THE PERCEPTIONS OF FOUR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN CHILE ABOUT THEIR IMPACT ON STUDENT OUTCOMES AND OPPORTUNITIES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

BY

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of four school principals in Chile. It is a qualitative, phenomenological exploration of the experiences of these principals, how they may affect student outcomes and opportunities and the ways in which this might contribute to the lives of young people.

The research posed four key questions:

How do these four principals enact educational leadership within the Chilean context?

How do the principals' views of their role and influence compare with wider current conceptions of school leadership?

What are the perceived consequences of each principal's actions for student learning, opportunities and outcomes?

Finally, how do principals engage with Chilean government policies to serve student learning and outcomes?

The selection of the four principals was based on their consistent excellent results over time in national tests and also the local communities' perceptions of their quality. The researcher visited each institution in Chile for two days over a two-week period, conducting semi-structured interviews with the principals and other participants in the project. In this way the key research questions were addressed as well as an opportunity provided for further findings to make themselves known. The data was collected via recordings, transcribed, translated where necessary, coded and then categorised via ATLAS TI 8^{tm} software. This Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) allowed the data to reveal emergent themes that represented the main findings, contributions and implications of this research for the general field of knowledge about educational leadership. The final observations serve to expose a possible connection between successful school leaders in Chile and that of the ISSPP (International Successful School Principalship Project) and the School Turnaround policy in the USA.

This thesis argues that these four principals - regardless of system levels of development, funding and/or lack of training provision - seem to exhibit similar qualities presented in other international research about successful school leadership and what principals do to affect student learning.

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Finally, my appreciation goes to all of those individuals over the years who have asked the question: “Have you finished your PhD yet?” and who are responsible for my T-shirt with the motif: “Don’t talk about the thesis!”.

To you all, finally I say, “Yes, I have finished it now”.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and no material from this thesis has been used or published previously. I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Mónica Gilbert-Sáez
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List of Abbreviations

- CAQDAS – Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software.
- CPEIP – Centro de Perfeccionamiento, Experimentación e Investigaciones Pedagógicas.
- ELP - Educational Leadership Practices.
- GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education.
- FTLP - Florida Turnaround Leaders Program.
- IB – International Baccalaureate. International framework and curriculum programme delivered in International Schools around the Globe. Pedagogy centres around inquiry and concept-based learning.
- IBDP – International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.
- ISSPP – International Successful School Principalship Project.
- KPI - key performance indicators.
- MINEDUC – Ministerio de Educación Chile – Chilean Ministry of Education.
- MYP – Middle Years Programme. This is part of the IB offer for KS3 and KS4.
- NPQH - National Professional Qualification for Headship in the UK.
- OECD – The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- P – Denotes a school principal for the purposes of this study:
    - P1 – principal from sector one
    - P2 – principal from sector three
    - P3 – principal from sector three
    - P4 – principal from sector four
- PACE – Programa de Acompañamiento Acceso Efectivo a la Educación Superior (or Effective Access Programme for Higher Education). Special educational path for students to access higher education in Chile. Geared towards students from poor areas with a focus on vocational programmes and colleges.
- Participants – Members of each school that were interviewed in addition to principals for this research.
- PCA – Prueba de la Calidad de los Aprendizajes (Learning Quality Assessment). Assessment test that measures skills and knowledge, only delivered in specific Catholic establishments.
- PSU – Prueba de Selección Universitaria (University Selection Exam). UK A-level equivalent delivered in Chile.
- PTA – Parents and Teachers Association. In some countries the PTA forms a school's governing body. In Chile, it is an ad hoc school body that supports the work of the school and can act as a consultative body.
- PYP – Primary Years Programme. This is part of the IB early years programme (KS1 and KS2 UK equivalent).
- S – Denotes a school sector for the purposes of this study:
    - S1 – Private education sector

    - S2 – Semi-private sector
    - S3 – State or mainstream system sector
    - S4 – State sector with special dispensation – vocational education.
- SIMCE – Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación (Quality Measurement System for the Quality of Education) is a battery of tests in Chile for public examinations at the end of Year Y4, Y8 and Y11. They are compulsory for state schools. They are GCSE and SATs exam equivalent in the UK.
- UNESCO – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- VA – Value Added.
- VET - Vocational Education and Training.
- SES - Socio Economic Status.
- GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This chapter introduces the rationale and purpose behind this investigation. I will present my professional background as a practitioner and school leader within international education to illuminate further the focus of this study. I will also engage with the literature related to Chilean education and highlight the state of educational reform and student protest in Chile. The country lives in a climate of constant reforms and social upheaval motivated by an education system that is perceived as reinforcing inequity and social mobility stagnation (UNICEF, 2018, Arango, 2008b, Zúñiga-Peña, 2015, Zancajo, 2019). The subsequent student movement along with the input and influence of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) have both played a role in the direction the country's education has taken. This is the terrain that the four principals in this study have to navigate. This chapter will also deal with specific reforms such as funding, national assessments and how schooling is organised across the country.

Background

The research into successful school leadership remains a fascinating field that continuously receives attention in new studies and generates new insights to enhance our learning, experience and knowledge. Much focus has been placed on the role of principals and how they enhance the lives of students. One such example is the work of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) (ISSPP, 2018), a network of academic researchers from more than twenty countries that has been fundamental in bringing together contributions to construct a body of data that informs us about the actions of successful principals.

This research intends to contribute to the body of knowledge by learning about school principals in a region with an underdeveloped school system by studying the realities of four successful principals in Chile. I chose proven school leaders based on the high attainment of their pupils and positive value-added of their institutions for a three-year consecutive period based on Chile's national tests Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación (SIMCE) - IGCSE/SATs equivalent - and Prueba de Selección Universitaria (PSU) - A-level Equivalent.

I interviewed them and certain members of their schools - who I will refer to as Participants - in order to learn what it is like to lead in their context. My approach is phenomenological, and the principals were able to reveal their experiences about their leadership in an educational climate that was turbulent and changeable.

My four research questions are:

a) How do these four principals enact educational leadership within the Chilean context?
b) How do the principals' views of their role and influence compare with wider current conceptions of school leadership?
c) What are the perceived consequences of each principal's actions for student learning, opportunities and outcomes?
d) How do principals engage with Chilean government policies to serve student learning and outcomes?

I will begin with an exploration of Chilean education, its constituents and current state. I will then move into what is influencing its current trajectory. The literature review chapter will provide a theoretical insight into all aspects of leadership, which will then link to the methodological approach. The findings chapter will engage with the messages from the principals and participants. The analysis and discussion sections will see the emergence of key themes from a phenomenological analysis. Finally, a conclusions chapter will present how this investigation may contribute to knowledge, and its possible implications for policy implementation and further research with a focus on Chile and Principals.

Positionality - my professional and educational experience

I have spent most of my teaching and leadership career in the UK since 1994, but I have experienced education in Spain and France and have worked in Chile, Abu Dhabi, Hong Kong as vice principal of a highly-regarded international school and currently in The Netherlands as a school principal in an international school. The relationship between my professional and educational experience is central to understanding the reasons for this investigation and is highlighted in this extract from an e-mail sent to me when I was teaching at a Santiago university that makes a provision for student teachers from poor backgrounds:

> I would like to thank you for teaching us a new perspective on our world as future teachers. I'm glad that we had a teacher like you, you went beyond in our learning process and reminded us that we chose to teach people with feelings, not numbers.

This comment served to remind me why, through this PhD, I am attempting to make a difference to education in Chile.

Chilean Education

Chilean education is complex. With every new government there are changes in perceptions and ideologies and education is the first recipient of them (Ramírez et al., 2015). This reality is placed squarely on the shoulders of the country's principals. I will analyse Chilean education - and its interrelationship with equity - through an account of current and past reforms, its structures and assessment systems, its teachers and also the influence of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on policy making.

In this context, it is important to explain my conception of what is called the 'neo-liberal approach to education'. This paradigm is one in which education becomes 'a subsector of political economy and not part of social policy" (Espinoza, 2017, p. 437), i.e., to see education as a consumer's good rather than a public one, where the values of social justice, solidarity and ethics come second to the needs of private influence and action (Zancajo, 2019). This neo-liberal educational model has not led to improved educational opportunities for the majority of Chilean students, because "neoliberal policies have only increased the quantity of students, not the quality of education, and they have intensified social inequalities in education at every level (elementary, secondary, and higher education)" (Cabalin, 2012, p. 220). It is also important here to highlight the impact of the dictatorial regime of General Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990). Much of the current policy in Chilean education to this day still relates to how policies brought in under this dictatorship viewed education as a free market commodity (Zancajo, 2019) where improvement is driven by the alleged 'freedom to choose' (Cabalin, 2012) of parents in determining the school their offspring attend. This approach served to enable the current social stratification of the Chilean school system and the consequential need for reform to revert its influence on such stratification and perceptions of quality in education (Hofflinger and von Hippel, 2020). These reforms were further aided by the student protests that sought to put an end to the current system and enshrine state schooling as the primary source of quality education in the country (Tome, 2015).

The Educational Structure

The educational scenario in Chile consists of four sectors. I use the term 'sector' to identify the different types of schools and the Principals interviewed come from each of these sectors. For the below figures, I use the latest annual *Estadísticas de la Educación 2018* document from the Chilean Ministry of Education.

Chile's four education sectors serve a total of 3582351 Chilean students through 11,574 registered schools:

- Sector 1 - Private non-subsidised schools: schools administered by private non-profit or for-profit organisations that do not receive public subsidies. It represents 7.9% of the total intake. Sector 1 has 678 institutions.
- Sector 2 - Private subsidised schools: schools administered by private non-profit or for-profit organisations that receive a public subsidy per student of the same amount as municipal schools. These schools serve 53.2% of the total student population. Sector 2 has 5665 schools.
- Sector 3 - Municipal schools or mainstream system: public schools administered by the respective municipalities. They are state

maintained and represent 38.9% of the total intake. Sector 3 has 4925 schools.

- Sector 4 - Schools with delegated administration: schools owned by the Ministry of Education and mostly offering technical-professional education whose administration is delegated to public or private non-profit organisations (typically associated to the industry, commerce and construction industries). These schools represent 1.5% of the total cohort. Sector 4 has 70 schools.

(Mineduc, 2019b)

The educational provision in Chile is predominantly delivered through sectors 1, 2 and 3. Sector 3, or the mainstream system, is fully funded by the state via taxation. The government delivers funds to local authorities or municipalities. Mayors become the official sponsors or *sostenedores*, but they delegate the management of funds and schools to the departments for administration of municipality schools (*Departamento de Administración de Educación Municipal*) within each municipality. They are not allowed to make a profit. Sector 2 is financed by the state and private investors and parents (the latter in the form of additional fees). The state funds the poorest 80% of students at a cost of 50 thousand pesos (around £60 at the time of writing) per student per year. The overall running of the school is in the hands of *sostenedores* or private sponsors (they could be an individual, a group, a consortium or a foundation). The state subsidy allocation is based on the number of students on-roll via SEP (*Subvención Escolar Preferencial* or Preferential School Subvention) or student premium or school vouchers. The introduction of the latter allowed for a while the private sector to enter into sector two, sharing the student population with sector three. This has resulted in sector three steadily losing students and funding, leading to schools in a precarious financial state and poor teachers' salaries (Waissbluth, 2010, Allende et al., 2017, Elacqua, 2012).

All private schools are allowed to select students, and there is no legislation to govern this. Sector 3 is expected to admit all children, especially if a school is undersubscribed and sector two can still implement selection programmes, and do so via tests, within their institutions. However, "Chile has (…) (Hofflinger and von Hippel, 2020, Rowe and Lubienski, 2017) prohibited the selection of children on the basis of criteria such as academic ability, socio-economic background, ethnicity" (Santiago and et al., 2013, p. 17) and religion, but only up to Year 6 for all schools receiving SEP. In addition, schools in sector two are expected to enrol 15% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds with no tuition charge (Arango, 2008a). Sector 2 may also lose state vouchers if their fees go beyond "a ceiling of roughly USD125" (Arango, 2008a, Santiago et al., 2013). This has led to a number of these schools moving to sector one in order to continue increasing their fees. The funds received by sector two are delivered monthly and are dependent on the mandatory school attendance register. Profit making is allowed to benefit sponsors. Sector 1 institutions are fully private institutions. They are free to fix their fees; this will normally mean

an admittance fee (paid once when the student enters the school for the first time), an annual tuition fee (paid in instalments), a yearly enrolment cost plus a so-called Parents' Centre (Centro de Padres) fee. Fees for insurance, equipment, schools' meals, schools' trips etc. are charged in addition.

Latest data has shown that sector three is the most improved of the four (Educación2020, 2012). All students that attend these schools come from deprived and vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds (OECD, 2012, OECD, 2017, Educación2020, 2012, Valenzuela et al., 2013), yet it is still possible for these schools to select pupils on their academic merits, especially if the institution has an historic or exam performance-based reputation to maintain or it is in pursuit of improving results at a national level. They also are unevenly distributed. The concept of catchment areas does not exist, and parents are theoretically free to send their children to any school with some children traveling across districts to go to school as explained in the corresponding literature review.

Sector 2 schools have more flexibility related to staff hiring and student selection. This segment serves a middle-class (Allende et al., 2017, Elacqua, 2012) group that is eager to provide what they perceive to be better education for their children to improve future prospects and connections. Their quality is variable and is based on perceived public performance and results in national tests such as SIMCE & PSU. Latest data confirms the huge migration of students from sector three to 2. This approach started without any opposition, during the Pinochet Dictatorship (1973-1990) and for years it is claimed to have generated a damaging process of underfunding and the reinforcement of social division in education (Allende et al., 2017, Elacqua, 2012, Ramírez et al., 2015, Hofflinger and von Hippel, 2020). The state system has seen the percentage of students attending its schools reduced; this has meant less money for municipalities to finance them. The situation came to a head with an array of protests started in 2008 by students, teacher unions and activist movements that brought the system to a standstill. With the then new centre-left government of Michelle Bachelet, this inherited educational model saw its first scaling down. This was done via the promulgation of an equivalent act of parliament called "*Ley de Inclusion Escolar*" (School Inclusion Law) number 28845 that was passed in May 29, 2015 to phase out schools in sector two. This process is still in the early stages of implementation by the current government at time of writing.

Sector 1 schools are considered highly performing institutions, even though they are still below the PISA average that indicates that standards in Maths, Science and reading do not meet worldwide average for this exam (PISA, 2015, Correa-Betancour, 2016). They are expensive and highly selective socially, economically and residentially. Their reputation is earned via exam performance, historical reputation and perceived public opinion (Allende et al., 2017, Rowe and Lubienski, 2017, Valenzuela et al., 2013). This segment serves

wealthy families and is strongly influenced and led by religious denomination institutions, mainly catholic schools (Allende et al., 2017).

There are other organisations that deliver education in sector four that are often run by religious charities to provide specialist training for students in areas linked to mechanics and engineering. These colleges are found in disadvantaged areas and are supported by private industry (Santiago et al., 2013).

There is another group of schools that work in more challenging areas and with young people who have been excluded by students mainly in sector three. In their establishments, young people are offered the possibility to finish their secondary education for free. These organisations work within young offenders' institutions, peripheral areas within the city or provide space for young people who have been rejected from the mainstream system (Zabaleta, 2015).

According to the OECD (Santiago et al., 2013), which sector students attend is strongly determined by family income levels, leading to a pronounced social stratification of Chilean society aided by its own education system and for many years fomented or justified by its policy makers.

> Students from the most disadvantaged families attend municipal schools in largest numbers (…). Private subsidised schools received students from a wider range of backgrounds. By contrast, private non-subsidised schools are mostly attended by students from high-income families.
>
> (Santiago et al., 2013, p. 18)

The above means we must question what is meant by 'school choice'?

School Choice

School choice in Chile (BCN, 2017) is used to promise flexibility and quality to all parents and their children, but thirty years of this approach has only demonstrated that the only real choice is one based on income (Elacqua, 2012).

Waissbluth is a well-known Chilean economist, educationist and leader of Educacion2020 (Educación2020, 2012), a Chilean education think-tank that has tackled the issue of school choice in Chile. He summarises as follows:

> Put simply, [Chile] is a country where rich children study with the richer ones, those from the middle classes with the middle classes, poor people with poor people, thus initiating a cycle of class reproduction and elitism that extends to university and so on into adult life (…) In our classist and racist country, the poor also live and study away from the rich.
>
> (Ramirez et al., 2015, pp. 162-163)

(NB All translations in this study are the researcher's own.)

According to (Valenzuela et al., 2013) the mere presence of a private school within a municipality in Chile initiates a process of segregation with families migrating to these institutions without a clear understanding of performance and real value. "A recent study in Chile finds that parents are more likely to choose schools based on the class composition of the student body than on objective academic performance" (Elacqua, 2012, p. 446). Parents in Santiago prefer private education to public education due to perceived better quality: "A representative survey of the population of Santiago, the Chilean capital, revealed majority preference (59.8%) for private education over the public-school system (33.2%)" (Matear, 2007, p. 107). This is further emphasised by the statistics (Matear, 2007) that show the municipal sector intake of students dropped from 58% in 1990 to 49% in 2001, despite state funding. The current situation shows a similar trend with municipal sector accounting for 31.1% of the total student population and a growth for semi-private schools at 54.1% and private schools serving 9.9% (OECD, 2017). Parents tend to select schools where their children can study with others of similar social economic status or higher (Allende et al., 2017, Elacqua, 2012, Rowe and Lubienski, 2017, Cavieres, 2014).

Middle class parents, aided by their higher income and the provision of vouchers, can prevent their children entering into contact with those whom they see as a risk to the future prosperity of their children. However, this does not accord with early research findings. The study of Carnoy (2007) found that in areas such as literacy in the primary years, the state sector has performed much better and with fewer resources than voucher schools, despite the fact that "higher income parents can offset (Carnoy, 2007) most of the bad effects of a poor teacher, but lower income parents cannot" (p.114). This trend has continued as proven by PISA results that shows the state school system can outperform the semi-private one in areas such as literacy (OECD, 2019, PISA, 2015). The state schools clearly do have the capacity to respond and deliver education that makes a significant impact in the early years of student learning.

However, despite so many reforms, policy makers in Chile have not been able to lessen the reality of being one of the most unequal education systems (Treviño et al., 2016, UNICEF, 2018). The issue was highlighted in the study by Valenzuela et al. (2013, p. 233):

> The magnitude of the socioeconomic school segregation in Chile was very high and tended to slightly increase during the last decade; we also found that private schools - including voucher schools - were more segregated than public schools; and we estimated that some educational market dynamics (i.e. privatisation, school choice, and fee paying) accounted for a relevant proportion of the Chilean SES [Socio Economic Status] school segregation. We interpreted these findings as broadly consistent with our hypothesis that (…) that larger private school participation in educational markets is not coupled with improvement in the

> average national standardized test scores, but it is strongly related to more segregated and unequal educational systems.

Educational equity in Chile does not exist due to the manner in which the system is constructed and how society implicitly undervalues diversity and community cohesion. Viteritti (see Elacqua, 2012, p. 445) in this respect argues "that an educational system that provides choice to some and not others is inherently unfair, especially if the opportunity is determined by income". This is the case in Chile: a public and a private sector divided in the middle by a subsidised sector (for profit and not for profit) which is financed via per-student state vouchers (i.e., tax payers' money) and parents who are in a position, until five years' ago, to top up school fees. This creates "inherently unequal opportunities for students from low-income families, who (…) experience sub-standard educational achievements as a result of an on-going bias in favour of privatization measures" (Arango, 2008b, p. 1).

Social mobility is also affected with the formation of a different understanding of community organisation and values; society becomes fragmented and fair access to opportunities disappear leading to social groups mistrusting each other:

> What is beneficial for some, is damaging for others. Therefore, each individual or similar groups look after themselves and they assume themselves confronted with their neighbour, whom they distrust and fear that an eventual improvement of the living conditions of them will directly affect their wellbeing.
>
> (Bellei, 2013, p. 236)

Chile's return to democracy in 1990, did not bring immediate changes, but rather, consecutive governments have tried to adapt the dominant educational model to improve its quality and equity (Ramírez et al., 2015) via incremental reforms co-financed by the Chilean government. Yet social segregation in Chilean education persists. Valenzuela et al. (2013) consider social segregation as "the degree of similitude in the distribution of an individual characteristic among various units of a specific territory and is linked to the unbalanced spatial distribution of a population with a specific social attribute" (p. 222). In Chile, several commentators claim the education system is geared towards reinforcing and exacerbating social segregation (Tome, 2015, Kubal and Fisher, 2016, Ahumada et al., 2016). Valenzuela et al (2013) definition represent the current Chilean educational format where specific social groups are served by specific educational sectors: state, semi-private and private. It is unbalanced as groups only have access to these schools' clusters based solely on their income, and yet the schools' provision is not a guarantee of a better education locally or internationally, but it is a promise of less contact with other social groups. This situation becomes exacerbated when there are economic groups keen to maintain the current state, according to Kubal and Fisher (2016) and the market has created a range of interested parties with a stake in the voucher system including parents, operators, owners, educators, the Catholic Church, wealthy

individuals and groups of investors with ties to right and centre-left parties. They lobby via two bodies, the Federation of Private Education (Federación de Instituciones de Educación Particular) and the Private Schools of Chile (Colegios Particulares de Chile) and have a powerful and influential voice. Kubal and Fisher (2016) indicate that these groups are supporters of a free market model of education and regard the implementation of new state equity policies as in opposition to this neoliberal model.

It is important for this research to acknowledge the above landscape as it is against this backdrop of inequity and social stratification that Chilean principals operate and is felt strongly in the quality of instruction in their schools.

Teachers in Chile

The advice coming from (OECD, 2017, OECD, 2019) is for the Ministry of Education to continue challenging didactic and old fashioned instructional approaches. There is a need to modernise the teaching profession with high quality initial teacher training and professional development. “Teachers are the most important factor influencing student achievement. They have more direct impact on student learning than budgets, curricula, inspection and accountability system, and governance” (OECD, 2017, p. 22).

