Therefore, the PIE is not highly valued by the school, and it is not considered a facilitator for school improvement.

Finally, a barrier for this school is the instability of the leadership team. School 2 is a school with a team that has had several people in leadership positions: in the last five years it's had 3 principals and 2 UTP (Technical Pedagogical Unit) coordinators. This is considered a barrier according to the voices of the school in the sense that a clear leadership has not been systematized for all people. In addition, the technical coordinator is also the inspector, which results in hybrid roles that make pedagogical work difficult.

The main facilitators of this school are the creation of supporting networks, connection with the community and surroundings and the focus on school environment.

The connection with other institutions, both from the same or different cities, is also a highly valued element by the leadership team. Not only networks such as the police and hospitals, but also churches, foundations and NGO's that collaborate in some way towards student well-being. This is especially valued by teachers, who mention that the principal has several contacts that can facilitate the optimizing of resources and take advantage of the opportunities for families and students to access services that are not always available to them, such as medical care, nutrition specialists, etc. These support networks also allow to place the school as an access centre for institutions that wish to use the school's facilities: contact with churches, foundations, NGO's, etc. Having support networks facilitates the leadership function since it allows to broaden the functions of the school and respond to the various needs of students and families. As explained by the school principal:

'Networking is one of my virtues, I have my contacts, I have the ability to connect with institutions, with people, I get along with everyone. I don't get into feuds with anyone, despite liking a good argument, but I don't have problems with anyone, so I have good support networks, for example the main one is the municipality, I worked at city hall as a councilman, so I have a very important network there' (Principal, School 2)

The relationship with the community and surroundings is another facilitator for this school. The celebration of milestones, festivities and anniversaries is a highly valued element by this school in general. The effort to carry out various celebrations such as Independence Day, family day, student day, teacher's day, welcome to school day, etc. is well received by the different sectors of the school since they link the school with the neighbourhood and the families. This has been

mentioned, especially by the principal of the school, as a practice that has allowed to integrate all actors of the school. The principal mentions that one of his greatest interests is to strengthen human relationships, the logic of the community school, the reciprocity with neighbours and the well-being of all people within the institution. In this sense, the principal focuses his purposes in generating opportunities for cooperation and school community.

Another important facilitator within the school which also, according to the collected data, seems to guide a great part of the practices of the school is the focus on School Climate. This focus is embodied in one important actor: the School Climate Coordinator. She is a hinge or bridge of sorts that links discourses and practices between teachers, students, supporting professionals and leaders. Her role in the management team has allowed her to have a panoramic vision about the school practices, winning the trust of the leadership team. In this sense, not only the focus on school climate, but also the role of the school climate coordinator has become an important resource within the school, especially when there is the need to take measures, reach agreements, or lead and manage decisions that are directly related with school improvement. The School Climate Coordinator states that “it is an issue, a concern. It is difficult because school climate not only is an issue among children, but also among adults”.

Conclusions

The first that must be considered is that barriers, for its greater part, belong to the internal policy dimension of the school and institutional organization. The lack of systematization for a profound student participation, disorganization of support, absence of managerial leadership with a pedagogical focus or the imprecision of roles and functions correspond to the diverse sub-dimensions and indicators that belong to inclusive policies (Booth and Ainscow, 2015). This is

coherent if we think that the focus of this study was on the barriers that leadership teams present or face. This means that, if we think of inclusive cultures, the relation with the practices of the leadership team is inevitable (Author, 2018).

In the case of School 1 – a school center with a high inclusive culture – it presented less barriers and more facilitators. Regarding the barriers, these were centered mainly around the low student participation in the school decision-making process, in the excess of pragmatism of the leadership team, the special emphasis of an administrative leadership by the principal, and the poor connection to the community. All these elements are barriers for the creation of an inclusive culture since they affect the possibility of building an educational community or maintaining this community in time if it exists. In the case of the facilitators, these are mainly centered around the quality of the staff of the school - teacher reflection, a good relationship among adults, a stable leadership team and a high value given to the program that attends to diversity -. These elements combine well with the pedagogical focus of the school and the presence of cultural markers, individuals that, not being formal leaders of the institution, lead and gather the rest of their peers towards the development of a culture of inclusion. If we think that inclusion is, above all, a matter of values and that it implies a strong cultural emphasis, then we can expect School 1 to have these facilitators.