The famous ‘banking concept of education’ described by Paulo Freire (1970) is still very relevant in understanding instruction in Chile. There is a strong need to modernise teacher training and move away from such a model by emphasizing the need for different educational approaches and to enrich the national curriculum by fostering teachers’ creative practices and capacity to design curriculum (OECD, 2017, Paulo et al., 2013). At this point it is interesting to notice the influence of the OECD in the educational ambit. This organisation, of which Chile has been an active member since 2010 (OECD, 2019), has exerted an influential role in its policy development, especially within education and its reforms. I will focus below on the OECD’s role to further illuminate the setting which Chilean principals experience daily.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)

According to the OECD (2011a, p. 22), the average income of the richest 10% of the population across its 34 member countries is about nine times that of the poorest 10% – a ratio of 9 to 1. However, the ratio varies widely from one country to another. It is much lower than this average in Nordic and many continental European countries, but reaches 27 to 1 in Mexico and Chile. This already delivers a picture of unfairness in terms of income distribution and shows Chile to be a country in need of better equity, something that is pertinent to this study because of the interrelatedness between equity and education - “Equity in education is fundamental because education plays a role in changing patterns of inequality” (2011a, p. 9) such as income distribution. Equity is specifically addressed by the OECD in the following terms:

> Equity in education includes two dimensions: equity as fairness and equity as inclusion. Fairness implies ensuring that personal and social circumstances should not be an obstacle to educational success, and inclusion implies ensuring a minimum standard of education for all. Consequently, equity in education demands that students' expected learning outcomes should depend only on their own effort and capacity, and not on considerations over which they have no influence (gender, ethnic origin, family's socio-economic level). The concept of equity in education goes hand in hand with the concept of equality of opportunities. It is not only desirable from an economic and social point of view, but also constitutes a human rights imperative.
>
> (2011a, p. 9)

The PISA index of Economic, Social and Cultural Status (ESCS) shows that most of Chile's student population (91%) are below 0.0 ESCS index which indicates a lower socio-economic background, and this is in direct positive correlation with exam performance. Sector 3 (municipal) and sector two (private subsidised) schools do not meet OECD average performance. Private fee-based (sector one) though, perform better and correlate with higher socio-economic student background. However, even these are not outstanding performance results as they are below the PISA average score. When an education system is failing, it does so at the cost of the country's capacity to develop (OECD, 2011a). It also harms social cohesion and places an excessive burden on public budgets, especially those with minimal investment in education, when dealing with the "consequences of school failure – increased criminality, higher public health spending, public assistance, etc." (p. 1). In Chile, students are not provided with services "leading to successful student learning, or when a student is failing to advance to the next grade, and eventually becomes a dropout" (p. 2).

Given the above backdrop, the OECD (2017) submitted specific the following recommendations for Chile to address educational segregation, the quality of education and the increasing debt that poor families fall into to offer an education for children:

1. Developing coherent and evolving strategies for learning for the future.
2. Strengthening an environment of inclusiveness across the system, addressing processes and structures.
3. Supporting successful outcomes for all girls and boys from all ethnic origins.
4. Ensuring good education and care opportunities from the youngest age.
5. Unifying and strengthening the public education system as a learning organisation.
6. Promoting the role of the teacher and the profession of teaching and engaging teachers in the ongoing process of education reform.
7. Completing the review of the Good Teaching Framework and developing aligned professional standards that take teachers' career structure into account.

8. Reviewing how initial teacher education and in-service training is delivered.
9. Promoting high-quality professional development opportunities for all teachers and school leaders.
10. Developing a strong professional cadre of school leaders and principals.
11. Ensuring that the country's VET (vocational education and training) programmes meet both the needs of students and employers.

(pp. 41 – 42)

Despite the international popularity of the OECD, its influence on education policies and its PISA Global Education Survey, we cannot escape a discussion on its role and whether it is a valid tool with which to rate and improve a country's educational system, especially as countries possess exceedingly profound cultural, economic and social differences (Møller, 2017). Countries are different and, for example, it is possible to say that there are nations that cannot afford the time and the investments that other richer and experienced ones enjoy. Goldstein has expressed his concerns about PISA. "(It) has been used inappropriately and some of the blame for that lies with PISA itself. I think it tends to say too much for what it can do and it tends not to publicise the negative or the weaker aspects" (Stewart, 2013, p. 1).

It is worth noting that the above guidelines give express directives to Principals for the first time and sees them as agents in the process of reform.

The Impact of Structural Reforms

Various governments have tried to lessen the effects of a segregated educational system (Elacqua, 2012, Treviño et al., 2016) with varying degrees of success and progress such as the implementation of the highly contentious voucher programme. In terms of quality of education, Valenzuela et al. (2013) identify that Chile has shown steady improvements in international student assessment within the OECD (Santiago et al., 2017). At primary level, student-teacher ratios have gone from 32 to 23.5 between 1999-2010. Steady strengthening of access to early years and primary school enrolment is between 93% to 96 %, which is comparable to more developed countries. There have been sustained efforts to ensure students finish their secondary cycle and transit into tertiary education. There have been broader socioeconomic changes; the World Bank has acknowledged this and has reclassified the country to one with a high-income bracket. However, there still persist issues with income inequality reflected in the lack of equity in education (OECD, 2018b).

Another initiative explained by Valenzuela (2013) has been bringing together key stakeholders and strategists. They are expected to address specific educational priorities with an emphasis on political consensus among policy makers to prioritise education above ideologies. The tendency in Chile has been

that every five years, with the change in government, Chile has developed new educational policies. Implementations have enhanced the learning experience of students with additional resources such as textbooks, classroom libraries and material. Also, improved strategies and incentives for teachers' professionalisation, assessment and employment conditions have been achieved via their reassertion as public servants, raising salaries and providing bonuses for those who achieve better SIMCE (*Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación* or Quality Measurement System for the Quality of Education – GCSE Equivalent) scores. All in all, there is a commitment from policy makers to increased capital expenditure to reverse the effect of two decades of underinvestment.

Reforms passed in 2015 put an end to unfair selection practices that 'skim' talented and affluent middle class students and, as from March 2016, schools could no longer be run for profit (Kubal and Fisher, 2016). Additionally, the flat rate student voucher was increased by 70% for students from the poorest socioeconomic group. However, schools that subscribe to this must commit to a school improvement programme to justify that extra funding (Osses et al., 2015).

The above reforms have led to the implementation of specific compensatory programmes to support public schools such as the "P-900". This project provides extra funding for the 900 lowest performing schools in the country:

> P-900 has been praised as one of the most successful school interventions in the developing world, and the literature reflects a perception that it substantially raised the achievement of treated schools. Specifically, previous research finds that treated schools' average test scores improved more than those untreated schools.
>
> (McEwan et al., 2008)

However, the interventions only prove successful during the period of time in which the programme was delivered which support the research (Bellei, 2013, Day, 2014, Notman and Henry, 2011, Jacobson, 2012) showing that, once the programmes ended, schools went back to their original state (Bellei, 2013, Gonzalez Torres, 2017).

There are two elements that need to be highlighted from the above. One is that to bring together economic ideologies so dissimilar in their understanding of education - one sees it as a social entitlement whilst the other as a commodity – is problematic when it comes to policy agreements. In addition, the current scenario means that policy does not have the time to be fully and properly implemented to have any perceived impact as the expectation is that every five years, with presidential elections, the educational field including its laws, curriculum and vision change too.

The current reforms are the latest within the system seeking to rectify the divided current provision and break the cycle of segregation and inequity. This present study, therefore, addressed these issues through asking the Principals and participants about their views on and experience of these reforms and the extent and manner in which they impacted student academic progress.

The impact of changes in school admissions' policies, funding and governance

According to Kubal and Fisher (2016), new reforms in Chilean education cannot legally take place unless they are transformed into parliamentary acts. One of the most desired reforms by pressure groups was the replacement of the *Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Educación* (LOCE) from 1980 (UK Education Act of Parliament equivalent), which sustained a failing model of education. There has been a series of changes since then both in content and name. The original LOCE became the *Ley General de Educación* (LGE) and, of late, with the previous socialist government of Michelle Bachelet (during her second tenure), there is the new *Ley de Inclusion Escolar* (Schooling Inclusion Act). The *Ley de Inclusion Escolar* (LGE) is regarded by critics as similar to the Pinochet-era LOCE (Kubal and Fisher, 2016), as it does not fundamentally alter the school choice system since it still claims that parents have the responsibility to educate their children; the state has only a subsidiary role to play. This latter change of law was possible, according to Kubal and Fisher (2016), as the *Nueva Mayoría* (Bachelet's conglomerate of supporting parties, formerly known as *Concertación*) won the majority of seats in congress making the approval of the education bill possible. Ramírez et al. (2015) explain that Bachelet's government (2014 - 2018) sought to put an end to top-up fees within voucher schools, to end vouchers for for-profit schools, to make state college and university education free for all, to increase the value of the voucher within the public system, to create more play groups and reception schools and to establish specialised local education authorities that replace municipalities.

The voucher system is controversial with more critics than supporters (Bravo et al., 2010, OECD, 2012, OECD, 2018b), especially so in Chile where it was implemented almost 40 years ago. Chile's experience means there is robust research with comparative studies revealing the potential pitfalls this strategy has brought to a whole country and its society, with lessons to be learned either by being avoided or implemented depending on how policy makers perceive education and its purpose. For example, Sapelli (2010) identifies as a success of the voucher system its impact on attendance - "Since schools receive per student budgets they face incentives to attract students, and since attendance is measured by random inspection, they have incentives to monitor their presence and inquire as to the justification of absences" (Sapelli, 2010, p. 228). However, it has also contributed to exacerbate inequality and segregation as not all families can afford top-up fees.

Another significant reform has been the reintroduction of the Teachers' Standards Guidance for School Leaders, School Staff and Governing Bodies (*Estatuto Docente*). It is worth remarking that public schools abide by this legal document whilst private voucher schools do not (Sapelli, 2010). This act of parliament is a significant document as it contains the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders within an educational establishment including the principal. It will be addressed within the Literature Review section on Chilean Leadership section.

The Chilean Government has also created additional units in 2011 to support the role of the Ministry of Education (Mineduc, 2017). The first one is the *Superintendencia de Educación* (HMI equivalent) which oversees that educational legislation is adhered to and ensures that allocated resources are appropriately used. The second one is the *Consejo Nacional de Educación* (the National Education Advisory Unit), whose role it is to check and approve curricula and programmes prepared by the ministry and also determine educational standards and performance to be implemented by, finally, the *Agencia de Calidad de la Educación,* known as SAC*,* or the schools' inspectorate (OFSTED equivalent). This new organisation evaluates the degree of adherence to the ministry's quality and performance standards in schools by allocating achievement categories. Three axes underlie this sub-unit (Page et al., 2017a): autonomy of schools in the implementation of the national curriculum; official support from this agency on behalf of the Ministry of Education to provide pedagogical support to underperforming schools (Page et al., 2017); and the allocation of external accountability classifications that will help identify schools in need. However, all standards are measured via standardised national tests.

With regard to the impact of reforms and their implementation to seek to improve students' attainment via national assessment results, Chile has invested a great deal of funding and resources to deliver high-stake exams in line with international policy. The next section elaborates on this point.

The impact of reforms in assessment

Chile is a regional leader in the application and dissemination of standardized tests. Since starting to assess students in 1988, "Chile has been at the forefront of measuring, analysing, and disseminating data on student achievement" (McEwan et al., 2008, p.2) although it was not until 1997 that other information was also gathered such as socioeconomic data. Much of the information obtained is used to inform policies and provide rewards, assistance or sanctions to schools and inform parents about school performance (McEwan et al., 2008). Zúñiga-Peña (2015) identified that between 1990 and 2013, Chile had had eleven different types of tests. See list of tests on table 1.1 below:

Yearly National Assessments	International Tests
• SIMCE (SAT, GCSE equivalent). ○ They are delivered to students in Grade 2 (7-year-olds), Grade 4 (9-year-olds), Grade 6 (11-year-olds), Grade 8 (13-year-olds), Grade 9 (14-year-olds), Grade 10 (15-year-olds) and Grade 11 (16-year-olds). • PSU (current A levels) – Admission exam for higher education for students who finished their secondary education. Approximately age 17.	• PERCE, • TIMSS, • CIVED, • PISA, • PISA+ • SERCE, • ICCS and • TERCE

Table 1.1 – list of assessments delivered in Chile.

However, because the scores do not provide value-added data - they are vertical results that do not deliver an idea of progress and effectiveness of institutions over time (McEwan et al., 2008) - the Chilean approach with its emphasis on average test scores is of limited value to identify good and high value schools. Averages change yearly, which makes them unreliable to represent school quality in the long term.

SIMCE (*Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación*), (SATs or Standardised Attainment Test equivalent) is a battery of tests in Chile that measure students attainment in reading comprehension, writing, Maths, Science, History, Geography and English. It also gauges other aspects such as pastoral care, wellbeing, gender equality and social and emotional aspects of learning. The latter is done via surveys to key members of the schools community such as parents. The organisation in charge of delivering this assessment is *Agencia de Calidad de la Educación* (OFSTED equivalent). The same entity is in charge of coordinating the delivery of international tests such as PISA, TIMSS and TERCE. The SIMCE is compulsory in sectors 2, 3 and 4, however sector one may opt out, but they tend not to. It takes place every year between October and November. The target groups are ostensibly 10-, 12- and 16-year-old students. This evaluation is used, according to its website (SIMCE, 2020), to observe progression in terms of learning, to relate its results with lesson observations in order to determine the quality of learning and the corresponding methodologies utilised in lessons and, finally, to identify elements within schools in need of modification with the intention of improving results. This instrument has great importance for all schools as its results generate the national school league tables.

The introduction of SIMCE has brought huge challenges to schools that openly need to compete with others, regardless of their type of cohort, funding and location. 'Gaming' is a very current strategy in schools with teachers teaching to the test, underperforming students asked to stay at home on test day or the creation of specialised hours within the timetable called SIMCE hours (Ramírez et al., 2015, Falabella, 2020). There have been calls to stop the SIMCE test. One campaign called '*Alto al SIMCE*' ('Stop SIMCE') has gained popularity in many sectors, arguing that such an approach does not serve students, but schools. McEwan et al. (2008) argue that data play a key role in Chile's educational development and it should continue, but to improve its use, it should consider

incorporating value added (VA) and take into consideration type of school and cohorts. This is a suggestion that will enable schools to better understand individual student progress and achievement within a year or years. This could also provide a better picture to inform school strategic plans. There are detractors of the approach, though. Page et al. (2017b) consider it still too general to provide evidence of effective performance about schools linked to student types and abilities. Others such as Kelly et al. (2010) criticise VA measurements as they are an oversimplification of how schools perform; they are complex to read and schools are not able to check for accuracy and amend information prior to their being published. Namely, the approach fails to "respond adequately to competing legitimate demands: from the public for interpretability; from teachers for usefulness; and from policy-makers for accountability" (Kelly et al., 2010, p. 196).

Another very important instrument that measures education in Chile is *Prueba de Selección Universitaria* (PSU). This is the A-Level equivalent and is an assessment that determines student access to universities (DEMRE, 2016). It has two compulsory exams: Mathematics, Language and Communication and four optional subjects: Science (Biology, Physics, Chemistry & IT), History, Geography & Social Sciences. All students must select at least one from the optional list. As is evident, there is a limited range of subjects compared to A-Levels and the test content is limited to multiple choice and cloze questions exercises. The scores range from 150 to 850 points with an average of 500. The importance for institutions lies in how many students in Year 13 are able to both score the highest grades and attend the best universities in Chile. The results also serve to provide a national ranking with all school sectors. This test takes place in December of each year.

Both the PSU & SIMCE are relevant for this investigation as all principals operate within this accountability framework. These examinations rate school performance at a national level and any school's perceived success and good name across the Chilean Society is strongly linked to them both.

Overview of this chapter

This chapter has raised issues about the broad policy context and its influence on the organisation of the school system in Chile. The quality of teaching in Chile is below international standards as measured by its own local assessments and those collected by external bodies such as OECD through its PISA process. The turbulent scenarios described affect all members of the educational field in Chile including principals and it is their experience that I sought to investigate in this research. All Chilean schools live with a historical legacy that has conditioned their current state as serving specific groups from a specific social band, with a defined income bracket and located in certain areas of main urban cities with limited social mobility. The challenge, therefore, for those principals participating in this study, is that that their work is potentially conditioned by these factors as they seek to promote equity and raise the quality of performance for all students.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of my research is the relationship between school leadership and students outcomes. I will start with an exploration of the Chilean context within South America, then I will consider the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP). The ISSPP is chosen for two reasons – it is the best corpus of international research available and also allows me to place Chile in a global context. Next, I will focus on the School Turnaround (ST) research, again for two reasons - ST exists within a neoliberal model and also seems particularly used with, in and by schools in challenging socio-economic circumstances. Both of these factors are of significance to the Chilean context. Then, I would like to offer a critique of the relationship between school leadership and student outcomes within the area of School Effectiveness Research (SER). I will also highlight the phenomenological nature of my study before finally engaging with a new Chilean leadership framework.

School Leadership and its influence on student academic achievement.

Leithwood et al. (2004) concentrate on leadership models and leaders' own attributes to account for their influence on student performance. They see leaders as responsive individuals who have two essential objectives for leadership: setting organisational (school) targets and influencing the community to follow them in the name of a common good. These two aspects are key actions that affect school and student performance, however they do not see the preponderance of specific leadership styles as a catalyst for improvement. In fact, they warn about the overuse of 'appropriate' styles of leadership - parallel, transformational, instructional, distributed and so forth:

> The lesson here is that we need to be sceptical about the 'leadership by adjective' literature. Sometimes these adjectives have real meaning, but sometimes they mask the more important underlying themes common to successful leadership, regardless of the style being advocated.
>
> (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 6)

For example, "distributed leadership" can become a practical application that may just imply for some to distribute management responsibility, without a genuine trust in individuals to perform and develop areas within schools. Hattie (2002) has a more radical view about leadership models:

> There is no accepted wisdom about leadership, there are as many models as people promoting them, and most die with the owner. There are so many management hints, so many models, so many gurus, so many quick fixes.
>
> (Hattie, 2002, p. 1)

The argument so far seems to imply that the success of school leadership is not dependent on the style of leadership imposed, but on the actions taken to

address what the school needs. As we will see later, the influence of specific modes of leadership is still nascent and uninfluential in Chile (Aravena Castillo and Hallinger, 2017, Marfan and Pascual, 2018, Quiroga and Aravena, 2018) and yet there are examples of successful leadership practices. This implies that good leadership can exist without an understanding of leadership styles.

However, Leithwood et al. (2004) argue that there is still much to be learnt before understanding what it is that successful principals do and how they manage the demands of their role within and outside their institutions and do it successfully. These authors claim that further research is needed:

> Research [will] provide (…) us with more robust understanding of how successful leaders make sense of and productively respond to both external policy initiatives and local needs and priorities. Such efforts will also benefit considerably from more fine-grained understandings than we currently have of successful leadership practices; and much richer appreciations of how those practices seep into the fabric of the education system, improving its overall quality and substantially adding value to our student learning.
>
> (Leithwood et al, 2004, p. 14)

In the case of principals in Chile, the educational climate Principals need to "make sense of" is in constant substantive reform and change as we have seen, yet its low international exams performance persists (OECD, 2017, PISA, 2015, OECD, 2019) when compared to other countries.

The study of Robinson et al. (2009) on how school leadership impacts student outcomes and learning argues that, based on qualitative and quantitative findings, the connection between leadership, schools and student outcomes is not clear. Qualitative research delivers a story of success and passion; principals that have been able to turn around institutions and "transform them into schools which attract both students and staff, where there is a love of learning and student achievement meets or exceeds relevant benchmarks" (Robinson, 2007, p. 5). Yet quantitative research design shows that school leaders have had, by contrast, a small and indirect effect on students (Robinson, 2007) as their actions are mediated by teacher influence. She continues by emphasising that:

> Despite the thousands of studies of school leadership and the conviction of the public and policy makers that the quality of leadership impacts the quality of student outcomes, there are surprisingly few studies that test the relationship.
>
> (p. 21).

However, perhaps what is missing here is how principals influence their institutions and different studies (Day, 2011, Dhuey and Smith, 2018, Leithwood et al., 2008, Reid, 2020) highlight they do make a difference. Whether via direct or indirect actions, it is still the leader who is the source of any improvement

via their strategic undertakings. Leithwood et al. (2008) at the time showed that much has been learnt and that the growing field of study needed to be built upon further:

> There are some quite important things that we know and claims that we can now make with some confidence. Not taking pains to capture what we know not only risks squandering the practical insights such evidence can provide; it also reduces the likelihood that future leadership research will build cumulatively on what we already know. Failure to build on this would be a huge waste of scarce resources.
>
> (Leithwood et al., 2008, pp. 36-37)

The burgeoning of academic research into school leadership in developed education systems (Guzman, 1997, Brewer, 1993, Eberts and Stone, 1988) is not matched in Chile (Weinstein and Hernández, 2016) therefore any comparative analysis will use what it is available without overlooking the differences related to culture and country.

The above leads us to consider the relationship between leadership and context. Hallinger and Heck (2010) found that no single approach to leadership works to improve a whole school as it is conditioned by its context. Their 2010 research suggests that leadership, while a potentially important driver for change, is by itself insufficient to bring about improvement in learning outcomes:

> These findings are both sobering and heartening. They may disappoint those who have hoped that upgrading the quality of leadership will provide an efficient and ready means of solving 'the school improvement problem.' However, we suggest that the results are also quite encouraging. They suggest that strengthening leadership capacity can pay off when it is part of a more comprehensive strategy that simultaneously targets the academic improvement capacity of the school.
>
> (2010, p. 107)

Their investigation clearly points towards the need to be holistic and place leadership under an umbrella of actions that affect learning positively. School contexts are complex environments with layers of actions that affect provision and academic progress. This demands an understanding not just of leadership traits, strategies and actions, but a deeper insight into what aspects combine to influence a given school and its unique community (Hallinger, 2018). This includes aspects such as social groups, culture, identity and wealth as well as the interplay between schools, political activity and governmental goals and expectation for their population.

Contrary to Hallinger and Heck (2010), Mourshed et al. (2010) present a more positive stance towards the role of leadership and, especially, to those new in role:

> By far, the most common event to spark the drive to reform is a change in leadership: every system we studied relied upon the presence and energy of a new leader, either political or strategic, to jumpstart their reforms. New strategic leaders were present in all of our sample systems, and new political leaders present in half. Critically, being new in and of itself is insufficient for success – these new leaders tend to follow a consistent "playbook" of practices upon entering office to lay the foundations for their improvement journey.
>
> (p. 4)

This report focuses on leaders' charisma and actions - their energetic input to initiate changes to bring about reforms to institutions regardless, somehow, of their context. A report by Barber et al. (2010), confirms that such findings prove that leaders can have an effect by deploying a set of skills which seems to be consistent despite the national setting:

> Most of the evidence we have reviewed suggests that good leadership is the same irrespective of context, and that "what works" is surprisingly consistent. For instance, the literature review found remarkably similar traits and practices in effective school leaders from Australia to Pakistan to Africa.
>
> (2010, p. 5)

Both reports highlight that successful principals have the capacity to overcome challenges regardless of school context and that individuals manage circumstances through their capacity to read the environment and its needs and call upon a specific set of skills. The study of Hallinger and Heck (2010) also concludes that successful school leaderships have a consistency in content and action across different countries. The studies continue by focusing on Ofsted's (UK school inspectorate Office for Standards in Education) own analysis of findings in the field:

> [it] suggests that the overall performance of a school almost never exceeds the quality of its leadership and management. For every 100 schools that have good leadership and management, 93 will have good standards of student achievement. For every 100 that do not have good leadership and management, only one will have good standards of achievement.
>
> (Barber et al., 2010, p. 7)

The study does not reveal how leadership enables schools to succeed and what type of leadership makes this a reality, however it supports the research of Hallinger and Heck (2010) in that principals are a vital element in our understanding of what makes successful schools. Similarly, according to this report, they all share similar attributes and commitments and one common to all is the development of teachers, who make "the biggest contribution to student learning outcomes" (p. 8).

Commissioned reports, such the ones provided by McKinsey & Company (Mourshed et al., 2010) or the Wallace Foundation (Leithwood et al., 2004) could be seen as a response to business, government and other institutional

agendas. However, as evidenced-based reports, they do suggest guidelines that can serve to illuminate our understandings of school leadership. The former report, for example, offers advice on how to improve educational systems, suggesting that adequate investment and training should be allocated to principals and teachers. It proposes six key interventions that facilitate the improvement in the education of a country:

> Revising the curriculum and standards, ensuring an appropriate reward and remunerations structure for teachers and principals, building the technical skills of teachers and principals, assessing students, establishing data systems, and facilitating improvement through the introduction of policy documents and education laws.
>
> (Mourshed et al., 2010, p. 20)

Some steps have been taking, but there is still a long way to go to improve the current state of education in the country OECD (2019).

It is important to keep in mind, too, the link between leadership and its impact on student learning. A study (Huguet, 2017) of how effective leadership influences school performance explains that, "Education is definitely an area where leadership is important because the commodity that should be produced is student learning" (Huguet, 2017, p. 97). This leads us to a concept of leadership centred around an understanding of pedagogy, curriculum and instruction – the core elements of learning in a school setting. According to this author, "when principals are knowledgeable of curriculum and instruction components, teachers often are more willing to accept their administrators' guidance" (Huguet, 2017, p. 97). This discussion in itself is new according to the literature on the subject of principalship in Chile (see section on School Leadership in Chile below), where school leaders are seen as managers and administrators (Marfan and Pascual, 2018, Weinstein and Muñoz, 2013) rather than instructional leaders, i.e., leaders with a focus on the quality and improvement of instructional classroom practices and who themselves are rooted in this work.

The study (Huguet, 2017) also argues that much of the work that principals should engage in is building and nurturing their relationship with parents, teachers and the community at large. In this way the accountability, decision-making and overall school project is owned by all concerned. This sense of ownership is an enabling factor for principals, especially when difficult decisions are to be made as they will have the understanding and support of the community, and especially of the teachers, who are in direct daily contact with students:

> Principals who support teachers and encourage parental and community support may be more successful in impacting teacher and student achievement (…). When the academic welfare of the students becomes a school-wide and community mission from the top-down, teachers may appreciate that accountability for all involved in the education of students is in the limelight.

(Huguet, 2017, p. 97)

This strong sense of participation and involvement at a large scale may seem almost self-evident but, given the conceptions of school leadership in Chile, it might come to Principals there as an unexpected role, one for which they are unprepared. This may be all the more the case if they are required to go beyond the normal constraints of their offices (BCN, 2017, Quiroga and Aravena, 2018) and have an active and knowledgeable voice on instructional matters, community outreach and the communication to others of their goals and educational plans. This is where, perhaps, building capacity and expertise (Day, 2014) would come as a priority for Chilean principals before demanding improvement in other pedagogical or leadership attributes.

The link between leadership practice and student achievement is also highlighted in a quantitative study by Dhuey and Smith (2018) which found that successful principals were able to improve test scores in maths and literacy. They suggest that the implications of their research are that policy makers should identify "the most effective principals" (Dhuey and Smith, 2018, p. 876) and strive to "allocate them among schools to reduce gaps in achievement or to increase achievement overall" (p. 876). This finding is important as it reveals that principals can have positive effects on student outcomes and even "modest changes in the quality of the principal, all else equal, can produce appreciable gains in student quality" (p. 876). The implication is here that higher levels of improvement in leadership quality could, therefore, go even further when impacting the learning of students. This is interesting because it is without doubt that Chile will have amongst its ranks successful school leaders who, given the above discussion, could be utilised to enhance provision with an appropriate plan in a school in much need of attention. Which bring us to examining what we mean by 'successful leadership'.

Successful leadership

There are many studies seeking to identify what attributes school leadership apply to ensure the success of student outcomes. Authors such as Sergiovanni (2007), Robinson (2007), Hattie (2002), Hallinger and Heck (2010), Day and Gu (2010), Penlington et al. (2008), Leithwood et al. (2004) and (Leithwood et al., 2019) deliver vigorous analysis, challenges and syntheses that help us, first, to understand leadership influence; secondly, to recognise what leaders do to support their schools and communities; and, thirdly, to observe a profile – a guiding tool – of what a good leader is and does. A study by Day et al. (2011) of seeks to bring together the available research and provides information about what successful leadership means within the context of student outcomes. Researchers will refer to strong claims that support the significance of a principal's actions on student outcomes and these claims are an important anchor for this inquiry.

One such claim is that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning. Leithwood et al. (2008, p. 28) argue that, "Leadership acts as a catalyst without which other good things are quite unlikely to happen" (28). The authors emphasise, however, that the qualitative evidence - typically carried out in exceptional school settings - needs more external "validity and generalisability" for it to be robust. In this case, the influence of leadership attached to student achievement and learning is measured as only 5-7%, in comparison with other factors, but this is because the action of school leaders is indirect and related to building strategies to influence teachers who are, in turn, the most direct influence on student progress and achievement. This study, therefore, is a response and a challenge to Robinson (2007) which suggested that principals' influence on student outcomes is not conclusive.

The study of Leithwood et al. (2008) also found that an average headteacher seeking to improve his or her attributes can add 10-percentile points to student test scores, a finding with which the recent study by Dhuey and Smith (2018) broadly concurs. The main point here is that, according to Leithwood et al. (2008), "there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership" (p. 29). This is further confirmed by the different studies within the ISSPP, which we shall investigate later, and is of significance for this thesis and whether four Chilean principals are indeed capable of "unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organisation" (p. 29).

Another claim from the research (Day et al., 2011, Gurr, 2015, Leithwood et al., 2008) is that almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices. Firstly, they create a sense of purpose, they motivate all members of the school community and they transmit a clear understanding of goals and expectations across the school. Secondly, they are adept at understanding and developing people. Successful school leaders know how to integrate the functional and the personal to ensure staff commitment not only to acquiring new skills, but to also be persistent in applying them. Thirdly, they are effective at redesigning the organisation. Successful school leaders create working conditions within which people are able to work at their best and also develop themselves further. Finally, they invest time managing the teaching and learning programme. Good leaders know how to create stability and strengthen the organisation through a focus on areas such as staffing programmes, teaching support provision, monitoring school activity and safeguarding staff from distractions to their day-to-day core business of student learning.

The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work (Day et al., 2016b). Context is everything and successful leaders are sensitive to it (Hallinger, 2018). The above practices are the same across schools, but good leaders will identify which ones to deploy

depending on an individual school's circumstances and needs at any given time. For example, when redesigning the organisation, 'turnaround' leaders - leaders called upon to quickly change an underperforming school - will seek to improve organizational communication, to set guidelines for better performance and open the path for approaches to leadership to "sustain high levels of performance" (p.31).

A number of studies reveal how school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions (Day et al., 2008, Leithwood et al., 2004, Dhuey and Smith, 2018). If leaders are to influence pupil learning and achievement and staff performance and capacity, the aforementioned conditions seem to be paramount. Excellent school leaders generate positive influences through supporting staff working conditions, leading to increased motivation and commitment and an enhanced belief in the potential of self, school and leadership. Furthermore, leadership practices that serve to enhance rather than limit teacher agency are important as "there is no loss of power and influence on the part of the headteachers when (…) the power and influence of many others in the school increase" (Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 35) and such an approach is linked to high levels of student achievement.

An early qualitative study by Day (2005) based on ten successful headteachers echoes the above claims. It is especially insightful in that it drew on the perspectives of the principals themselves and what they felt they needed to succeed. This is important for this thesis as it resembles closely the process of inquiry, setting out to learn about individual lived experiences and an understanding of the nature and practice of school leadership in Chile. The study showed how principals were able to balance the need for a broad and balanced curriculum and also managed external demands (e.g. exam performance) without losing sight of their personal view of the purpose and practice of education. In other words, they were able to manage the tension between performativity and vision, responding both to policy makers and also to what they themselves wanted for their own institutions. Successful schools were the ones in which "each head had constructed, with others, a coherent sense of purpose and direction out of the multitude of policy reforms, fragmentation and intensification of work and changes in society which threatened to engulf them" (Day and Leithwood, 2007, p. 281). Namely, they acted as a filter of external demands to ensure their school continued unimpeded towards their organisational goals. The principals in Chile face exactly the same demands, yet their situation is further impacted by a dearth of leadership training and support and a climate of significant and ongoing educational reform (Aravena and Lobos, 2018).

The study by Day and Leithwood (2007) also added that it was paramount for successful principals to build and sustain an inclusive community. Schools, students, parents and the community needed to form "teams" that ensured capacity building "for long-term growth and sustainability, building a collective

memory of purpose, process and success" (Day and Leithwood, 2007, p. 279) to allow schools to grow and have a sense of self. These school leaders created a culture of individual and collective agency; they defended the work of their teachers and they celebrated their achievements.

Throughout the research, the principals' ability to build and sustain trust is a recurring theme and is of particular relevance to a country such as Chile, given the levels of division in its society as discussed earlier and its violent and divisive recent history. According to Robinson (2007), with increased levels of trust, it was noted that:

> Teachers reported a greater willingness to try new things, a greater sense of responsibility for their students, more outreach to parents, and stronger professional community involving more shared work, more conversations about teaching and learning and a stronger collective focus on student learning. Increased relational trust produced more coordinated, mutually supportive and more effective efforts to engage students in learning. With increased trust comes more and better-quality cooperation, more social support and a stronger sense of mutual obligation, binding together the efforts of teachers, principals and parents.
>
> (Robinson, 2007, pp. 20-21)

These investigations cited above show the potential for study when engaging with school leaders as real individuals undergoing lived experiences and, by meeting with them, it is possible to gain an important insight into who they are, what they think and what we can learn from their experiences.

School Principals

Sergiovanni (see Guzman, 1997, p. 440) is explicit in his commitment to the understanding of a principal's role in a school:

> It is the principal who has the most power as a moral authority. It is that individual whose actions, statements, and expectations make powerful symbolic statements. Further, intentionally or unintentionally, the principal's behaviours, actions, or inactions condone or condemn the attitudes and behaviours of staff members.

This is further acknowledged by Tubin (2011, p. 407), "the principal's actions affect those of the teachers, distributing and evoking both actions and feelings, and mutually advancing toward improved achievement". Day and Harris (1999) in "Successful Leadership for Effective Schools in the 21st Century" define the actions of successful principals. These include establishing a vision, organising monitoring procedures, building strong external relations and taking on board values that define their institution's identity. The same findings can be found in Leithwood (2005) when he refers to specific practices, highlighting "setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organization as the basics of successful leadership – probably not sufficient for success, but necessary in almost all contexts" (2005, p. 620). Day and Harris (1999) also acknowledge that

these principals are people centred, able to deal with tensions and dilemmas and act boldly to raise standards; they foster collaboration and minimise external demands on staff and they are able to model values and practices to the rest of the community. This is what Leithwood (2005) names as their capacity to redesign the organisation by "building a collaborative school culture, creating structures to encourage participation in decision-making, and building productive relationships with parents and the wider community" (p. 621). This view remains and the work of Day et al. (2016b), Sun and Leithwood (2017) and Leithwood et al. (2019) continues to highlight school leaders' impact on student learning, albeit indirectly and mediated by variables such as practitioners and family. These researchers emphasise the value of effective leadership practices via involvement, empowerment and trust across their school to create capacity for development and achievement centred around a common goal - their vision. An early study by Guzman (1997) on multiple case analysis supports this. Her investigation showed how a principal's vision and strategic thinking created meaningful channels for staff voice to influence policies, practices and put forward recommendations. These principals provided time for collaboration amongst staff and promoted systems of support with a focus on student inclusion. For them, staff professional development was key in the process of improving student learning. This study and others especially within the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) emphasise that successful school leaders act as intermediaries (or 'filters' as described above) and facilitators (Sun and Leithwood, 2017). Successful principals encourage staff to be leaders themselves. They provide enough autonomy for staff, i.e., "a balance to allow consultation and involvement and still maintain a sense of direction despite strong views and demands" (Day and Harris, 1999, p. 7). They identify strongly with institutional values that are just as important as academic performance. In this respect, Merchant et al. (2012) describe a strong sense of moral purpose that is beyond policy makers' directives:

> Those principals with a social justice orientation, however, resist the pressure to teach to the test, and they do all they can to buffer their teachers and students from the pressures associated with high-stakes exams. They encourage their teachers to focus on what is right for the students in their classrooms, and to remain confident in what they know about best practices with respect to learning and teaching.
>
> (Merchant et al., 2012, p. 439)

The narrative by Day and Harris (1999) places principals as instrumental in student achievement. They characterise quality leadership as "driven by individual[s] and collective value-systems rather than instrumental, bureaucratic, managerial concerns" (Day and Harris, 1999, p. 8). The emphasis on commitment to a set of values seems to be a strong characteristic across all the literature on successful school leadership. Gurr et al. (2006) also stress the importance of the principal's core values and beliefs in successful leadership:

> Values and beliefs inform the principals' decisions and actions regarding the provision of individual support and capacity building at the school level, including school culture and structure. The principal's core values and beliefs, together with the values and capacities of other members of the school community, feed directly into the development of a shared school vision, which shapes the teaching and learning, student and social capital outcomes of schooling.
>
> (Gurr et al., 2006, p. 379)

Leithwood (2005) adds that successful leaders all share passion, enthusiasm, an ethic of care and, of note when comparing within the Chilean context, a set of values for social justice and equitable education for all students. Externally, they are less preoccupied with imposed accountability. Leithwood explains that in more developed educational contexts such as Australia, England and the US:

> Successful leaders (…) were less consumed with (or had become desensitized to) worries over the sometimes-negative steering effects of many accountability initiatives – reduced autonomy and public shaming through publication of league tables, for example, – and more intent on harnessing government accountability initiatives to their own school's priorities.
>
> (Leithwood, 2005, p. 623)

In many countries, principals who absorb rather than disseminate external demands is neither the norm nor does it reflect what the system expects from principals working in schools, yet their institutions can still be regarded as successful within the cultural realities of those environments. Chile is one such example.

To help examine further such cultural and historical differences in expectations and practice, it is important to next turn to the *International Successful School Principalship Project* (ISSPP) (ISSPP, 2018) in which case studies from around the world have been conducted to a common protocol and collected to illustrate similarities and differences in values, qualities and actions of principals and shed light on the global school leadership field .

The International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP)

The breadth and variety of the ISSPP mean it is ideal for shedding light on the practices of principals in Chile and, in turn, it is hoped that this present research may contribute insights about Chilean school leadership practice to ISSPP's ongoing work.

Initially, the ISSPP was a three-phase project with eight countries: Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Norway, Sweden and the USA. The data gathering and methodologies deployed were "multiple perspective case studies, surveys and observational case studies" (Gurr et al., 2006, p. 373). By 2012, this international study had expanded further in influence and authority

with “more than 100 case studies” and “more than 70 articles to international, peer-refereed journals” (Jacobson, 2012, p. 8). The list of countries and their participating institutions can be seen in table 2.1:

Country	Institution	Country	Institution	Country	Institution
Australia	University of Melbourne	Greece	University of the Agean	Spain	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid,
Austria	University of Klagenfurt Universidade	Ireland	University college Dublin		Universidad de Sevilla,
Brazil	Federal Fluminense	Israel	Ben-Gurion University of the Negev		Universidad de Granada
Canada	University of Western Ontario	Mexico	Tecnológico de Monterrey	Sweden	Umea University
Chile	University Alberto Hurtado, University del Bio Bio	New Zealand	University of Otago	Switzerland	Zurich University of Teacher Education
China	East China Normal University	Norway	University of Oslo	Turkey	Anadolu University
Cyprus	Open University of Cyprus	Portugal	University of Algarve	United Kingdom	University of Nottingham
Denmark	Aarhus University	Puerto Rico	University of Puerto Rico	USA	University of Arizona, Boston College,
Finland	University of Jyväskylä	Singapore	National Institute of Education		University of Buffalo, Clemson University, Hofstra University, Northern Illinois University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, School for International Training, University of Texas at San Antonio
		South Africa	Vaal University of Technology, North-west University		

Table 2.1 – ISSPP participating countries and institutions.

The ISSPP investigation, now with 25 participating countries, continues to provide evidence that “variations in context, both within and across nations, are related to variations in leadership practices that result in school success” (Jacobson, 2012, p. 9). In this respect, Møller (2017, p. 379) indicates how the ISSPP “is probably the most comprehensive international study of school leadership ever undertaken” and therefore, clearly of value to this current research. Thus far the ISSPP project has found via its investigation a number of common practices and approaches by school principals. They are passionate individuals with growth mindsets, i.e., flexible, undeterred by challenges and

committed to “promoting social justice, equity and excellence” (Møller, 2017, p. 380). They adopt and adapt combinations of strategies according to their school context and phase of development. In all of the studies the principals look at their context to understand and be informed about a school’s situation within a local and national reality (Gurr et al., 2006). Effective principals believe strongly that all children can learn, regardless of circumstances. This is linked to personal traits related to goodness, passion, equity and “other-centeredness” (Gurr et al., 2006, p. 376). They work to allocate a responsive provision for staff training (Sun and Leithwood, 2017) in order to build individual capacity in the delivery of curriculum. When building school-wide capacity, they act to motivate their communities to appreciate and value the need for change in their school cultures and to participate through new roles related to staffing and leadership growth and Gurr et al. (2006, p. 376) write about “a culture of collegiality, collaboration, support and trust and that this culture (…) [was] firmly rooted in their democratic and social justice values and beliefs”. This touches on the structure or organisation of the school by ensuring that vision and mission are linked to specific outcomes:

> The focus of the school vision/direction was reflected in the school curriculum and in teaching/ learning strategies and was underpinned by a pastoral care or similar supportive school environment strategy evident within each school. Evidence from the case studies indicated that each school’s mission and vision was articulated and reinforced on a regular basis to ensure a cohesive and holistic school focus.
>
> (Gurr et al., 2006, p. 377)

What these findings underline is that successful school outcomes need to be recognised as an input born from a principal’s values, qualities and actions. These actions played a key role in the organisational growth of a school with direct and indirect impact on student learning. All things considered, the ISSPP has produced evidence to claim that successful principals’ actions have a positive impact on schools performance, even within challenging and varied cultural contexts and settings (Møller, 2017). In this respect, the Australian ISSPP project, conducted by Drysdale and Gurr (2011), claims that successful principals “were all intellectually restless and actively sought new ideas to supplement their significant on-the-job training” (p. 364). The Australian case studies reinforce the study of Guzman (1997) that principals have an indirect but significant influence on student outcomes. Tubin (2011) offers a similar view:

> School principal affects students’ achievements directly, indirectly, and reciprocally, with most evidence pointing to indirect effects (…), there was very little evidence of direct effects on any student outcomes, and more about indirect effects, with leadership style as a mediating variable.
>
> (Tubin, 2011, p. 396)

This corpus of empirical research seems to strongly indicate that principals need special attention if we are to improve the quality of provision for student learning.

The work reported by Gurr (2015) is important as it seeks to encapsulate ISSPP findings thus far. Successful school leaders seek to establish a culture of high expectations which they achieve through core leadership practices whereby they set direction, develop teaching and non-teaching staff, lead change and improve instruction. In many cases, there are examples of heroic leadership, where principals challenge the status quo by empowering communities (parents, teachers and students) to achieve, regardless of circumstances. Namely, they possess a catalogue of personal resources, qualities, beliefs and values that allow them to do what is right for students. They are context sensitive, not context driven; "school leaders fine tune their responses to the context and culture in which they lead to optimise school success" (Gurr, 2015, p. 140). This is what Day et al. (2016a) define as context sensitivity in the implementation of leadership practices:

> Without doubt, successful leaders are sensitive to context, but this does not mean that they use qualitatively different practices in every different context. It means, rather, that they apply contextually sensitive combinations of the basic leadership practices (…). The ways in which leaders apply these leadership practices—not the practices themselves—demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work.
>
> (Day et al., 2016a, p. 253)

These principals also believe in continuing learning - they seek new ideas and innovations that become opportunities for their own professional development and new opportunities for their schools. Most importantly, no single model of leadership seems to explain what they do as we have seen earlier. "These principals develop approaches to leadership which enable them to lead a school community successfully; they are less concerned with the academic debates that range about the impact of various leadership styles" (Gurr, 2015, p. 138).

The above can be linked with other ISSPP studies such as Drysdale (2011) and Wang et al. (2016), i.e., significantly, these principals undertake a process of establishing a vision, create a collaborative culture, educate the whole child for academic and non-academic success and develop staff.

In light of the above discussion, it is important now to focus on the Latin American context within which Chile exists that reflects wider regional (Latin American) and linguistic (Hispanic) as well as more local political and cultural influences.

The Latin American context

In Latin America, the role of principals is described as having little influential power to provide meaningful instructional leadership (Bolívar, 2015) compared to expectations in more developed educational settings where their actions can be transformative, contextually responsive and in line with national and international policies (Aman and Ireland, 2015, Flessa and Weinstein, 2018, Flessa et al., 2018). However, these high expectations have started to permeate different school systems and the role of the principal in enhancing teacher and student achievement, as highlighted by the ISSPP, is the focus of a number of initiatives across the continent as explained by Weinstein and Hernandez (see Bolívar, 2015, p. 18).

The studies in Hispanic countries seem to show (Bolívar, 2015) that the dimension of successful school leadership most observed is that of the promotion and participation of learning and development of staff followed by planning, coordinating and evaluating the teaching and curriculum. These results coincide with the research findings that school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly by affecting instruction, training and building leadership capacity amongst the staff as explored earlier. One of the supporting ISSPP studies undertaken in Spain, by García Garnica and Moral Santaella (2015) via a case study, elaborates on a more transformational vision that gives successful principals an empowering social role as social justice leaders who promote diversity and the construction of a fairer society. Chile has also had the opportunity to contribute to ISSPP via the investigation by Fromm et al. (2017) that sought primarily to validate the responsiveness of a Spanish version of the principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) with 595 teachers and 26 principals as participants in Santiago. Although the main target was to determine the "cultural adaptation (…) in Spanish speaking contexts" (p. 149) of this Anglo/American survey tool, it produced results that added to wider ISSPP conclusions. The dimension that refers to goal setting, mission and communication was the highest rated principal function by practitioners in schools and, although limited in its findings, it represents a specific attempt to learn about school principals in Chile.