In the case of School 2 – a school centre with low inclusive culture – it presented more barriers than facilitators. The barriers are centered on organizational aspects (imprecision of roles and functions, low student participation, administrative leadership and instability of leadership team) and on attitudinal aspects (low value of the School Integration Program). An inclusive culture includes the creation of a community that is organized to provide support. If the functions are not clear, and if in addition, there is no leadership to provide guide regarding functions, then it

becomes difficult to sustain a systematic process of cultural development. In regard to facilitators and related to the school's concern about school climate, network generation and links with the community seem to be in the same field of action: the need to build a cohesive community. However, according to the reports of the participants, this concern is still at a discourse level, but not materialized in practices, and in particular in practices that allow to reduce the existing barriers in the institution. This implies thinking about the school climate coordination from a human relations' and extra-academic activities perspective and not from an inclusive, formative and pedagogical perspective.

If we establish a relation between the barriers in both schools, although different in terms of the criteria by which they were selected, we find two relevant areas in terms of educational inclusion: low student participation and leadership of the school principal with an emphasis on the administrative and not the pedagogical. The case of low student participation is a concerning issue. An inclusive school is, above all, a democratic school, and therefore, the consideration of the voices of students is essential if the goal is to create a community in which everyone feels welcome and valued (Figuerola-Céspedes and Yañez-Urbina, 2020). The same happens with school leadership, if this is not clearly inclusive, then there is no guarantee of moving towards a school with an inclusive model (Óskarsdóttir et al., 2020). The previously mentioned barriers provide us with a relevant observation: the path of inclusive cultures is a continuum, unending, and therefore, it has no expectation of being a closed process. Developing inclusive cultures means a constant and intentional action that must necessarily undergo reviews, as the case, for example, of student participation and school leadership. Therefore, we have two relevant challenges. **However, when talking about inclusion and leadership we cannot leave aside the social, economic, and geographic characteristics** (Ainscow, 2020). **In this context, the neoliberal logic that characterizes the Chilean**

educational system affects the consolidation of inclusion, since it promotes principles such as competition and standardization (Sisto, 2018). This calls for greater discussion in relation to the development of inclusive school cultures.

In looking into the facilitators, attention must be placed to a key promotor of the school with a high inclusive culture: cultural markers. Cultural markers are three individuals that carry out tasks that influence and mobilize their peers, despite not being institutional leaders. They can be seen in meetings providing constructive opinions, reflecting, reminding their colleagues the signature of the school and the importance of the work with students, they mark the culture of the centre and are constantly mentioned by the participants of this study in interviews and focus groups. A great part of the reflection of the teachers and the good relationship between adults is due to them, they act as a bridge and the leadership team empowers and trusts them as other leaders in the institution. Although we can find middle leadership in School 2, we did not find cultural markers. Exploring this type of leaders is, without a doubt, a projection worth considering.

The results of the study relate to the findings in national and international research about the importance of the cultural dimension when leading a school (De Matthews and Mawhinney, 2014; Conrad and Brown, 2011; Author, 2016; Hoppey and Mcleskey, 2013). This means, that the focus of a leadership for inclusion must be on school culture. The aforementioned authors state that inclusive leadership must create the cultural conditions for inclusion to thrive. The same in the case of barriers. Literature mentions that inclusion ends up being a personal matter and this implies that there are restricted conceptions of diversity or negative attitudes towards it (Glenda et al., 2014; Author, 2016; Lindqvista and Nilholmc, 2014; Miskolci et al., 2016; Osiname, 2018). The findings also allow to understand that leadership, as an influence process, does not lie only on school principals, but it extends to other actors that are committed to the project of an inclusive

education, such as middle or informal leaders. In this context, Figure 1 presents the challenges that leadership teams have to develop an inclusion culture.

[Figure 1 near here]

The projections aim at identifying non-institutional leaders that carry out mobilization and influence processes within the schools and do not hold management positions. In addition, it becomes relevant to perform critical studies on inclusion paying special attention to student participation. If the challenge is to move towards democratic schools, then leaders must draw attention to voices and words of the less heard actors. The main limitation of this study is that it does not consider the participation of municipalities, whom through the administration of Chilean schools become relevant actors in the field of school leadership. This, at the same time, poses a challenge in terms of inclusion and leadership. We consider it fundamental to continue the ethnographic research related to inclusive leadership, complementing it with quantitative research that allows us to continue to move forward towards the development of the key elements that lead to an inclusive education for all.

Declaration of conflicting interests

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