Hispanic countries in this project show a difference in perception in the role of principals. They are either technicians (managers) or professionals (teachers) (Hernández-Castilla et al., 2017). However, according to the same authors, exceptional principals seem to overcome challenges for the greater good of students, this comes to further support Day et al. (2016a) and ISSPP's findings on principals' influence regardless of complex circumstances. Hernández-Castilla et al. (2017) produced a diagram (fig. 2.1) that presents the commonalities found between their study and that of the ISSPP. This schematises the key needs related to the performance of successful school leaders in non-Anglo-American cultures:

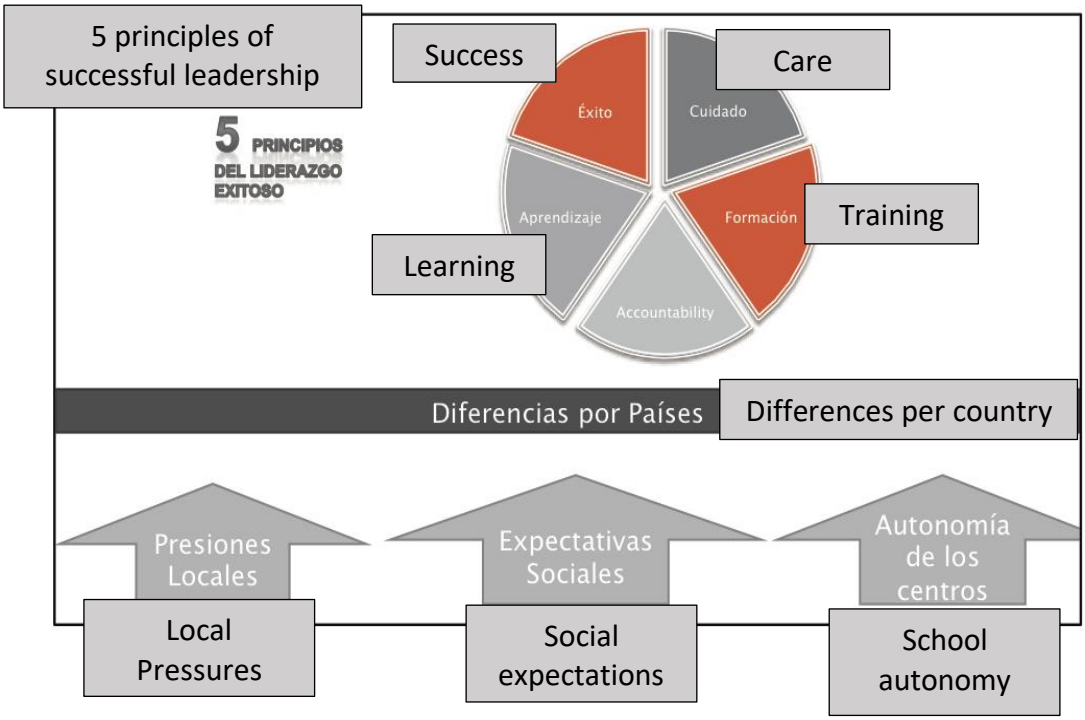


Figure 2.2: Five principles for successful leadership (author's translation).

These commonalities are the leading of learning, training provision for school leaders, care for students, achievement for all and accountability (interestingly, the Spanish language does not have its own word to express this last concept). Below the pie chart are the three external factors that influence actions and decisions and are common to school leaders everywhere - local pressures, social expectations and a school's capacity for autonomy. My reading of both studies suggests that, regardless of country, culture or socio-economic background, navigating these elements creates the first layer of challenge for any principal. For example, there is a sense that successful school leadership has been caught between the need to demonstrate national performance and the need to provide care for the child and future adult we wish to develop. This tension has been proven to be managed well (Gu et al., 2018, Day and Leithwood, 2007) by successful principals, even in contexts where principals are regarded as mere administrators (Hernández-Castilla et al., 2017).

The evidence gathered (Day, 2005) shows that successful leaders succeed over time in every context despite constraints such as funding, policies and accountability. This claim is even more important now as the educational scenario for principals will further demand action on matters related to, for example, migration and the integration of refugees or their response to the 2020 Covid pandemic.

Although these new expectations should come in tandem with appropriate support from policy makers, evidence from high performing principals suggests they will still deliver, regardless of such new constraints (Gu et al., 2018). This is where it is suggested that research and leadership should work together in

informing educational actions and decisions when leading schools - “Our thinking about educational leadership must be complemented and informed by research which focuses on recent changes in the political economy that have challenged public education severely” (Møller, 2017, p. 375). Therefore, school leaders will examine ideas about successful school leadership, as it “requires that we ask: success in or for what, success for whom, who benefits, and success under what conditions?” (p. 383).

Other research projects have also sought to highlight the leadership practices needed for school improvement and, given the internationally recognised underachievement in Chile’s schools, exploring this in the light of recognised structured and intrusive school improvement projects will be illuminating for this present research. This is why I focus next on the School Turnaround project.

School Turnaround

This project deals with targeted training for principals to prepare them for the improvement of chronically underperforming schools in the United States and emphasises the transformational power of principals. Apart from exploring this approach more closely, I will also compare it with the ISSPP project to seek to add further understanding, perspective and depth of analysis when examining principals in Chile.

According to Duke (2012) and Johnson (2013), School Turnaround is a USA policy makers’ response to tackling chronically underperforming schools measured by an increase in student academic achievement in national assessments (Ong, 2015). A key aspect of this agenda is that it demands change in a restricted timescale (four years) (Duke, 2012). This approach places a strong emphasis on the role of leadership - the incumbent principal often attributed as the cause of the problem and the replacement as the cause of the improvement. In the USA, this process is funded and led via the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) 2009. To make use of these grants, school districts have to adhere to strict rules. If schools do not demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) via their school improvement plans, school districts are expected to choose a strategy from the options below:

- Option 1 calls for closing the school and sending students to higher-achieving schools.
- Option 2, the so-called restart model, involves turning the operation of the school over to a charter or education-management organization. This latter course of action is an educational shift (Mette, 2013), giving to business and private bodies or individuals the role of problem solvers when addressing school improvement. It opens the door to reform public education by consenting (Peck and Reitzug, 2014) to “private ‘alternative management’ and provision of ‘supplemental services’ for schools deemed as failing” (Johnson, 2013, p. 241).

- Option 3, or the *Transformation model*, requires replacing the principal and improving the school through comprehensive curriculum reform, professional development, extended learning time, and other reforms.
- Option 4, dubbed the *Turnaround model*, entails replacing the principal, screening existing school staff and rehiring no more than half the teachers, choosing a new governance structure, and adopting reforms similar to the transformation model.

(Duke, 2012, p. 14)

The choices above, operating within a neo-liberal social, political and economic model (Klees, 2020) as discussed previously, can be seen as drastic solutions that do not incorporate participation from school members: parents, students, teachers or the local community. The possible courses of action described above can leave communities disenfranchised and penalised (Johnson, 2013). For students and their families there is little option but to yield. This also shows that the programme is controversial, especially because it "names and shames" institutions perceived as delivering well below national standards. Johnson (2013) maintains that the closure of a school in these circumstances is akin to social and civic death that affects not only the schools, but also their communities. For Mette and Scribner (2014) turnaround is a neo-liberal economic strategy borrowed from business to turn failing, unproductive organisations into profitable and renewed enterprises. Johnson (2013) refers to this as the "marketization of education"; a practice that is "characterized by the intensification of standardized testing and tracking, investment in charter schools or schools of choice, and [their] privatization" (Johnson, 2013, p. 223). Mette (2013) argues that School Turnaround is a questionable practice as the "programs are understudied, uninformed, and unsupported by evidence" (p. 340) exposing the risk of allocating capital to unproven strategies. Nonetheless, there are other authors that see potential in this strategy.

Currently, the Turnaround Project continues with its emphasis on the role of principals. While Meyers and Hambrick Hitt (2017) acknowledge that transferring practices from other fields could be regarded as a "fad" (p. 40), indication so far show that, in education, "the work of a truly effective principal would transfer into even the most challenging school settings. (…) An effective principal will succeed regardless of the context" (Meyers and Hambrick Hitt, 2017, p. 40). A turnaround principal has become a synonym for a talented individual who is able to lead a school in decline (Meyers and Hambrick Hitt, 2017). Meyers and Smylie (2017) reflect that much of the current Turnaround experience has led to a conception that school decline has little to do with poor student achievement in national tests. "At its heart, school turnaround is a problem of organization change, not simply the introduction of new personnel, programs, and practices" (Meyers and Smylie, 2017, p. 503). This means that local authorities or school districts need to support chronically underperforming (Meyers and Sadler, 2018) schools via the reallocation of support, accountability and resources to help champion these schools and their settings.

Nonetheless, for the purpose of this research, we can observe that this approach to low-performing schools is centred around expectations of the role of school principals - they alone are accountable for the success or failure of their school and will be feted or removed accordingly.

Understanding the above is particularly relevant to my research given the neo-liberal practices trialled in Chile during the dictatorship (1973-1990) and their continued presence in the country as a whole (Bellei et al., 2014, Cabalin, 2012, Kubal and Fisher, 2016, Alarcón Leiva, 2017) and in education specifically. Furthermore, as school turnaround is most prevalent in poorer areas where school underperformance is considerable, it has particular relevance given Chile's school performance and the socio-economic make-up of many parts of the country.

It is worthwhile, at this point, to explore briefly the specifics of a case within the Turnaround Project in the United States, namely the Florida Turnaround Leaders Program (FTLP). All such projects operate on similar lines, that is to work with principals, and in some cases with teachers, on aspects related to best practices in education and business. Duke (2014) explains that leading School Turnaround follows five components: awareness of problems and obstacles to raise performance; to understand the root of the problem; to plan action and direction to address the issues; principals' self-awareness of action to recognise why certain actions are necessary and commitment to lead staff in overcoming and addressing the need for change. The foundational skills identified by FTLP, for example, highlight key areas of development needed that work partially in tandem with ISSPP research claims as quoted below in table 2.3:

FTLP (The Florida Turnaround Leaders Program)	ISSPP (International Successful School Principalship Project)
1. Analysing the context of low-performing schools. 2. Envisioning a culture of high expectations. 3. Promoting effective teaching and learning. 4. Providing a rigorous and relevant curriculum. 5. Building a productive school environment. 6. Planning and managing the turnaround process. 7. Implementing organizational change and professional development. 8. Leading initiatives to improve student success. 9. Maximizing flexibility and autonomy in the charter setting. 10. Sustaining turnaround and growing the organization. (Duke, 2014, p. 82)	1. Culture of high expectations – high yet reasonable with a focus on internal needs 2. Pragmatic Approaches – no adherence to specific leadership models, but concerned with staff, their professional development and instruction. 3. Leadership distribution or leadership of many. Meaningful participation from different stakeholders: teachers, parents and students. 4. Core leadership practices: setting direction, developing people, leading change, improving teaching and learning. 5. Heroic Leadership – challenge the status quo, fight for their students and empowering view of what is possible in their school communities. 6. Capacity development for teaching and non-teaching staff to be better at what they do. 7. Trust and respect from the school community to their actions based on their core values, transparency and integrity. 8. Continuous learning in that they seek new opportunities to develop as professionals. 9. Personal Resources an acumen of traits that enables them to do what is best for students. 10. Context Sensitive, principals moderate and reconcile their school settings to continue an agenda of change and improvement. 11. Sustaining success strategies that enable them to continue organizational growth and improvement. (Gurr, 2015)

Table 2.2 Comparing the FTLP (The Florida Turnaround Leaders program) and the ISSPP (International Successful School Principalship Project).

FTLP and ISSPP raise similar issues when it comes to actions linked to the school settings and recognising areas that need attention and work. They both believe in the need to create systems that will enable schools to change and sustain that change in the long term. There is a commitment to staff development in both agendas that emphasises the importance of their role in student learning. There is an expectation to develop and aspire to a culture of high achievement for all. Both approaches seek to provide the foundations for strong leadership that enable schools to provide a meaningful provision for students. However there needs to be highlighted certain caveats when comparing the two projects. The FTLP is a reflection of a need for action in a small percentage of underperforming schools in the United States and the ISSPP intends to offer a global evidenced-based approach that explains, retrospectively, quality leadership for positive change. The FTLP's purpose is to indicate actions that need to be done within school, whilst the ISSPP's findings reveal principals that involve others in the process of growing change organically in their schools. The

FTLP is also a formulaic process that is not rooted in specific schools and may collapse due to a lack of institutional and school community awareness and support.

That said, Turnaround adheres to the idea of principals in charge with the capacity to improve institutions and deliver needed structural and personnel changes to affect school results. Turnaround principals are deemed to be talented heads that are expected to enact strategies, implementations and rectification to improve national scores quickly. For some academics, it is not a process of construction, but of dismantling school identities to fit them into a generic universal understanding of what is regarded as a successful school vis., high scores in high-stake national tests (Barber and Mourshed, 2007b, Møller, 2017). Others strongly believe in the capacity of good principals to affect school performance, but there is a move to thinking that it should involve the participation of communities and local authorities (Meyers and Smylie, 2017). Furthermore, as the ISSPP highlights through evidence and research (Jacobson, 2012), principals' motivations stem from their inner values and commitment to education and its capacity to make a difference to young adults and their families. The study has been able to gather a commonality of actions related to school leadership - principals, all in all, work to build up trust and respect within the community (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998) and a commitment to support students above all via vision, staff and leadership development, organisational improvement and safe learning environments, building relational trust and "a strong commitment to promoting social justice, equity and excellence" (Møller, 2017, p. 380).

The true test for the Turnaround policy's effectiveness is the sustainability of its changes (Meyers and Smylie, 2017, Meyers and Hambrick Hitt, 2017, Meyers and Sadler, 2018, Day, 2014). According to Day (2014) real change can only be maintained by involving every member of a school community and in this scenario the actions of the principal are fundamental:

> The successful principal knows that for change to work students, teachers, non-teaching staff and parents must all have a sense of ownership of the process and the product. Without such commitment, sustaining change will be difficult if not impossible.
>
> (Day, 2014, 10)

To achieve sustained change, principals need to build agendas with meaningful participation that gives opportunities for all to feel that what is newly in place is the result of their input (Day, 2014). The same author warns against rapid changes, as the key to durable implementations, ones that become strongly imbedded in the fabric of a school, is time:

> 'quick-fix' changes may lead to temporary recoveries, which cannot be sustained; and these often exhaust the staff (and principal) rather than re-energizing them (…). This may be the case, especially when change processes do not acknowledge people's emotions,(…) vulnerabilities (…) or values (…); when

> they do not seek to renew their passion for teaching (…); or when they fail to provide the training and development opportunities and ongoing support necessary for staff to learn new skills and acquire new knowledge, in other words, when they fail to build the individual and collective power of the staff to improve student well-being and achievement, otherwise known as 'capacity building.'
>
> (Day, 2014, p. 10)

Day (2014) refers to these as 'layered' development phases, where the principals will need to manage and articulate a message of inclusivity based on their values and moral educational purpose in the planning and direction of strategies. Of particular relevance when comparing and contrasting school practice with the Chilean context is the research that suggests that "Schools and leaders of schools in locations which serve highly disadvantaged communities (…) can never 'coast' if they are to succeed" (Day, 2014, p. 18). Once schools have moved out of a cycle of improvement, they can start to explore ways to add further value to children's daily experience in schools. In this regard, Day (2014) affirms:

> Children from highly disadvantaged communities are often deprived of experiences from outside their immediate environment, and (…) [so] part of the whole vision for the school was to extend their view of what might be possible for them by looking outside their normal environment.
>
> (p. 18)

Day (2014) recognises the challenges for schools in areas of deprivation with high crime rates - a situation which describes three of the four schools in my research - and he is categorical that schools cannot solve these social issues. However, he recognises that principals have an effect on student expectations, achievement, opportunities for future life prospects and motivation to succeed. This is achieved via the decisions they make, the values they uphold and their commitment to enhancing student school experiences.

All things considered, the above phases are a reminder that, for them to function effectively, school principals cannot work in isolation. They have to be responsive to school contexts and recognise that success is a complex and multifaceted process. As Day (2014) explains:

> (…) successful leaders are driven by intentions which are associated with 'beliefs', 'knowledge' and 'skills' and their application in specific contexts at particular times and with particular individuals and groups, and that successful improvement processes are both multi-layered and time related.
>
> (2014, p. 19)

The above discussion is important for principals in its recognition that change is not easy, nor is it impossible. Yet, leading institutions under the circumstances described above requires individuals who constantly think ahead, re-think intervention processes and question the validity of external demands at the

expense of internally focused school actions that will produce a lasting impact and commitment from the school community. This is a challenge for policymakers in search of rapid improvements in test results or who are keen to impose a one–size-fits-all solution. Such approaches are likely to fail, not least due the lack of endorsement by the practitioners involved:

> Policy makers must develop smarter, more humane ways to help competent, hard-working educators improve their practice. Reformers should also seek to motivate teachers through any positive means available rather than simply applying punitive measures put on public display.
>
> (Peck and Reitzug, 2014, p. 31)

The field of School Turnaround highlights above all the deep differences that are apparent between research-based research for school improvement and government-imposed, short-term policies (Peck and Reitzug, 2014, Meyers and Smylie, 2017, Duke, 2012, Johnson, 2013). It also further emphasises the importance of highly-skilled school principals (Mette, 2013, Meyers and Hambrick Hitt, 2017, Ong, 2015, Day, 2014) able to move institutions forward not just academically but also via policies and actions for inventive curricula and pastoral support that are in tune with students and their community's needs.

For this purpose, specially trained principals take the leadership of these schools to restore organisational results. The evidence from the research seems to be strong for successful school leaders. However, I feel that it is important to also raise a discussion that delivers a different message and seeks to build up a critique to the above and in so doing to balance out the argument so far with other divergent voices on the subject.

School Effectiveness Research (SER) and School Leadership Impact on Student Outcomes - Critique

It is important to examine School Effectiveness Research (SER) and School Improvement Research (SIR) as related but differing bodies of study. And also, then to explain how this present investigation acknowledges but seeks to go beyond these agendas, in contributing empirical evidence from four principals in Chilean schools.

SER & SIR

SER has been criticised as focussing on evaluating school effectiveness as defined by measurable student outcomes (Thrupp, 2001, Wrigley, 2004). Some authors (Teddlie and Reynolds, 2001, Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, Harris, 2013) consider SIR as a subsection of SER that delivers the qualitative data necessary to give SER a broader methodological sphere of influence in research for education. Thus, whilst SER makes an important contribution to knowledge (Harris, 2013, Teddlie and Reynolds, 2001, Scherer and Nilsen, 2019), its

approach is narrow in that much of it represents a 'functional' perspective, i.e., it is restricted to demonstrating results in the improvement of a school's performance in tests. This ignores the purpose of schools as educational organisations in a much broader social and personal sense. Biesta (2015), for example, claims that such an approach serves to undermine the importance of individual school knowledge, understanding and the daily experience of children's education. Other critics of SER (Slee and Weiner, 2001, Thrupp, 2001, Wrigley, 2004) have also highlighted that 'effectiveness' can be measured via other means, such as financial efficacy, attendance, student enjoyment, student participation or citizen preparedness (Gorard, 2009). Slee & Weiner (2001), suggest that SER advocates need "to disentangle the concept of efficiency from effectiveness" (p. 83) and to acknowledge "about whom schools are most 'effective' for" (p. 83). This is especially important when considering issues of inclusion in education. For example, research into schools in areas of extreme poverty will benefit from a more holistic approach that takes into account their challenges and addresses the possible roots of their problems, providing a body of learning that is more responsive to context.

Writing about the purposes of education, Biesta (2015) suggests it is a teleological practice, centred around three domains: 'qualifications' (knowledge, skills and dispositions), 'socialisation' (individuals within society) and 'subjectification' (an individual's own development). He believes that when deciding on actions to improve areas within each domain, the presence of all three needs to be acknowledged, so the balance and interdependence of these purposes remains stable. From this perspective, the emphasis of SER on "performance accountability (also known as high-stakes testing)" (Falabella, 2020, p. 24) is regarded as "a powerful and insidious policy technology that is now at work at all levels and in all kinds of education (…) that links effort, values, purposes and self-understanding to measures and comparisons of output" (Ball, 2012, p. 19).

This is a challenging situation for individual schools, teachers and principals who need to constantly negotiate the efficacy of their professional values: "Individuals have to constantly improve themselves, calculate their efforts, and perform in order to satisfy external standards, criteria, and tasks, and thus produce a favourable and profitable image" (Falabella, 2020, p. 26). Therefore, the SER emphasis on testing, as a representation of quality, can be seen as a focus purely on qualifications, in Biesta's terms, without due regard to socialisation and subjectification. As such it leaves out significant moderating aspects of children's educational experience such as the influence of family background, social group, economic status and governmental educational priorities.

Responses to National Policy Agendas

Because "It would clearly be absurd to argue that schools should be less effective, stagnate or deteriorate" (Wrigley, 2013, p. 32), critics of SER suggest

that it is not surprising that national and international policy advisers (e.g. OECD) make use of SER findings when advising national governments on educational policy. This may explain why SER has been closely linked to national governments' developing agendas (Kelly and Elliott-Kelly, 2018). SER provides evidence of what effective changes in schools are necessary to yield positive academic results, albeit usually supported by quantitative data (Hopkins et al., 2014, Slee and Weiner, 2001). They often focus on remedying areas of perceived academic deficiencies (Courtney and Gunter, 2015) in schools seeking major and immediate functional knowledge of (Thrupp, 2001) "what works best" (Kelly and Elliott-Kelly, 2018). For Teddlie & Reynolds (2001), this almost "symbiotic relationship between educational policy makers and school effectiveness researchers is overstated" (p.50). They argue that it is mostly centred in the UK with little impact elsewhere. Additionally, the responsibility for selecting and making use of data and findings is largely in the hands of policy makers and principals, not researchers.

Policies by governments which allocate power to school leadership and highlight leaders as responsible for school performance – satisfactory or otherwise – have been regarded by some as a reductionist expression of the purposes of schools within the wider education system. This is primarily due to the perceived emphasis on a positivist stance and the lack of more qualitative studies (Mowat, 2019, Slee and Weiner, 2001, Kelly and Elliott-Kelly, 2018). However, for Teddlie and Reynolds (2001), this is a simplistic portrayal of SER, which has disseminated over 600 articles and reviews with wide academic specialization via *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* (SESI) since it began in 1989. However, they do concede that more qualitative and mixed method studies are necessary within the field: "We agree (…) and the call for more qualitative and mixed methods research has been made several times within the SER literature, and answered" (2001, p. 73).

SER researchers have, perhaps, been "too sanguine about the impact of managerial interventions to improve standards in schools and make them more accountable" (Thrupp, 2001, pp. 451-452). Writing early in the field, (Burgess, 1980, p. 13) identifies himself with this view: 'My fear has been that managerial goals are being offered as a substitute for more fundamental debate about curriculum and pedagogy'. This is something that the study of Falabella (2020) on policy enactment in Chile highlights, where current imposed measures by the central government - such as emphasis on high-stakes testing, league tables and parental choice - are validated as a priority and other foci such as student welfare, entitlement and inclusion are left aside. In her study, principals and teachers felt torn between external expectations and their own moral purpose as practitioners, something which links this current research.

Schools are complex organisations with complex purposes. Solely focusing on a principal's influence and then trying to quantify their actions is a narrow field of understanding in relation to what takes place in schools, ignoring factors such as the role of teachers in the implementation of educational policy and

how they enact school improvement strategies. (Day, 2019) emphasises that teachers are entrusted by society to educate "children and young people in ways which others, including advanced technologies, cannot" (2019, p. 2). This means necessarily that, if they define their educational mission as broad rather than narrow, they need to go beyond considering teaching solely as a process whose nature is accessible purely through a functional, quantitative lens:

> [Good] teachers strive to influence their students' minds beyond mere absorption, re-gurgitation or reproduction to embrace access to, processing and evaluation of existing information, knowledge, social formation, embodied artistic and spiritual experiences.
>
> (Day, 2019, p.2)

These are provisions beyond the realm of numeric indicators and finding out more about them requires a different approach to discover how principals and teachers embrace their role and influence on students as stated by Day (2019). This means a type of research that involves direct contact with principals and teachers to reveal what it is like to work at a holistic level for the education of their students.

SER and Social Justice within Neoliberal Agendas

SER has been characterised by its critics as principally concerned with seeking to show how effective and proven actions can improve educational results within a short time scale, with anything else regarded as unnecessary (Thrupp, 2001). This may be regarded as a political stance:

> [SER] grew in a context of the neoliberal educational market and consumer choice, (…) it inhabits a dense forest of high stakes testing, league tables, accountability, teacher competences, performance pay, performance review, an increasing emphasis on education as the production of human capital, curricula imposed from above, (…) government-imposed teaching methods, the restoration of selection and accelerating privatisation.
>
> (Wrigley, 2003, p. 92)

In this respect, philosophical orientations, values or ethics are not fundamentally explored within SER. Scheerens (2013) implies that SER lacks a theoretical base. It relies on studies that show cause and effect, without models, preferring methodology drawn from "organisational theories" without any theoretical base and ignoring the reality that schools are "moral enterprise[s]" (Møller, 2017, p. 383). Kelly and Elliott-Kelly (2018) concede that SER needs a theoretical framework as a guiding tool:

> There is general agreement that communities need effective schools, but there is no acknowledgement that this can exacerbate differentials in achievement; schools can improve in aggregate, but adversely affect disadvantaged pupils.

> Having a philosophy would enable (…) [SER] to re-examine fundamentally the consequences of aggregation.
>
> (2018, p. 530)

The same authors also recognise that:

> SER looks at variations in practice between schools and between classrooms with a view to understanding why and how some schools, but not others, make educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils more equitable and fairer. The challenge for the field is to debate and define what is meant by terms like "fairness" and "equity", and to be self-conscious about the philosophical implications of those definitions.
>
> (Kelly and Elliott-Kelly, 2018, p. 531)

SER studies which focus on achieving social justice are also associated with the performance of schools, student outcomes as measured by quantitative outcomes and neoliberal policy agendas (Courtney et al. 2015). They have also been criticised for the narrowness of their investigations as they do not acknowledge (Thrupp, 2001, Slee & Weiner, 2001) either the complexities of school settings (Weinstein et al., 2020, p. 64) or the broader social purposes of schooling. A counter argument by Teddlie and Reynolds (2001) shows that the primary purpose of SER is to work within current reforms and paradigms and guide actions on school improvement within constraints. Changes at societal level are long-term endeavours; SER works "within the constraints of the current social order" (p.71).

A recent study by Kelly and Elliott-Kelly (2018), affirms that SER efforts and focus on methodology have obscured the work that can be done in social justice, for which they suggest a Rawlsian conception, vis., the capacity to elaborate on what we expect from an education system without first considering our own current state of knowledge and expertise. This means adopting a veil of ignorance which would better enable SER to be concerned with how schools contribute to social justice and equity. However, the current situation is not like this:

> SER's attention has been given over the decades to methodology that by default the field has succumbed to the dominant utilitarian philosophy of policymakers.(…) So today there is little or no shared understanding within the field of what is meant – philosophically, as opposed to methodologically – by "fairness", "justice", and "equity".
>
> (Kelly and Elliott-Kelly, 2018, p. 539)

The issue of a neoliberal agenda is related to the above, in that the current educational landscape derives from governments who see education as a commodity (Ball, 2012), of which Chile is predominantly regarded as an

example (Weinstein et al., 2020, Falabella, 2020, Zúñiga-Peña, 2015). Neoliberalism drives a performance indicator agenda, one that pushes individuals to attain targets to demonstrate progress and achievement:

> As neoliberal subjects we are constantly incited to invest in ourselves, work on ourselves and improve ourselves – drive up our numbers, our performance, our outputs – both in our personal lives and our work lives. In teaching, the articulation of performance and improvement in terms of student test scores is more and more widely linked to another set of numbers – money.
>
> (Ball, 2015, p. 299)

And this emphasis does not necessarily lead to a preoccupation with the poorest of society and their entitlement to quality education because other numbers drive policymakers' agendas. Especially as they rely on research that demonstrates what policies are most effective in the short term. Thrupp (2001), for example, pointing to issues of social equality in SER explains:

> There are really no grounds for thinking that [SER] (…) can overcome the effects of social inequality. While greater effectiveness may somewhat improve the absolute performance of disadvantaged groups, it will not improve their relative performance against more advantaged groups.
>
> (Thrupp, 2001, p. 446)

It is also important to add that these SER studies come predominately from an Anglo-Saxon perspective that may not resonate with other social and cultural contexts, something that SER also tends to ignore (Rooney, 2018). Such differing contexts may include unique idiosyncrasies such as local perceptions of principals and teachers (Weinstein et al., 2020, p.64). A later study by Rooney (2018) that sought to open a wider understanding of student and school performance via a cultural assets model was a preliminary step to widening SER perspectives to more qualitative approaches that acknowledge schools as cultural hubs. This more holistic view would enable us to recognise and better support the improvement of the performance of school. However, the same author acknowledges that SER's attention to cultural assets and theory is recent and in its infancy (Rooney, 2018).

Issues of social equity are significant if we are to consider countries like Chile, where the lack of social mobility is sustained by the market-based education system (Cox, 2015, Weinstein et al., 2020, Falabella, 2020, Zúñiga-Peña, 2015). In fact, Lumby (2016) goes further in her analysis and considers the over attention on school leadership, especially distributed modes of leadership, just a "a fad" (2016, p. 161) that hides what she regards as the real needs that school should attend to in their contexts: "the core purpose of leadership (…) is to address the persistent inequality of chances that children experience in school[s]" (p.161).

All in all, the above seems to leave SER without a developed 'improvement' orientation that may add depth in our understanding of institutions and student performance. However, this is something that SER advocates reject (Hopkins et al., 2014, Teddlie and Reynolds, 2001, Harris, 2013) as they see School Improvement (SI) as a subsection of SER, confirmed via the journal *School Effectiveness and School Improvemen*t, providing a qualitative body of research that contributes further validity and reliability within their research. However, Wrigley (2004) argues that SIR has been strongly influenced and distorted by SER, especially within the *International Handbook of School Effectiveness Research* by Teddlie and Reynolds (2000). For Wrigley (2004), this is an attempt to limit views about SER's narrowness in research. However, the strength of this amalgamation is influential in public policy, especially in the UK (Teddlie and Reynolds, 2001). For Wrigley (2003, p. 96), there is a clear distinction between SES and SIR :

> School improvement (…) [has a] greater emphasis on within-school processes, a qualitative orientation to research methodology, a bottom-up orientation in which improvement is owned by the school and its staff, an interest in the dynamics of change in individual schools, and a more questioning approach to 'outcomes'.

These are valuable undertakings in the appreciation of how a school and its teachers experience and react to changes, especially, those imposed on them. This is precisely the kind of service that SER needs from SIR, exploring if specific school members achieved expectations and how successful implementations were, namely:

> Whether the improvements were powerful enough to affect pupil outcomes, and recurring themes such as the effects of leadership and leaders' focus on teaching and learning, capacity building and staff development, and parental and community involvement began to emerge.
>
> (Jacobson, 2011, p. 34)

In a later paper, Hopkins et al. (2014) celebrate the combined work of SER and SIR:

> They have matured through a wide range of well-documented projects, interventions, and innovations across a range of countries, describing how efforts to help schools become increasingly effective learning environments for the full range of their students have been more or less successful.
>
> (Hopkins et al., 2014, p. 257)

SIR wants to learn about the connection and the interrelatedness of all school actors within a school journey; this applies to successful as well as underperforming institutions. On the other hand, the SER focus is on statistical data, "removing the environmental effects from the frame in order to

concentrate on the school effect" (Wrigley, 2003, p. 234). SIR orientation is to find out the provenance of issues and focus on specifics when analysing them. Ultimately, SIS wishes to acknowledge the complex dynamics of school life and explore the settings that "make up a school's culture" (Wrigley, 2003, p. 90).

One further aspect that is important to discuss is how successful school leadership has been promoted as having a pivotal role in the improvement and effectiveness of schools. This has been much promoted within the SER literature and publicised by the OECD (2019).

Successful School Leadership – Limitations

The Roles of Principals

Current policy reforms internationally delegate to principals and teachers the responsibility to enact suggested policies as a way of achieving desired improvements (Slee and Weiner, 2001), as measured by statistical analysis and results, mainly centred around high-stakes tests, attendance and student behavioural data (Wrigley, 2013). Courtney et al (2015) show how principals in their research explicitly acted on behalf of policy makers and the action taken against those practitioners who did not:

> [Teachers] who are different or do and say things that are different in ways which contradict these leaders' vision for the school, or those whose practice is judged as not raising standards sufficiently or speedily, are being removed.
>
> (p. 396)

Recent research by Moreno et al. (2019) in Chile shows that there is a tension among principals between compliance with and resistance to national expectations:

> Achieving the balance between the democratic, pedagogical and administrative is a challenge for these principals, and it is demonstrated when, for example, principals mention that they work hard for standardized tests, and manage the curriculum to achieve success of only a few relevant indicators.
>
> (Moreno et al., 2019, p. 153)

In another study, Falabella (2020) analyses how principals within specific Chilean schools tend to accommodate policies so, to external observers, any improvement in standardised test scores reflects school improvement, even when such measures are not necessarily what their school context needs. Falabella (2020) found that Government imposed policies produced "undesired effects" (p.25) and "unintended consequences" (p. 25) not connected with the original policy such as:

> Curriculum reduction; intensification of traditional teaching methods; selection, grouping, and exclusion of students according to their ability; and student test anxiety, teacher stress, and disenchantment with the practice of (…) [teachers'] profession.
>
> (Falabella, 2020, p. 25)

Such approaches, pushed hard by the OECD (2018a, 2019), are regarded in other sectors as reductionist in nature, in that the figure of a principal becomes central to the growth or decline of schools. According to Møller (2017), the OECD gives an almost unrestricted value to principals but, within highly regulated educational systems, this seems untenable (Møller, 2017). The success and failure of a school explained by the actions – or inaction – of a single person is seen as an attempt to ignore a host of issues that might explain underachievement or chronic underperformance in schools. Møller (2017) warns against regarding principals as heroic figures; this is a return to an old understanding of leadership. Successful school leadership is a complex and multi-layered endeavour determined by local conceptions of principalship and the educational needs and landscape in situ (Hallinger, 2018). Therefore, a clear understanding of principals' roles needs a viewpoint that offers not just numerical statistics, but also engaging on more personal narratives of these individuals' experiences.

An alternative perspective on the meaning of success: The work of ISSPP

Fundamental to the research in the ISSPP network is that 'success' is not just ascribed to the ability of principals to improve academic results. Although these are included in the criteria for success, its research also addresses the wider social and personal purposes of schools. Moreover, using multiple perspectives of staff, students and parents to indicate success, it addresses the question of whether short-term success is sustained.

Central to the ISSPP findings is what successful principals across the world have in common (Moos and Johansson, 2009, Gurr, 2019). One such commonality is a strong sense of moral (Hargreaves, 2014, Møller, 2017) and ethical purpose. Successful principals concern themselves with matters of social justice and a values-led agenda with staff and students, recognising that the two go hand in hand:

> The narratives [from school principals] were characterized by (…) passion for their school, a strong sense of moral purpose, the building of relational trust, a focus on developing staff members, including themselves, and a strong commitment to promoting social justice, equity and excellence.
>
> (Møller, 2017)

The ISSPP has shown from its inception that, whilst values and principles of successful principals are generic, regardless of contexts, strategies are not. Much later Hallinger (2018) observed the influences of context upon school leadership, describing it as coming out of the shadows (Hallinger, 2018). Prior there was a dearth of research that specifically examined leadership in context, with scholars tending "to 'average' the effects of leadership in studies across large numbers of schools" (Hallinger, 2018, p. 16). An approach that seeks out "'mean effects' can lead us to ignore contrarian effects hidden in the shadows" (Hallinger, 2018, p. 16) such as context.

School leadership, therefore, needs to be contextualised:

> Leadership is often portrayed as an unquestioned road to a promising future if one is able to attract the right people to fill leadership positions, if the core responsibilities are clearly defined and delimited, if school leaders are granted autonomy with appropriate support, if leadership is distributed and if leadership development is treated as a continuum.
>
> (Møller, 2017, p.376)

It is important now to engage with how this current research sits within the above context. For this purpose, I will elaborate on the following:

1. This research does not seek to average out the effects of leadership on student outcomes, a strategy cautioned against by Hallinger (2018). It is perhaps within Hallinger's 'shadows' that I wish to work by presenting the experiences of four Chilean principals living within a "performative market regime" (Falabella, 2020, p. 24).

2. This current research with its qualitative methodology and emphasis on understanding a principal's impact on students may be regarded as working within SIR, and so, within SER. This may be interpreted as trying to influence education beyond this study's constraints and capacity, which might be seen as a criticism for small-scale research. However, this is not the case, as it does not purport to show to what "extent (…) schools, teachers, or programmes contribute to student performance" (Marks, 2017, p. 148), but rather seeks to understand the experiences of four Chilean principals and what it is like to live and work within an educational field in constant change.

3. The body of work which I draw upon includes, but is wider than, the SER studies, important though they are, by examining not only the functional, but also the social and personal purposes of education. This includes the body of research produced internationally by members of the ISSPP network, who view 'successful' leadership as including but going beyond the functional.

4. This study is qualitative and seeks to evidence its findings via the involvement of participants who reflect on their experiences as they happen in the moment. It does not seek to measure the direct impact of policies on principals, but how they influence, rather than determine, their work. It is a bottom-up process that highlights events and actions by principals, as seen by them and other participants, when leading their organisations. These occurrences may or may not illuminate how these principals match other studies on the subject such as the ones led by ISSPP or School Turnaround. Therefore, I would argue that this research does not sit within the SER agenda due to the holistic, multi-layered and quantitative slant of its methodology and findings.

5. The reality of successful schools in education need more than just a specific focus on leadership abilities, but also an understanding of context. Simply stated, it is valuable to learn about the specific settings of these schools and their principal's actions to stimulate growth within their school communities. In doing so, I am attempting to reveal more about them as individuals working in challenging areas and illuminate further the field of study about how these principals operate within their schools.

6. The participants within this study only represent themselves and their experiences. They do not offer a wider rationale or explanation of the broader Chilean educational field. The success of each school is dependent on the way they lead and manage their own unique settings, strategic actions, values-led beliefs and how they negotiate policymakers' educational agendas. This research recognises the entitlement of these principals and participants to illuminate our understanding of the Chilean context.

7. Successful School Leadership studies provide a source of information to build new understandings of principals and their communities when addressing student learning and progress. Wrigley (2002) emphasises that "'strong leadership' can mean many different things, from supportive or inspiring to dictatorial. Some meanings are context-dependent" (2002, pp. 232-233). In this respect, by engaging with four principals regarded as successful, to uncover any context-related theme is of interest to this investigation, as is any consideration of leadership styles adopted by these four individuals in their schools.

8. SER with its emphasis on statistical information and analysis and SIR are not in opposition to this research. The qualitative nature of the current research serves to capture the essence of specific contexts, cultures and individuals that may add information about why a school is performing specifically and how it does so. This study also aims to take "cognizance of leadership beyond the position of the principal, as well as the fact that interpretations of school leadership are shaped by the context"

(Hallinger, 2018, p.16), hence the involvement of other participants to add depth to this inquiry.

9. Policy effectiveness is not the remit of this investigation, rather the focus is on how this study's participants feel working within Chilean education and its climate of constant change. In other words, this research seeks to illuminate our knowledge of the experience of specific individuals at the receiving end of policymakers' influence and actions.

10. The principals' strategic actions and thinking, as studied, provide a sample in a specific moment in time of what their successes and failures have been. No institution follows a path of absolute brilliance and changes are meaningful when they acknowledge drawbacks and what was done to address them. These schools and their principals are at different stages along this path of transformation. As it stands, the complex and unique nature of their experiences may not be able to be replicated in other schools or within the wider educational field, but they shed light on this field of research to serve other future investigations.

11. High-stakes exam results were one factor in the selection of the schools studied (see p. 103 within this research). High-stakes tests do not fully inform us about the reality of schools that serve communities within deprived areas, with social challenges, high levels of debt and disjointed family backgrounds. These extra factors are what makes them special and they are valuable sources of information. It is their experiences that matter as seen and felt by them and, as such, they inform us further about the reality of leading their schools in Chile.

12. Successful schools in difficult circumstances are more likely to succeed when they do not ignore their school context (Hallinger, 2018). This is what this study seeks to explore via the perspectives of principals and participants. Nonetheless, regardless of the success of specific institutions, they will not alone fix a system pervaded with disadvantage, poverty or segregation. This current inquiry seeks to reveal the principals' and participants' stance on the influence of strategies coming from policy makers.

13. Connected to this previous point is the capacity to influence. In Chile, where much educational policy comes from central government, it seems appropriate to learn about the effects of this model on principals and practitioners. This is especially important in this study as our principals and their teachers deal with the possible burden of complying with administrative tasks in order to align the school with systemic policy demands. However, at the other end of the spectrum is the desire of policymakers to influence the Chilean education system, via SIR, and to respond to the necessity to improve the quality of education

> overall. As such, their demands are frequent and rapid, and it is important to find out what that feels like for individuals such as those taking part in this study.

With my research distanced from SER studies through its qualitative nature, I would like to elaborate on the phenomenological approach I undertook.

Phenomenological studies in Leadership: Why are they distinctive?

Phenomenological studies in education are regarded as representing a unique methodological contribution to understanding the experiences of the lived experiences of participants. Within this context, Van der Mescht (2004) argues that it is not educational leadership as an abstract concept that is important. Rather it is the leaders and their lived experiences that illuminate the research. This distinguishes it from empirical phenomenology (Schweitzer, 2002), since it is about *what it is like* for individuals to experience education within their organisations and systems. In other words, it seeks to make sense of the lives of school community members within their educational contexts (Randles, 2012). This, it is claimed, may "lead to startling new insights into the uniquely complex processes of learning, teaching and educational managing and leading" (Van der Mescht, 2004, p. 1) from the personal perspective of those experiencing the system.

Although within empirical phenomenology, the researcher contemplates the meaning that individuals make of their own circumstances which can be political, cultural or historical (Randles, 2012), in phenomenological studies the elucidation of these experiences can only serve to represent an individual case and cannot move beyond that (Schweitzer, 2002). Researchers seem to agree that phenomenological studies in leadership and management are a reaction to scientific theories or the orthodoxy of a quantitative paradigm (Sutherland et al., 2015). The study of Randles (2012) on phenomenology in the teaching and learning of music posits that the strength of phenomenology in education is its capacity to join the gaps between research and practice. Practitioners do not require special knowledge, as in some quantitative studies, to access or emotionally connect with, the implications of storytelling or thick descriptions provided within phenomenology in education. "These stories or narratives naturally tie to practice and can therefore be transferred to other similar teaching and learning situations for application and further consideration" (Randles, 2012, p.19). The ultimate purpose is that the study resonates in a way that is "meaningful to someone" (Randles, 2012, p.19) and allows this engagement to be a root for self-reflection and learning: "Phenomenology can illuminate one's own thought processes and affect how one approaches the teaching and learning that surrounds a phenomenon" (Randles, 2012, p. 18).
Phenomenology, therefore, presents itself as an opportunity to interpret the complexities of leadership and how leaders live it, acknowledging that participants and researchers are too close to ignore their connection:

> There is no window into the inner life of the participant, as this is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity (…). Developing a relationship with the participant gives the researcher greater access to insights – clues – which might aid the interpretation process.
>
> (Sutherland, 2015, p. 367)

Within empirical phenomenology, the focus is on dialogue that brings to light the experiences of the participants and their environments (Van der Mescht, 2004). It is the verbal data that is then foregrounded, and this focus might enable researchers to learn about (Van der Mescht, 2004, Randles, 2012) a subject. In relation to data, its volume and nature may be regarded as messy, but phenomenological researchers embrace the richness of such information. "The messiness intrigues them, informs them, and guides them to draw conclusions that are logical for them and quite possibly others as well" (Randles, 2012, p. 18). This is applicable to school leadership which, as a socially constructed phenomenon, is multifaceted and multi-dimensional (Sutherland and Cameron, 2015) and to attempt to fully grasp it only via quantitative means may lead to "myriad definitions for, and theories of, leadership or indeed an inability to define it at all" (Sutherland and Cameron, 2015, p. 365).

Phenomenological studies in education bring an important perspective to research. Education is a highly contested field (Møller, 2017) and influenced by policy makers in search of rapid changes (OECD, 2019) to improve the educational field within a short timescale. Some of these implementations have a focus on funding, parental involvement, on high-stake exams, effective modes of appraisals, introducing performance related pay, changes within the curriculum offer, providing Higher Education access, being ready for inspections and responding to league tables, to name just some. These demands will have a significant effect on all those working within education, especially principals, when it comes to morale, actions, thinking and experiences. Phenomenology, in this scenario, gives agency by engaging with those living and experiencing the aforementioned circumstances and interrogating them on the issues. This generates learning and opportunities by exploring the circumstances surrounding the people involved. They convey this via their messages whose content gives a glimpse into the perceived experiences of others. Within school leadership, the tension brought by the need for school performativity and improvement, influenced by School Effectiveness Studies, has created a proliferation of leadership approaches (Thrupp, 2001; Wrigley 2013) to deal with policy makers' demands. "Effective leadership becomes simply a question of adopting the appropriate behaviour for the given context, or the maturity level of the followers" (Van der Mescht, 2004, p. 4). Is it really as simple as this? Empirical phenomenology is able to provide space for principals to reveal their own experiences and share them, and, in so doing, allow others to understand what it is like for them to live within complex and demanding educational systems.

> Leadership theorising usually falls short of capturing the real complexities and subtleties of leadership, they are useful in framing discussion and analysis of the phenomenon. They provide points of entry that lead to fruitful and potentially useful debate. But they do, in the end, want to present leadership as a recipe, a formula, simply a way of doing
>
> (Van der Mescht, 2004, p. 12)

This research does not seek to find absolute truths, but offers exploration, reflection and, perhaps, some partial insights into the multi-faceted phenomena (Courtney and Gunter, 2015, Courtney and Gunter, 2017) of school leaders (Van der Mescht, 2004). It allows distinctive voices to emerge from a sea of data and serves to play its part "not only in the further democratisation of the discipline, but also in the conceptualisation of leadership itself" (Sutherland, 2015, p. 371).

It is fitting now to continue by exploring the reality of school leadership in Chile.

School Leadership in Chile

Principals have become symbols of effective change and improvement as proven also by the interest coming from studies such as the ISSPP and School Turnaround projects (UNESCO, 2014, Santiago et al., 2017, Correa-Betancour, 2016, Møller, 2017, OECD, 2018a, OECD, 2019). Nevertheless, for countries such as Chile, this presents challenges:

> [For Principals in Chile,] stress results from the expansion and intensification of roles and responsibilities, from ambiguity and conflict raised in the new functions, from the pace of change and demands of managing others in change, from heightened accountability for results and public scrutiny and sometimes from the reduction of student enrolments and the need to compete for students and from reductions in funding. Such stress may diminish principals' ability to do their best work and over time it can erode their commitment to the job.
>
> (Pont et al., 2008, p. 31)

According to Chilean academics Maureira et al. (2014), within the context of Latin American countries such as Chile, the importance of improving school leadership is an element that has only now started to have significant relevance within public policy. There is a contrast between school systems with well-established and strong conceptions of principals' roles and those who have only now started to observe the need for action. Furthermore, the official perspective is that we do not know enough about school principals in Chile (Pina et al., 2015) and it is important to bring this into the agenda in the coming years. The reality is that current information available on the topic is unreliable in both quality and quantity (Mineduc, 2014).

Maureira et al. (2014), Horn and Marfán (2010) and Raczynski and Muñoz (2005) describe school leadership in Chile sustained on a three-pillar model. The

technical pillar is that of the pedagogical expertise of principals; the emotional and situational pillar allows principals to motivate, build teams and generate a good school ethos and, finally, the organizational pillar enables practitioners to work in conditions that facilitate their day-to-day job. These studies match the international experience of successful leadership, as described previsouly, that show that institutions with positive academic results are those that have robust academic leadership, work closely with parents and guardians and sponsors, have a clear educational plan, promote a climate of high expectations and achievements for teachers and students and have practitioners who are committed and satisfied with what they do. This is in contrast to the reality of principals in Latin America, a region with vastly different expectations of its principals:

> While the instructional role of principals has been strongly emphasized by literature focused on school leadership, in Latin America, there remains a strong belief that the teacher is an independent professional, who is not subject to the pedagogical authority of the principal. In other words, the role of school principals in the support, evaluation and development of teacher quality is minimal or non-existent.
>
> (Weinstein and Hernández, 2016, pp. 247 - 248)

The above poses a substantial challenge to principals who will need to break cultural barriers through a strong belief in what their role and influence should be amongst teachers, which the international literature identifies as the primary source of work if we are to best impact student achievement and progress.

However, by contrast, a study by Weinstein, curiously one of the authors of the above study, (see Maureira et al., 2014, p. 139), investigating leadership practices in 650 Chilean schools, shows a different reality, finding that teachers see a school vision and establishing a school direction as relevant priorities for their school principals. This supports current research (Mourshed et al., 2010, Pont et al., 2008, Fromm et al., 2017) which suggests that school communities need a sense of purpose and understanding of actions to move forward and that much of that is seen as the responsibility of the successful principal. Furthermore, the study by Murillo and Roman (2013), which focuses on performance in numeracy and literacy in Chile, shows a significant improvement in schools where principals provide more time for instructional leadership such as implementing and modernizing the curriculum, staff appraisals and the promotion of educational projects that enhance team building, sharing practice and staff development. However, another investigation by Sepúlveda (2015) claims that Chilean principals' time is spent excessively on administrative tasks, leaving limited time to enhance instruction. The research highlights that when a principal's primary task is quality of instruction, student performance and results seem to be affected positively. In its way, then, it echoes the ISSPP and Turnaround findings that to improve the quality of instruction, principals involve themselves in the establishment of

strategies that seek to precisely serve and work on the core business of schools: student learning:

> It is evident that principals [in Chile] should be more focused on duties directed to improve the students' academic achievement like monitoring academic practice at school, providing meaningful feedback, working collaboratively with teachers, and analysing students' academic achievement data.
>
> (2015, p. 2488)

Vaillant and Rodríguez Zidán (2016) support the above by adding that the best achieving schools in Latin America seem to be those where principals emphasise learning within their institutions. This claim reinforces the international beliefs of the role of principals to enact changes that have an impact on students via their practitioners' involvement. Vargas-Jiménez (2017) adds to this when she stresses how successful school leaders promote a climate of trust and, for teachers, self-confidence to improve instruction. The study by Vaillant and Rodríguez Zidán (2016) based on eight educational systems in Latin America, including Chile, recognises that successful principals in these countries do not seem to have endorsed formulaic practices to improve learning. This links with other investigations (Day et al., 2016a, Gurr, 2015) that show that skilful school leaders are not concerned with specific leadership styles. The study also notes that "a large percentage of principals make little use of research for decision making" (Vaillant and Rodríguez Zidán, 2016, p. 253), which may indicate that they may rely more readily on their intuition and context awareness when it comes to decisions and actions to enhance student progress and opportunities. Again, this is of significance in a country like Chile where, in the absence of adequate funding and support for leadership professional development, intuition and awareness of context might be all that a school leader has to fall back on.

Internationally within developed education systems, schools are expected to have core leadership roles and responsibilities that allow them to enact sustained changes in their institutions. In this respect, UNESCO (2014) has further ratified the OECD's findings to enhance the school leadership role and its impact on student learning. The thinking is that the key task of principals is to "influence the motivations, capacities and working conditions of teachers who in turn shape classroom practice and student learning" (Pont et al., 2008, p. 19). Therefore, according to UNESCO (2014) a principal's responsibilities should encompass four areas: Teacher development, support and quality; establishing objectives and accountabilities; managing finances and human resources and promoting collaboration amongst schools. However, the same report highlights that countries like Chile have not progressed enough. School principals are neither influential individuals nor have they differentiated themselves enough from the role of classroom practitioner, nor are they acknowledged in their own intrinsic needs to create formal union representation, for example, to negotiate their specific interests. Within

pedagogical instruction, these principals inhabit traditional education systems that favour passive rote learning and assessments that measure "fact-based memorisation and recall rather than deep understanding, ability to synthesise with other knowledge and applications in real-world situations outside the classroom" (Pont et al., 2008, p. 26). In other words, there is a minor independent role allocated to them:

> Principals' autonomy in (…) schools is limited, and they tend to have no decision-making capacity in the management of human resources, and particularly in the hiring and firing of teachers, as well as setting their salaries. The exception, in this scenario, is seen in the case of Chile, where there has been recently some improvement, although in a limited degree, in this area.
>
> (Weinstein and Hernández, 2016, p. 249)

The above reference is to the ability of principals in Chile to propose to the municipal local authority for the state system or to the sponsors for semi-private schools, to end the employment contract of the five per cent worst evaluated teachers during the yearly performance-related assessment process. This is another example of how the reality for principals in Chile can be different to the one that a principal operating in Western-influenced culture encounters. Yet, despite such cultural differences, they are still expected to be fully involved in school improvement and growth. That said, according to UNESCO (2014), Chile has started to promote the instructional role of principals and their expectations when it comes to leading educational vision. The current Chilean legislation supports this, and the precise law content indicates that principals:

> Article 7 Bis
> In the pedagogical field, they will have at least the following attributes: formulate, follow up and evaluate the goals and objectives of the establishment, the plans and programs of study and the strategies for their implementation; organise and guide the instances of technical-pedagogical work and professional development of the teachers of the establishment, and adopt the necessary measures so that parents or guardians receive regular information on the operation of the establishment and the progress of their children.
>
> (Chilean Law BCN, 2017)

First, this information is still current in 2020. The above recognises that principals are pivotal within the organisational network of schools and the areas allocated to them, thus it matches the international standards' expectations for their role. These attributes can generate enough influence to commence a process of instructional improvement. However, as it is merely statement of a point in law, it offers nothing by way of direction to schools and communities for clear action on achieving it. However, the "Legislation and professional standards explicitly recognise that leadership is an organisational quality and that distributed leadership and school leadership teams play a key role for school improvement" (Santiago et al., 2017, pp. 185 - 186). This law seems to

give direction to institutions to implement more involved decision-making across schools, and create stronger teams and greater participation from staff in the development of key strategic needs and it is the school principals who serve as the driving force behind this. However, Weinstein et al. (2014) warn against this mechanistic adoption of policies and approaches that, albeit successful in other education systems, may not have the degree of impact in countries such as Chile where school principals have different educational and social-cultural challenges to overcome and significantly less funding and resources at their disposal. Policy borrowing in education, led by OECD under the principle of "what works" discourse (Auld and Morris, 2014), may lead to decisions that will not have the desired effect due to the specific conditions under which other systems function:

> Many emphasise the cultural and historical influences on education systems, the importance of understanding the broader context in which they are embedded and maintain that we do not have the techniques to provide the clear connections between cause and effect that policy borrowing requires.
>
> (Auld and Morris, 2014, p. 130)

Auld and Morris (2014) point to a lack of preparedness, readiness and adequate understanding of how borrowed policies may perform in different contexts, i.e., just because a proposed action, an Act of Parliament in the Chilean case above, becomes axiomatic owing to its success in other high-performing systems, does not guarantee replicability of process and outcome. Radical improvements in educational systems require more than adopting policies from very different contexts to generate significant changes. However, their supporters see significant opportunities in transferability:

> Empirical studies have shown that borrowing reforms from other countries, from other sectors within a country, or from "international standards" broadly defined often help coalition-building in a country. Policy borrowing (…) help to mobilize financial resources, especially when it is preceded by political talk of falling behind some international standards or "best practices."
>
> (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016)

Nevertheless, the risks remain; Steiner-Khamsi (2016) prefers policy lending to borrowing, requiring as it does observation, analysis and interpretation of any potential policy and an assessment of all its salient constituents to judge its suitability in the new context. According to Wei (2017), this is what countries such as South Africa, Latvia and China have done. In reference to the latter, within its quest for a world-class education system, they do not "blindly borrow (…) policy from "the West," but rather employ it as a strategy for legislation, to reposition itself in the global order and gain broader international recognition" (Wei, 2017, p. 181). What is more, the Chilean legislation above offers no signposts that provide official guidance and support for the implementation of this allocations of responsibilities, i.e., compliance is the norm.

Weinstein and Hernández (2016) further add to the borrowing policy related to the field of principalship. They argue that there are tensions in bringing Anglo-Saxon school leadership discourses into Latin America countries and there must be a local response to the need to promote principals' roles in schools. It "is not advisable to seek to introduce recipes from other socio-educational realities, (…) because the risk is to stay on the surface, with partial measures, sparsely articulated and of low impact" (2016, p. 260). They argue that principals in countries like Chile, have neither been empowered nor adequately trained "in setting policies for their schools or for the management of teachers (…) to effectively exercise (…) instructional leadership within schools" (2016, p. 259). Riley et al. (2017) add further to the discussion by stressing the emerging leadership focus on the ability of principals to navigate complex landscapes centred around students' multifaceted realities:

> Schools operate in a web of physical, socio-political, emotional and spiritual realities and school leaders' efforts need to take these realities into account. As families struggle with inadequate housing, healthcare services, or concerns about safety, it's important that schools build reciprocal relationships with them and develop networks with local community organizations.
>
> (Riley et al., 2017, p. 844)

Riley's research is perceptive as it is a glimpse of, potentially, a different role to the one allocated in Anglo-Saxon leadership expectations. Countries such as Chile showed differences when comparing their income distribution, poor investment in education and a workforce struggling to make ends meet and, yet, still facing huge demands to allocate effective school provisions for future generations. Leadership in these countries "is about thinking beyond the school gates and making connections to the outside world and the wider archipelago" (Riley et al., 2017, p. 848) of specific, urgent and serious needs for students.

A further reflection, and as an example of the above, is the reality that "vulnerable students can become a heavy burden for many teachers, because of the additional demands that are imposed on teaching as well as on the level of pastoral care that is required to support students in their lives" (Ahumada et al., 2016, p. 276). In this case, teachers and principals become the supportive adults that respond to the basic needs of students who may require clothing, food and safety. They are educators with a strong moral purpose (Fullan, 2003, Day, 2005). Day (2014), whilst highlighting the fact that schools cannot solve societal issues of this magnitude, recognises the role of principals in the provision of a quality education, curriculum and pastoral support that will address some issues in the long term. The Chilean Education Ministry's directive, nevertheless, holds one single view: school principals should go beyond administrative demands and focus their attention on pedagogical matters to improve student learning (Mineduc, 2019a). This shows a detachment between policy makers' expectations of principals and how these

principals realistically manage and deliver a policy, especially one for which they have not been prepared (Leiva et al., 2017, Falabella, 2020).

In Chile, principals work within school boards (*consejos escolares*), which have informative, advisory and proactive powers, but can only make resolutions if the school sponsor or municipal administrator allows it (UNESCO, 2014). Principals also have leadership teams with the same shape in every school in Chile, always constituted of the same roles: principal, deputy principal, curriculum director and an inspector (behaviour manager). However, the following it is not within a principal's remit:

> The school principals lack (…) attributions in the management of human resources and also budgetary demands reducing their capacity of real influence in the management of the school, which reflects the restrictions in the prevailing school autonomy.
>
> (UNESCO, 2014, p. 53)

UNESCO's comment is pertinent in this case when referring to the lack of autonomy, yet it is equally valid to consider that changing these expectations will demand further training and funding to prepare principals for the management of more complex tasks and understanding how the management of them can enable their institutions to grow and improve. Furthermore, professional development issues for principals in Chile are further compounded by the fact that it is self-financed and voluntary. However, there is a *Plan de Formación de Directores de Excelencia* (a National Professional Qualification for Headship - NPQH programme) which is an "incipient attempt" (UNESCO, 2014, p. 81) to regulate the training quality of principals. The selection to this programme is based on strict criteria for a very small cohort and leads participants to obtain a university postgraduate qualification: a masters degree. The provision is delivered via the Education Ministry led *Centro de Perfeccionamiento, Experimentación e Investigaciones Pedagógicas* (CPEIP) (or Training, Experimentation and Pedagogical Research Centre) via approved centres (UNESCO, 2014).

The impact of the above programmes will take time to evaluate as it is relatively new and there is no longitudinal self-assessment of impact of the programme. It is also very expensive, especially considering current salaries for principals which tend to be low (Santiago et al., 2017) for the state sector, where professional development would be most welcome. Research on this topic will enable us to understand how sustainable and valuable such training is for Chilean education. In Chile, it seems, there is little formal professional development, mobility and progression for principals (Weinstein and Hernández, 2016) and little commitment from policy makers to entice more people into the profession with meaningful salaries, nationwide career development choices or to establish a representative body that supports principals in schools. The study of Weinstein et al. (2014) further emphasises, however, that the new initiatives that do exists represent a new phase within

school leadership for Chile and Latin America and are centred around priorities such as enhancing the role of school leaders. In Chile, within the state and semi-private sector, the recruitment process is based on legal requirements of more than three years of previous experience and having a teaching and degree qualification of at least eight semesters. The Weinstein et al. (2014) study affirms that, of the participant countries in their study, Chile is the one with the highest number of principals with qualifications in school management at 97.5%. However, school leadership, as yet, "has not reached the necessary standards to respond to the increasing demands and responsibilities of school leaders in their diverse career stages, nor [is there] (…) a focus on pedagogical or practical or experiential methodological training" (Weinstein et al., 2014, p. 11).

Another study by Weinstein and Muñoz (2013, pp. 664 - 665) about state and semi-private schools sheds further light on the working conditions of principals in Chile:

- Subsidised private schools recruit younger and mainly female principals, while municipal schools are remarkable for a higher level of principal postgraduate education.
- Both groups receive an equivalent average remuneration, but there is wider salary range for subsidized private school principals (with more principals receiving higher and lower salaries than their municipal peers).
- There are two parallel principal recruitment systems: a municipal one, characterized by a competitive application process, and a subsidized private one, governed by direct hiring (personal invitation).
- Principals in the subsidized private sector have more input than their colleagues in the municipal sector in decision-making, particularly on matters of human resource management.
- Principals frequently consider that the student policy and school achievement improvement dimensions are their priority decision-making areas while administrators (or sponsors) are not likely to delegate decisions having financial implications.
- There is a clearly distinguishable subgroup in the subsidized private sector: those principals who are at the same time the owners of the schools (around 30%), who frequently have distinctive characteristics in terms of age profile, postgraduate education and salaries.
- According to teachers, municipal school (sector three) principals more frequently develop effective leadership practices than their subsidized private (sector two) colleagues concerning the organization redesign and its connection with its environment as well as in instructional management.
- The area in which principals display their best practices, according to teachers, is "school direction-setting", and the area in which their practice is weakest is the one that is most decisive for student outcome improvement: instruction.

The context above provides a background that highlights similarities and contrasts with the international perspective on successful principalship. Principals in Chile, like those internationally, are expected both to engage in setting the direction of their schools and also to engage key stakeholders in the process of long-term strategic planning ensuring a spread of accountabilities that enables others to take ownership of organisational growth (Robinson, 2007, Leithwood and Day, 2008, Day and Gu, 2010, Day and Harris, 1999, Day et al., 2016b). There is a strong overall belief that principals need special attention when it comes to their professional development as they are key to the improvement and growth of schools and the students they serve (Barber and Mourshed, 2007a). However, there are substantial differences when it comes to funding, recruitment, human resources and the core business of improving teaching and learning (Merchant et al., 2012, Sun and Leithwood, 2017, Møller, 2017). Internationally, principals have meaningful and funded opportunities to grow in their jobs and at different stages of their career (Barber et al., 2010, Sinnema et al., 2016). They have the possibility to move to other schools acquiring experience and wisdom that can lead them to support others via consultancy for example. Salaries and packages are competitive enough to attract gifted principals to areas of need. In Chile, however, principals do not have the same level of autonomy in relation to human resources, nor do their jobs have the potential for growth that may lead to a divergent but related future career opportunity. Recruitment processes are far too rigid for this, restricting the possibilities for more ambitious and high-quality principals to enter into the state system, added to by the poor state of salaries (Flessa and Weinstein, 2018, Weinstein and Hernández, 2016) which do not entice good principals to work within more challenging sectors. Although principals in Chile are expected to lead change, this can only happen with the approval of their sponsors and municipalities (Maureira, 2004, UNESCO, 2014). Finally, Chilean principals culturally are not vested with the international understanding that they should lead in learning (UNESCO, 2014, Murillo and Roman, 2013) and develop and grow their school practitioners and build their capacity to collaborate in the growth of their schools. On the whole, Chilean principals have to respond to the expansion and intensification (Ahumada et al., 2016, Pina et al., 2015) of a new role that is driven by international standards (Møller, 2017, Gurr, 2015, Sergiovanni, 2007, ISSPP, 2018), yet they are afforded fewer responsibilities than their international counterparts with which to achieve it.

Following the above discussion on principals' context in Chile, I next review a nascent leadership standards framework in Chile. This is to recognise how its trajectory compares with others in more developed education systems and also to assess its impact within the case studies for this research.

Leadership Framework

The Chilean Ministry of Education has promoted a framework that enables teachers and principals to provide practices and actions that respond to what

internationally are regarded as positive approaches in the management and leadership of schools. However, it is not compulsory, and it is left to schools and their leaders to interpret and apply its content and strategies. Fig. 2.3 (Mineduc, 2015) presents the overall programme:

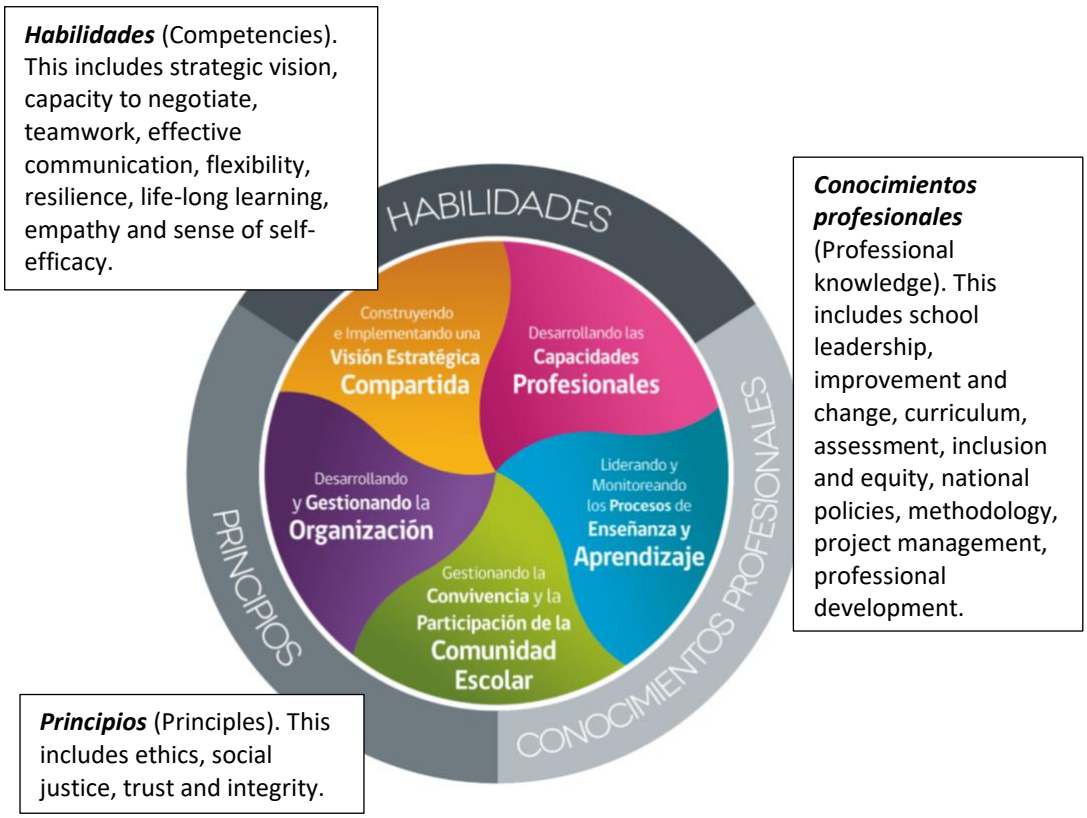


Figure 2.3 *Marco para la Buena Dirección y el Liderazgo Escolar* (Effective School Management and Leadership Framework [in Chile])

The inner section identifies five dimensions, explicitly, what it is key to know in order to lead and manage institutions considering the context in which they are inserted:

- Building and implementing a strategic shared vision.
- Developing professional capacity.
- Leading the teaching and learning processes.
- Managing the coexistence with and participation of the school community.
- Developing and managing the school organisation.

Attributes and dimensions are integrated, interdependent and non-hierarchical. The purpose of the document (Mineduc, 2015) is to outline effective school leadership; to promote a common understanding when discussing principals' roles; to guide self-assessment and professional development; to support initial training for new principals; to guide recruitment

of new principals and to identify effective new practices to be adopted or shared with other school leaders.

Working under Mineduc (Ministry of Education), CPEIP led on updating this 2005 framework for relaunch in 2015. It was a consultative process that took into account the views of world experts, research, Chilean principals, policy makers and university experts from across the country:

> The Effective School Management and Leadership Framework emerges from the need to project an educational policy that consolidates the principals' role in view of the trends and challenges that education requires in today's world: connecting globally with increasing demand for respect for diversity and local identities.
>
> (Mineduc, 2015, p. 5)

The framework recognises that school leadership has an indirect influence on student outcomes and this influence on motivation, competencies, practices and working conditions for practitioners makes its effective deployment all the more important. The same document (Mineduc, 2015) recognises that Chile displays a leadership style with an emphasis on goal orientation rather than teaching and learning, something this framework seeks to rebalance. This document constitutes a conceptual reference that reflects a key national educational policy to guide principals' actions, training and professional development in Chile. However, we must not forget that the document is not compulsory or actively promoted in schools(Campo, 2016, Cancino and Monrroy, 2017).

In a study by Wei (2017) on policy borrowing on professional standards for principals in China as introduced above, she compared key Anglo-Saxon leadership standards for her analysis on how China was managing policy borrowing at educational leadership level. The Principalship Standards analysed were: National Professional Standards for Principals (Australia), National College for Teaching and Leadership (UK), Ontario Leadership Framework (Canada) and Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (USA). The author wanted to assess how global leadership discourse and policy borrowing influenced that of China (Wei, 2017). For this study, I will use her diagram (see table 2.4 below) to compare the commonalities and differences between those of other school leadership frameworks and, in a new column, that of Chile to appreciate the manner in which Chilean government, in particular the CPEIP, is approaching educational improvement through policy borrowing:

Jurisdictions	domains	Australia	UK	Canada (Ontario)	USA	Chile
Commonalities	Setting directions and creating shared visions	Vision & Values,		Setting goals,	Setting a shared vision for learning	School direction, vision
	Student learning and program/curriculum Development	Leading teaching and learning, leading improvement, innovation and change,	Programs coordination,	Promoting collaborative learning cultures	Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning.	monitoring instruction
	Teacher development	understanding, personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills.		Promoting collaborative learning cultures	Staff professional growth	Provision of professional development
	Collaboration		Effectiveness of managing systems, structures, and processes.		Collaborating with faculty and community members;	Collaboration linked to support school direction
	Administration and management	Leading the management of the school,			Ensuring effective management for an effective learning environment.	
	Working with communities and social relations	Engaging and working with the community			Collaborating with faculty and community members;	
Differences				Using Data	Promotes the values of democracy, equity, and diversity	

Table 2.3 Commonalities and differences among Australia, UK, Canada and USA Leadership Frameworks. Chilean column added by author.

(Wei, 2017, p. 193)

We can see that the Chilean Leadership Framework has commonalities with most of the domains presented: to establish direction, vision and monitoring quality of instruction; to allocate a provision for teachers' professional development; to manage community involvement and pastoral care and to lead the management of the school organisation. There is a mention of a shared vision that could imply collaboration of key stakeholders within the process of strategic development. Remarkably, there is no mention of data as a source of analysis of organisational performance, nor any reference to grand national objectives that promote national values as in the United States. On paper, this framework is responsive to international policies, representative of current research and potentially impactful. Nevertheless, as seen before, policy borrowing cannot be a copy and paste process (Auld and Morris, 2014), as it is clear that the Chilean model above is a response to external influences in its

new conception of school leadership. This framework needs proper assessment to translate it into effective action and commitment by Chilean principals. In addition, it seems that there has been a committed and concerted stakeholder effort to revitalise this professional standard, but with no national compulsory role and, given the busy Chilean educational agenda (OECD, 2018a, OECD, 2019, Pont et al., 2008, UNESCO, 2014), principals may not act on it and it may not have the desired effect on the fabric of Chilean school leadership reform.

Overview of this chapter

This chapter has offered an overview of studies linked to school leadership and its impact on students. The work of principals that orients towards action and strategic provision seems to have the most impact on students' education. This leads to further add to the evidence that principals have an indirect influence on student outcomes and opportunities.

The research on principalship and the need to determine core practices have led to the establishment of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP), which has worked to explore the degree to which core practices are shared by successful principals globally. In a related sphere, the School Turnaround initiative aims to efficiently improve critically underperforming school via the influence of specially trained principals.

This chapter also provides a voice to those who warn about the extreme adherence and value given to principals' role to bring about positive changes within a SER and/ or SIR agenda. Context, especially in impoverish areas, need to account as well for the difficulty for some institutions to success and support effectively their students' populations.

This chapter also provided a rationale regarding education in the Latin-America region and how principalship is perceived here. This section ended with a focus on Chile and how this country is not dissimilar to the rest of its region. The concept and practice of school principalship in Chile is still in its infancy compared to other, more developed countries, and it enjoys neither a positive cultural-social view of its role nor, despite some early signs, effective attention by policy makers.

The next chapter deals with the methodology employed to learn about four principals in Chile who are perceived as successful and how they achieve this within the above climate.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The following chapter will reflect on how my own positionality as a researcher affects this research. This will be followed by an exploration of areas related to epistemology and ontology that influenced the final choice for the qualitative research design. This will include an explanatory narrative related to the use of interviews as the main instruments of data collection for this study. This will also consider sampling, piloting, principal selection and rationale. The data analysis section will examine how specific modes of thinking hindered or enabled the further development of analysis, and how CADQAS (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) are able to smooth the process of its implementation. The final section emphasises the importance of ethical considerations.

Ontology

Arthur et al. (2012, p. 5) assert that for any investigation, it is important to establish what are the views both of the researcher and of those partaking in the inquiry process. One perspective of these views relates to the external world; the "physical, technical and social reality is ontic, (…) [in other words] the support and framework for our existence" (Akehurst et al., 2011, p. 186). Ontological assumptions or "assumptions about the nature of reality and the nature of things" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 1101) need to be revealed, as they are "the very nature or essence of the social phenomena being investigated" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 1195).

Crotty (1998) adds that, when exploring approaches to research, we need to ask whether the reality presented is worthy of study and attention, and whether it merits further understanding? (Punch and Oancea, 2014, p. 17) pose the ontological question: "What are the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?" What also needs to be ascertained is whether what the researcher brings to the research is enough to answer the research question and, in this light, the researcher's positionality - the nature of his or her reality - needs to also be established. By so doing, we see how the researcher relates to the context and the potential this relationship has for not only creating assumptions that need to be avoided but also insights that would not otherwise be revealed.

As the study of principalship in Chile is a nascent field (Flessa et al., 2018), the principals' context at an ontological level becomes of interest and this will then connect with other investigations in other settings that might establish a relation of commonalities or differences across diverse realities such as the one provided by the ISSPP. According to Newby (2014, p. 1999) "ontology is a specification of what exists", so, in this study, we can search for new understandings of the nature of the perceived realities of the participants. This

in itself is a challenge and it is conditioned by the individuals themselves. Therefore, any bias needs to be controlled by focusing on the object of study and the evidence provided, using appropriate research design and data collection tools, and this includes any bias potentially introduced via the researcher's ontological stance. This is why Creswell (2009, p. 5) affirms that researchers need to consider how their own philosophical assumptions will affect their study and potentially its ontology and, by keeping them in view, it is possible to contrast and compare with the evidence coming from the analysis and findings.

Epistemology

Epistemology is defined as "the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). To have a clear epistemological stance will lead a researcher to make a choice in relation to what type of methodology to deploy: qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research. This demands that we know clearly how the research question fits within a theoretical field (Bryman, 2008). Crotty (1998) also elaborates on the link between epistemology and ontology.

It is important, therefore, to recognise how this present researcher's worldview impacts on the development of ideas when delivering a research narrative and also that such self-awareness is sustained throughout.

Researcher's Positionality

It is important for any researcher to establish their own stance in relation to their research in order to best 'bracket' their own experiences (Husserl, 2012). Of particular note is that nature of what might be referred to as the 'two selves' I bring to this research – I am both a professional educator and school leader who has been trained and has experience within a developed education system and also a researcher with a background both as a Chilean citizen but also, subsequently, a British citizen with an English university background.

My personal knowledge, experience and understanding of leadership from being a school principal in the Netherlands has led me to believe that principal's influence on student outcomes and opportunities is a reality as long as their actions are led by strategic considerations that aim to determine what changes are necessary to improve student learning and opportunities. In my experience, a focus on teaching, curriculum and creative timetable implementation has the potential to affect the student experience. It is also important to achieve a spread of responsibilities that enables leadership capacity to grow and staff to obtain benefits from being accountable for results.

Being born in Santiago, Chile, where I was also educated, has formed in me the belief that this country is still in its infancy when it comes to access, equity and economic support for their citizens to receive an education regarded as of

quality, capable of improving their standards of living and provide a fulfilling existence. I lived under a dictatorial regime that ruled by fear and persecution and, as noted earlier, much of Chile's educational system is the result of this period of time's view of education as a commodity, inspired by a neoliberal model and philosophy (Matear, 2007, OECD, 2012, Klees, 2020), one that sees no role for policy makers to guarantee quality educational for all.

When it comes to my philosophy of thinking, and in particular my dialectical stance, I feel inspired by the contradictions in and pressures on human beings and their settings. Individuals' experiences need to be valued for reflecting their reality, even though they represent a small sample in time and space of what it is like to be, for example, a principal in Chile and, in my case, a researcher investigating the matter. I believe that as a researcher, my positionality can enhance, without untoward influence, the process in a way that may better enable the genuine and truthful experience of all participants to come to light.

Using Creswell's (2009) terminology and analysis, my belief system is located within a "social constructivist worldview," especially when it refers to individuals seeking to make sense of the external world (Creswell, 2009). Within this stance, the role of the researcher is to seek to comprehend the complexities of those meanings and elaborate on them rather than trying to reduce and simplify them (Creswell, 2009). The enquirer, therefore, needs participants, who will be the primary source of data in order to better understand their context, and the best tactic is to let these participants share much of their thinking in open-question interview scenarios. This way of exploring principals' perceptions and experience of these issues in Chile will illuminate our understanding of what it is like for them to work in their environment, in some cases, with marginalised and disenfranchised young people. This researcher's positionality, therefore, as having been born into and brought up in what was that marginalised and disenfranchised Chilean society, yet who also bridges to a more Western and developed educational world, affords me an insight and understanding which I can, with diligence, use to play the role of an empathic researcher with all participants in the research in a way that those without my background would not achieve. The challenge, though, was to balance the insights and experiences I have of the lived experience of the participants with the need to step back and analyse the data produced with the appropriate levels of objectivity, something to be achieved through the processes described below.

One final important aspect of ontology, epistemology and positionality is that, for any research, we need also add the caveat 'at that time'. Research is by necessity, a snapshot - "if we want to know what the world is like at a given moment, we need to stop time, separate and analyse" (Akehurst et al., 2011, pp. 185 - 186).

Research Design

Research as an undertaking is defined as a problem-solving action to explain a reality (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998) and the reality I wished to explore was the lived experience of four principals, one in each of the four significant Chilean educational school sectors.

The selection of my methodology was dependent on its capacity to serve the research scope, intention, content, context and time scale and three potential research designs were identified that could serve this study - ethnography, case study and phenomenology. As my professional life took me away from Chile part way through my initial research period, ethnography was no longer a viable option which meant the merits of case study or phenomenology had to be explored as a way of fully engaging with the participants given the aims and limitations of the research.

Exploring possibilities – Case Study and Phenomenology

Robson states that a "research question provides the key to most things when doing social research" (2011, p. 25). Taking this as a starting point and my own worldview as previously stated – "inductivist, constructionist, and interpretivist" (Bryman, 2008, p. 366) - and the precise nature of the participants I wished to target, it seemed appropriate and logical to engage with a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one. By engaging with participants at a personal level and in their own environments and language, by encouraging trust and candour, my aim was to create a means by which themes would emerge capable of answering my research questions, something I did not feel a quantitative approach would achieve.

My research demanded a methodology that would allow me to answer my research questions in depth and across all four sectors with an emphasis on personal experience and so it seemed appropriate, therefore, to adopt a phenomenological study approach.

The following section provides a discussion on its selection for the research.

Phenomenology

"Phenomenology wants to explain the meaning of our experiences" (Käufer and Chemero, 2015, p. 32) and the purpose of phenomenology is to describe a lived experience, rather than to explain or quantify it in any way (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, CIRT, 2019a, Creswell, 2009). Husserl (Käufer and Chemero, 2015, Husserl, 2012) considered such meaningful experiences as conscious acts and proposed that phenomenology focuses on them as significant events. "An act of consciousness is any portion of the stream that has a single object as its content and consists of a single attitude towards that object" (Käufer and Chemero, 2015, p. 32), i.e., this is how

principals' thinking and reflections relate to their experience of leadership and influence on student outcomes and opportunities. Their thoughts are units of inquiry - or portions of the stream - that provide further understandings about them and the experience itself, which, in turn, become a source of information within the field of research. As related by Keen (1975), it is an approach with a set of goals that also seeks to "sensitize the researcher to a number of issues that need to be addressed" (Hycner, 1985, p. 279) rather than being a simple research procedure. According to the same author (1985), people can be certain of how their experiences appear to them and their consciousness, therefore, reality as they experience it, is treated as a phenomenon to explore. This event has something to say to you, such as a poem or a painting that encapsulates a moment in time. Thus, phenomenology is solely concerned with the study of the experience from the perspective of the participants; therefore, the methodology does not include a hypothesis or any preconceived ideas about the data to be collected. Pure phenomenology attempts to simply describe the data without attempting to explain it, yet there is an interpretative element that may validate or challenge assumptions (CIRT, 2019a) through any themes that emerge. "Phenomenology tends to look at data thematically to extract essences and essentials of participants' meanings" (Miles et al., 2014a, p. 8). Phenomenology is suitable for a variety of data collection tools that do not restrict participants' communication of the experience. In this sense interviews, conversations, participant observation, action research, focus meetings, analysis of diaries and other personal texts can serve this approach.

Phenomenology's essence is to encapsulate the lived experiences of individuals within their own professional or social life (Giddens, 2009), the researcher serving to capture and highlight how participants perceive these phenomena as realities. From this perspective, phenomenology emphasises subjectivity and the experience of an individual as the essence of the research which represents a form of interpretivism, i.e., the perspectives of individuals with agency are highlighted (Briggs et al., 2007) and explored. There is an emphasis on the significance of events as lived by them. In reference to this, Husserl (2012) uses the term 'epoché' to convey the experience of a situation, emphasising the importance of a single moment in the lives of participants and how this is perceived by them. This is of importance because participants in phenomenological research become co-researchers. This is achieved by conveying to participants the purpose, scope and needs of the research and how their experience on the subject or event will enhance understanding of their own reality and positionally. This is documented via the principals' interview recordings, consent forms, interview transcripts, two rounds of interviews and questions that convey a sense of exploration and mutual learning in the process of creating new meaning which the researcher wishes to bring out and convey whilst remaining flexible and open to their needs. The manner and nature of the interviews I carried out not only offered the participants an opportunity to share their objective memories and understandings of the phenomena under discussion but also a space for subjective reflexivity and reflection about the influence of principals in a

Chilean context and the opportunity to consider and discuss, in confidence and with anonymity, elements of their work, their school setting and their feelings.

The researcher's role in this process needs to be made explicit, in terms of their worldviews and positionality, as they need to be effectively 'bracketed' as described above. This was especially important for my research through the combination of my lived experience growing up and going to school in Chile and also as a school leadership team member and now principal myself. Therefore, the bracketing process was complemented by concentrating on the exchanges presented by the interviewees and focusing the dialogue on these experiences. This process was recorded and transcribed, and the transcription shared with them for analysis. Using ATLAS.ti 8^{TM}, I was able to record ideas of my own experiences and thoughts about the process in order to keep in check my own views on the matter throughout. This was done via the memo tools in ATLAS.ti 8^{TM} which enabled me to compare their narratives with mine, using this feature of the software as a tool with which to quarantine, as it were, my own conceptions so that my views would not influence theirs. This provided a framework for their outputs that enabled this data to enrich my own understanding.

According to Husserl (2012), there is no hypothesis put forward in a phenomenological study, as the desire is not to prove a premise, but to utilise the experience itself as a source of new understanding. It is expected that the researcher should analyse the volume of material to form a perception about what has been said about the phenomenon, but the experience of the phenomenon and its exploration is in the hands of the participants. For this research, the focus was solely based on the data provided by principals and participants, via transcriptions, coding, categorisation and analysis of the data as a whole, through which themes emerged that were compared with the literature and research about successful principals in other countries. In other words, the data guided that analysis and the subsequent understanding, or the phenomenon dictated the methods not vice versa (Hycner, 1985).

There are four steps in the phenomenological process (CIRT, 2019b) and based on Hycner (1985) and Husserl (2012):

- Bracketing – Phenomenologists believe that the researcher cannot be detached from their own presuppositions (Hycner, 1985), but they can control the process by which the researcher actively leaves aside preconceptions, opinions, notions or presuppositions to achieve an unbiased perspective. This is phenomenological reduction (Hycner, 1985), i.e., to isolate the phenomenon from what else is known "means suspending (bracketing) as much as possible the researcher's meanings and interpretations and entering into the world of the unique individual who was interviewed" (p. 281). For this research, I have provided a narrative that describes my own history and experience on the matter, describing above measures taken to achieve adequate bracketing, I

have connected with participants at the level of seeking their approval with the content gathered and memos were collected during the process to ensure my own conceptions were kept in check.

- Intuition – The researcher's stance is to remain open to the meaning of the experience as lived by others. This will have an impact on the data collection tool so as to provide the best approach to achieve understanding. This aspect of phenomenology demanded from me to be mindful of my own understanding and interpretations of the issues and assume a stance akin to one of a learner, ensuring that I fully listen to the principals and let their narratives guide the discussion, using this passivity to allow space for my own intuition to serve the ideas in this thesis. The extent to which I can be sure this was fully achieved will be discussed as part of the limitations of this study later.

- Analysis – This is the step during which the researcher immerses himself or herself fully in the data collected, using approaches such as coding, segmentation or categorisation that will lead to themes emerging. It is a process that involves careful listening to the interviews to get a sense of the views as a whole, also known as Gestalt (Hycner, 1985), to provide a context for the emergence of units of meaning. This process is not simple, requiring constant moving backwards and forwards through the data to ensure there is a constant checking of the component parts against the wider whole of the data. The advantage of having used Atlas ti 8^{TM} software is that it is possible to move from fragments to full text with ease ensuring that ideas are placed within their context quickly to gain insight from participants' reflections.

- Description – This the last phase during which the researcher reveals an understanding of the data, i.e., describing the phenomenon and communicating it to others. This will happen in the last three sections of this research where the principals and the participants' experience findings are delivered. The section about analysis and discussion is where I examined the data. I took their ideas and compared them with the literature on the subject and finally highlighted how this research had the potential to contribute to existing knowledge.

It is now important to explain how the explicitation of the data was conceived and organised.

Explicitation of the Data

Explicitation (Girogi, 1970) is a term preferred to analysis in phenomenology, as the latter means to reduce data into parts, which can potentially lead to losing sight of the whole, something to be avoided in this approach (Hycner, 1985). Explicitation "means an investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while always keeping the context of the whole" (Hycner, 1985, p.

300). This is the process by which the data is treated, i.e. what actions are taken to ensure the information is handled to keep the breakdown of the data in constant connection with the whole (Hycner, 1985). This procedure is achieved by a continually moving from the micro to the macro with the data. Using Hycner's (1985), Cohen et al. (2011) and Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching (CIRT (2019a) ideas, I undertook the following cycle within the explicitation process:

1. The phenomenological reduction is established in the study with the researcher's own personal stance described as his/her worldview. This is, also known as bracketing as described above.
2. Transcription and recording of interview documents. During the interview process with the principals, I proceeded to transcribe all the recordings adding, where necessary, my own memos. The process of listening to the data was an important step to get a sense of the whole interview or "gestalt" (Girogi, 1970, p. 87).
3. Seeking others' view to verify findings. This process was achieved by firstly, ensuring that participants understood the process and aims of the project with consent forms (see appendix page 265); secondly, having a second interview after the participants' interviews; thirdly, returning transcripts for substantiation of data to participants, and fourthly, keeping supervisors informed of actions and ensuring that they served as independent judges within the research.
4. Delineating units of meaning as defined above. This is performed in order to extract those statements that illuminate the researched phenomenon and eliminate redundant information. In the case of this study, it implied placing the data in ATLAS.ti 8^{TM}, reading, listening to and interrogating the transcripts, starting a process of coding to extract themes of significance to the research questions and adding memos and analysis as these themes emerged. Subsequent readings enabled the grouping or categorisation of the data presented, a process in which it was important to constantly zoom in and out of the information, comparing and contrasting, and to query the data to provide patterns of similarities amongst categories across different transcriptions that responded to the research questions. This is where redundant information is pruned to focus on units of significance. The results were clusters of data that were grouped according to categories that represented a unit of meaning linked to a wider category or group, known as themes.
5. Clustering of units of meaning, which in the case of this study commenced with the coding process as its smallest form. Once the data had been clustered or categorised, it was possible to see the emergence of themes that were found frequently across the data to become representative units of significance. Themes explain the essence of the cluster. In the case of this research, a theme such as the need for alternative paths to tertiary education to improve the chances of students of modest means was a representative topic of discussion.

Schools were all committed to further education for their students, however their challenges lay in access and equal opportunities and principals looked for ways to enhance student learning to enhance their post-secondary opportunities.

6. Summarising each interview, validating it and, where necessary, modifying it. The summary incorporated the themes elicited. This was done for each principal within chapter four - Principals' Interviews Findings.
7. Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary. This will be presented in the final chapter where common themes are presented within the implications section. Within this process it was also important to be aware of significant themes identified within specific interviews that could provide a counterbalance to overall themes which added a depth of experience from specific interviews. This is indicated where appropriate and necessary in the finding chapters for Principals and Participants.
8. Contextualisation of themes. Once the themes have been noted, the next step is to place them within the horizon (Hycner, 1985) where they surface as significant experiences for principals and participants. This is done in the summaries provided within the narratives in the finding chapters.

The next section raises the discussion about trustworthiness, reliability and validity of this project.

Trustworthiness, Reliability and Validity in this Phenomenological Study

Reliability and validity in phenomenology seek to determine that the data gathered, and its interpretation and analysis are not merely subjective (Giorgi, 1988, Giorgi, 2002). Qualitive researchers need to demonstrate that their studies have credibility (Rose and Johnson, 2020). However, this is not the same as in positivist or empirical traditions. In the case of the later, validity is the connection between a proposition and how a referent is able to match it. On the other hand, reliability looks at "how consistent the match is" (p. 168), i.e., if the instrument to analyse the data is appropriate (valid) and how effective and consistent (or reliable) it is (Polkinghorne, 1986, Giorgi, 1988) to deliver measurements under the same replicable conditions.

In phenomenology, reliability and validity work differently as the essence of these studies are everyday experiences which are "revealed in our emotions, actions and perceptions of things and relationships" (Schweitzer, 2002, p. 1). This sets phenomenology apart from other qualitative approaches (Schweitzer, 2002). In the study by Rose and Johnson (2020), where they seek to contextualise reliability and validity in qualitative research, they argue that a key concept is important before engaging with validity and reliability, specifically trustworthiness. This concept relates to the research itself and whether it was conducted in such a way as to furnish the sense that it is a

rigorous study from its design. The researcher's positionality, the credibility of any findings and the application and selection of the research method are all elements that contribute to the trustworthiness of a study and "studies that are more trustworthy are de facto more likely to constitute research that makes a difference" (Rose and Johnson, 2020, p. 4). An additional aspect of trustworthiness involves the reliability and validity of an investigation. Creswell (2014) states that

> Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects.
>
> (p. 201)

To be precise, reliability refers to the method used and how suitable and consistent it is to serve the investigation and its needs. Validity is connected to the believability of the research findings in relation to the researcher, the researched and those who will eventually be interested in reading it.

When it comes to reliability, it is important to consider that, in phenomenology, there are specific methodological factors that need addressing. These factors are evidence of the intention for a study to be consistent and responsive and serve to highlight further details about its reliability. For this purpose, I will use the study of Hycner (1985) on guidelines in the analysis of phenomenological analysis of interviews. He provides a breakdown of issues that denote how phenomenology operates as a research method as opposed to others.

Phenomenological Research – Achieving Reliability

a) Randomness: In phenomenological research the sample is not random. Participants are chosen because of their experience and knowledge within the subject matter. This is the situation with this current study as the selection of principals was based on their trajectory, perceived success and their experience in relation to the goals of this project. However, this is not a detriment to the study as, in phenomenology, only the experience of those involved and their understanding will provide the rich data needed to illuminate understanding.

b) Limited number of participants. The purpose of phenomenology is as a means of capturing the rich experience of the phenomenon as perceived by its participants. This means that the amount of data within interviews demands control. Within this study the number of principals was limited to four thus ensuring that the size, time scale and analysis of the information could be handled competently by the researcher.

c) Generalisability. Phenomenology does not seek to generalise findings, but to illuminate a phenomenon as experienced by individuals and, in

so doing, valuable learning can be potentially applied to the experience of others. In the case of this study, it is not about the provision of universal truths, but about agency of specific individuals as principals and what it is like for them to live within the Chilean educational systems and climate at that time.

d) Accuracy of descriptions. A criticism of phenomenology has been the nature of its retrospective analysis of data, verbalising non-verbal experiences, detecting confabulation during interviews and handling psychological defensives. These concerns may impede the construction of accurate descriptions. The counter argument here is that what is revealed is how it is and how it feels for participants and staying true to this is at the core of phenomenological study. Indeed, much of my work involved retrospective analysis of data, which was recorded, transcribed and uploaded in its entirety into ATLAS.ti 8^{tm} for management and facility of analysis. Any non-verbal or related issues were noted appropriately and informed the analysis where appropriate and relevant.

e) Replicability. Any phenomenological study cannot be replicated by other researchers to obtain the same results. However, in phenomenology, the focus is on context and individuals and how their experiences resonate with others whose standpoint is the same and, in so doing, they can see and concur - or not - with what the researchers observed. I am aware that this study is not about its capacity to be replicated, in fact, it will be impossible to access the same participants due to ethical implications, but these participants were chosen because they had the qualities, experience and knowledge required for the research to make it insightful and informative based solely on their input.

f) Absence of control groups, hypotheses, predictions and interpretation. All these are features of empirical sciences and used as criticism of a phenomenological stance. Within phenomenology, human experience cannot be controlled and as it seeks to capture its essence without restriction or hypothesis testing. Phenomenology does not aim to predict actions, but to understand (and not to interpret as this may be regarded as influencing) in depth the experience as perceived by an individual. This is not to construe according to any given specific theory, as human experience is unique. It is this realisation that delivers novelty and engagement that may capture human experience as a whole. This is precisely the case with my investigation. Whilst I have provided a wealth of knowledge and content in my literature review on topics related to leadership, principalship, Latin American and Chilean education and school leadership context to build up my own second-hand understanding of the issues I wish to engage with, none of this can play a role during the participant interviews and our interactions. I

needed explicitly to suspend all of this knowledge and learning to avoid prediction, interpretation or hypotheses and remain open and true to the phenomena at hand on its own terms, context at that moment in time.

g) Subjective influence of the researcher. This is a potential downside in that the subjective influence of this individual in the experience and process of an investigation could impede objectivity. However, in phenomenology, 'objective' means to be comprehensive in response to the phenomenon and apply a method that best suits its analysis (Giorgi, 2002, Hycner, 1985, Van der Mescht, 2004, Randles, 2012, Creely, 2018, Rose and Johnson, 2020). Objectivity is never achieved, even in the natural sciences, owing to the fact that the data is managed by individuals and their ubiquitous subjectivities. For Giorgi (2002), knowledge is correlated with subjectivity. There is knowledge when humans begin to understand. Therefore, phenomenology, for this author, is a philosophy of intuition or "being present to consciousness" (Giorgi, 2002, p. 9), i.e., how researchers maintain themselves faithful to the event at hand for their study, regardless of how much they know or how close they are to the topic. "The goal of phenomenology is to arrive at a structural understanding of specific and concrete experiences by being fully and critically present to situations where the desired experiences take place" (Giorgi, 2002, p. 9). This is precisely the case of this thesis. As a researcher, my full intention via my ongoing reading, through stating my positionality and experience from the outset, following university guidelines, choosing methods and data collection tools, piloting interviews, preparing/planning/organising visits, my consistency in documentation and procedures, the use of technology in coding and categorising of data, responding to ethical stipulations, supervision consultations, drafting (and re-drafting) and my *viva voce* assessments all serve to prove that this inquiry constitutes a reliable source of information within the confines, approaches and expectations of phenomenology. All of this has been undertaken with the intention of minimising the influence of my own idiosyncrasies, subjectivities and knowledge on the subject and only allow subjectivity – understood as views, positions or experiences brought into the research (Rose and Johnson, 2020) and reflections – or personal accounts about our own subjectivity - to guide the analysis, design, implementation and the learning obtained via this research.

The above intends to demonstrate that phenomenology is a suitable tool for this study's goals and, as a method, its precepts are enabling in that they contribute to create a meaningful opportunity for these four Chilean principals - and other participants in the project - to give an account of their own unique experiences within their educational time experience and contexts. As for validity, this is my next step in the discussion.

This is to demonstrate that any claims raised in this specific research, for example, are accurate and, consequently, trustworthy. It is important to expound on what has been done, as with reliability, to ensure that this study is credible in its analysis, discussions, findings and the potential contribution to knowledge it wishes to purport.

The studies on validity in qualitative research by Seale and Silverman (1997), Noble and Smith (2015), Ferrarello (2016) and Rose and Johnson (2020) confirm that validity is an ongoing process within research development. It "should occur throughout the qualitative research process, as should concerns and expositions about researcher subjectivity and reflexivity" (Rose and Johnson, 2020, p. 6). As with reliability, validity needs constant attention and action by the researcher. This means deploying techniques that show a thorough attempt to treat the data obtained from those researched rigorously in order to then evidence claims. Strategies such as member checking, triangulation, critical reflexivity and subjective positionality, rich, thick description, catalytic validity, crystallization, searching for disconfirmation (negative case analysis), peer debriefing, prolonged engagement and using an external auditor and audit trail are amongst the possible techniques at a researcher's disposal in seeking to add validation to their inquiries.

Member checking was one such action used in this research. For each interviewed principal, I also interviewed specific members of their schools: a parent, a teacher, a middle leader and a member of the support staff. The process was to interview principals, then other participants, then to reflect on the data gathered and return to the principals for a second final interview with further questions and ideas brought up by others' reflections. Member checking is about participation in the project by sharing collected data and receiving feedback from those involved. This enables the testing of information, strengthens the relationship between researcher and researched and start considering the strength of "preliminary codes, themes, texts, participant quotes (…) [and] cultural description" (Rose and Johnson, 2020, p. 9).

Triangulation is a process of corroboration (Thomas, 2013) by studying the phenomena from different angles. The type of triangulation used for this study was observer triangulation (Robson, 2011) to have different viewpoints on the same phenomena and ensure that I could have enough data for the above technique. In Chapter three, I provide a section that explains how this process of triangulation was organised, its rationale and framework.

Critical reflexivity and subjective positionality are incorporated throughout my research. For the former it is about the exploration of my own background and experiences as a Chilean national and school principal in an international school in The Netherlands. This can be evidenced in chapter one where I establish my

background and connection with the research as a critical reflection on my own process and input on the subject. The latter seeks to validate this study by revealing much of my own beliefs and feelings; this is acknowledged via the Researcher's Positionality, Ontology and Epistemology section in this chapter. They seek to elucidate my own subjectivity and potential influence within this project.

Rich, thick description relates to awareness of the field (Rose and Johnson, 2020) that provides information about the context of the phenomena, i.e., its social, political, economic and cultural landscape demonstrating "a sense of realism for readers, increasing the sympathy for participant perspectives or the more contextualized understanding of" (Rose and Johnson, 2020, p. 11) the issue at hand. Within this research, the thick description narratives come from my studies and experience on the subject of leadership, my own culture as a Chilean national, learning from the literature review, and from those participating in the interviews whose perspectives have enriched this study.

Searching for disconfirmation (negative case analysis) relates to working with the phenomena and constantly critiquing my own assumptions or knowledge on the subject. It is an action that aids bracketing by seeking alternative explanations to issues presented and how the research commences to grow in view of the phenomenon. This degree of critically is present in chapters two, six and seven. It is important to add that inconsistencies do not make a study wrong; rather they contribute to analytical credibility for potential readers.

Peer debriefing has been provided by two supervisors as experts in the field and their feedback has enabled me to keep in check my own influence on the research. They have questioned my methodological practices, descriptions, analysis and approaches ensuring that its quality is in in line with a serious research undertaking. The same has to be said of my internal and external supervisors during my *viva voce,* enabling me to rethink and re-elaborate aspects of this research to acquire further reliability and validity in its scope and depth.

External auditor and audit trail have been part of this research process via my external and internal supervisors during the *viva voce* stage. Both experts in the field of school leadership, but with no previous knowledge and unfamiliar with the issues raised in the investigation, they delivered a clear breakdown of actions needed to be addressed to enhance the project in its capacity and rigour. The audit trail, i.e., their advice and input into how the data was gathered and presented and how its journey needed further alignment and clarity, serves to increase "the perception that the data gained from these techniques are more representative of the phenomenon under consideration" (Rose and Johnson, 2020, p. 13).

Given the above scenario, it is significant to explain how I selected the principals and what areas of education they represent. This is detailed next.

Principals' Selection and Rationale

To commence, I would like to consider the study of Denscombe (2014, p. 44) five core questions:

1. Is my purpose to produce a representative sample or an exploratory sample? In my case, I needed an exploratory sample that gives an insight into specific members of the target group, namely a selective group of principals working within the main four educational sectors in Chile.
2. To what extent is this purpose better served by selecting the sample on the basis of random selection or deliberate choice? It was selective from the start as my research sought to engage with four principals from key areas that served education in Chile. For that matter only, I made a choice on the basis that I needed to identify a member of each educational strand to participate in a semi-structured interview.
3. Will qualitative or quantitative data be more appropriate for addressing my research question? Given the description offered of my worldview, my intention for this study to be a vehicle of contribution to education in Chile, the scale of the investigation, time and the research questions, a qualitative approach was the optimal choice.
4. Does a suitable sampling frame exist, and can I gain access to it? This was a challenge as, despite being Chilean, I had to rely on a small number of connections within the field to open doors to potential principals. Therefore, my selection was deliberate, but also responded to the connections derived from the participants. Furthermore, it also took into account other factors such as time, costs and access.
5. In terms of the resources available for the research (time and money) which sampling technique is both feasible and likely to produce relevant information? It was realistic for me to engage with a smaller group of individuals rather than the larger population for this investigation. I had a set timescale of two weeks for data collection which was adequate for the numerous interviews undertaken within the exceptions of a phenomenological study and I fully financed the project. Therefore, it seemed practical and reasonable to manage the research from a perspective that resonates with these needs, i.e., nonprobability sample.

It is important to mention that my selection was focused on my overall research statement concerning a phenomenological study of the four principals. Explicitly the paradigm, by which I wish to communicate this study is qualitative as it presents to me the best option for discussing and engaging with my own worldview.

Principals and Sectors Involved

Initially I wanted a sample of four principals from all four sectors, the selection of whom was, as discussed earlier, based on the following criteria: good

performance on high-stake tests (SIMCE & PSU seen previously), continuous good performance in school ranking and perceived success across the wider community. For the selection of the schools, I identified the top 20 with a continuous high performance since 2010 in national tests. Within the private sector, I was well acquainted with a principal whose school responded perfectly to all characteristics in sector one. I was able to discuss my needs with him and he immediately accepted to take part in the study. By this time, I had already contacted schools in the other areas, but had received no reply. The situation became critical as it happened that during my research in Chile, I was still in need of two more participant principals and their schools. Thus, I requested the assistance and good knowledge of the principal from the sector one to put me in contact with any other institution or headteacher once we thoroughly discussed my study and its targets and in this way I obtained access to more principals and schools, a situation that can be described as snowballing or opportunity sampling, a process only truly available in the field and by being responsive to appropriate possibilities that arise. In the end, the school leader from sector two matched fully the features I was looking for in terms of continuous good performance and a leader with a recognised trajectory in the field.

The situation with sector three was different. There was no school in this field that could accommodate me at the time with the criteria above. However, I had access to a state school that was well regarded from its leadership approach in the pastoral care of the students. They are free and serve in very poor areas; however, when it comes to performance and results these schools are in competition with all sectors and expected to perform on equal terms. I was fortunate to know very well the executive leader of one of these organisations; one of the largest charities in Chile that works in areas of extreme poverty. They owned a conglomerate of four schools in key areas of Santiago offering free education to students who otherwise would not be able to complete their secondary education. Their success was measured in terms of numbers of students finishing their secondary education and continuing on to higher education or going into the world of work. The doors of one of these schools were open to me and its principal was willing and keen to support my work. This particular conglomerate, especially the school I visited, if compared with other mainstream schools, performed exceedingly well with all students continuing their education. To me, it was very interesting to talk to this principal in particular as I had the chance to meet him previously when he was a classroom teacher and had come to visit the UK to learn about schools in England. My intention was to engage with him, now a principal, and see what effect this experience had on his leadership and this school's students.

The school in sector four matched my criteria as well. The school itself belonged to a relatively well performing school group but served students in a different way. They delivered a traditional curriculum as well as providing a technical input, supported by the private sector via paid apprenticeships for students opting for this path and, although it still received state funding, it was with a

slightly different offer. The communities and areas of the schools in sector three and four where regarded as the poorest in Santiago with a high incidence of absenteeism, truancy, violence and drug use. While this school did not match fully my parameters, it gave me something different and valuable; that is, a sector four school with all the features of a mainstream institution and, in the end, I wanted to engage with a principal who worked in challenging contexts and whose educational stance was worthy of attention.

To sum up, the selection of the principals can be divided in two: typical and atypical of accepted school leadership norms. The former represented by one school from sector one and sector two that corresponded to the characteristics already mentioned. Some important statistics to note is that sector one school belongs to a socio-economic group regarded as high (SIMCE, 2020). The students' parents have 16 years or more of formal education and with a monthly income above £1350 per month and less than 8% of the student population is considered at risk. For the sector two school, the data shows that it belongs to a medium-high social group. Parents have between 14 to 15 years of formal education and their monthly income is between £700 and £1350. 8,01% to 31% of students is considered at risk (OECD, 2017, OECD, 2018a). Both schools' SIMCE test results are above national average and stable since 2010 when the process started. For both, learning progress is high, with only 4.2% of student learning regarded as insufficient; this is well above national standards. Both schools perform well at PSU (A-Levels) which positioned them within the top 20 schools in the country (Said, 2018).

The other two schools are atypical in the sense that I was looking for two principals who were "considered unusual, unique, or special in some way" (Lichtman, 2013, p. 92), but still matched my research criteria. Both schools worked with a socio-economic group deemed as low. This meant that the majority of parents had less than nine years in formal education and earned less than £300 per month. 70.01% to 100% of students are considered to be at high risk. This was the template of both schools where the principals worked. One of them, sector four, delivered a technical and innovative curriculum to ensure students could leave with a qualification and were ready for work after the age of 18. The other school from sector three with no appearance in SIMCE data had bigger challenges as all of the student population had up to two years with no formal secondary education. All of the students were regarded as high risk.

My sampling, therefore, acquired a further characteristic. It was exploratory, as explained by Denscombe (2014), and it relied on a participants' partnership and influence to lead me to other participants who fulfilled the needs of this study. A further reflection on this is that my approach came to be selective rather than pure sampling, as I was selecting directly and indirectly with the support of another participant. While there may be risks inherent in such an approach, it is important to explore the benefits of this decision. It was both a careful, strategic choice based on the conviction that this fitted perfectly well my inquiry purpose and research question which required access to an insider's knowledge

to provide first-hand information, yet also brought an element of opportunism. Throughout the process, the choices made served to ensure the integrity of the data gathered; I contacted a prominent stakeholder in the educational field in Chile and I knew of the work of the main charity organisation that provided education in the same country. It seemed reasonable to use these sources to facilitate my investigation, to open doors and guarantee that I interacted with quality participants to add value to my study. Being part of this culture, I recognised that this facilitated the interviewees' support, knowledge and openness to this process, especially during the interviews.

Another element of my research involved identifying possible participants of the wider school community with which to also conduct semi-structured interviews. The purpose of this was to compare the observations of others with those of principals and find out how much of their views and understanding were also shared - or otherwise - with these participants. For this purpose, I requested to work with key participants in each school – a middle leader, a teacher, a member of support staff and a parent. This procedure enabled me to gather further understanding of the same issues affecting school principals and their work in impacting student learning and opportunities in their institutions.

Although the focus of this research was four principals in Chile, the inclusion of other members of each school - as mentioned above - added extra depth to this enquiry, to aid triangulation and, again, "to reduce possible bias" (Robson, 2011, p. 22) in findings. Interviewing the principals for a second time, subsequent to the participants' interviews, also helped ensure the integrity of the purpose.

The understanding of interview format, organisations and routines needs to be addressed to explain how I further respond to the above discussion as well as to serve effectively the needs of this study, its goals and the new learning obtained from participants. This is detailed in the next section.

Interviews

Interviews are highly regarded instruments of data collection that serve three main purposes according to Miles et al. (2014b): they gather information; they test or suggest new hypotheses - or serve as a device to identify variables and relationships - and they may form a part of other research methods. However, these authors give deeper meaning to them as a research strategy by indicating that an interview is more than a data collection tool; it is a social encounter. I concur with this view, as my professional experience has benefitted greatly from this conception and it has allowed me to obtain vital information to inform and further my own thinking and practice. Interviews are indeed a conversation, not in a conventional sense as they are at least semi-structured, but with all the benefits of any amicable exchange. The main difference is that, within interviews, there is clear purpose, agreed roles and the seeking of mutual

benefit. An interviewer needs specific information and willing respondents able to share their expertise, knowledge, skills or experience. They can be personal exchanges that show how individuals feel deeply and view the world around them. They can potentially bring up inner beliefs, reveal undetected realities and create awareness in both interviewer and interviewee about what it is like to inhabit their contexts - "Interviews enable participants (…) to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 421).

I made the decision to work with four principals on the basis that it is their experiences of working day in and day out serving schools, students and the national education system that I wanted to understand. Therefore, interviews - and appropriately planned questions - will allow me to showcase the above discussion by involving participants in this process to discover more about their sphere of influence. This is supported below:

> Any research which aims to achieve an understanding of people in a real-world context is going to need some interview material, if only to provide illustration, some insight into what it is like to be a person in that setting. This can be very effective even with as few as four or five interviews of individuals carefully selected as typical, or in different positions.
>
> (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409)

The above identifies that all research benefits from the input of interviews, as they provide immediate access to the objects of study and to begin a process of discovery. The next section details my rationale for employing semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews provide both a commonality across the interviews but also the opportunity for each participant to describe freely their lived experience, as the expectation in phenomenology (Groenewald, 2004, Husserl, 2012) is to have a relatively unrestrictive approach that allows participants to communicate their realities with little hindrance beyond the set initial questions which serve to act as a catalyst for freer subsequent discussion. My intention was to provide a space for expanded reflexivity by the participants through my role as an empathic interviewer able to relate to their experiences at a personal, cultural and professional level in order to encourage an openness and candour in the transactions. The intention was to provide a voice for principals and participants on how the former sought to influence student outcomes and opportunities and how this might - or might not - be inspired by a specific leadership approach. I worked via recorded semi-structured interviews conducted in an informal style at their places of work, in their mother tongue, with a clarity as to what I was seeking to achieve. The purpose was for them to see my motives and support me in this process whilst making every endeavour to put them at their ease.

Semi-structured interviews best suited my worldview, the research design, the type of enquiry and the research questions employed in this study. Careful choice of the questions and language to be used in the semi-structured interviews was important as was the nature of the spontaneous language I used during the interviews. This was designed to encourage participants to share their thoughts without being led. Also important are interview skills in this process, such as active listening and listening without interruptions that may serve to break the discussion and the line of thought of the interviewee. The careful preparation of questions, learning about the skill of interviewing, piloting the process, and learning about how to conduct interviews was a major part of the process to ensure that I was able to conduct the interviews in an appropriate and rigorous fashion. The subsequent process of data analysis and codification was also an opportunity to identify and eliminate any potential partiality. In relation to school selection, I focused within the Chilean capital, Santiago, not only to manage better the interview process and better complement my positionality as a former inhabitant of Santiago, but also to reduce significantly the number of variables in a country as diverse as Chile.

The next step was learning what theoretically it is like to deliver, organise and prepare interview questions.

Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

Phenomenology, as previously discussed, fundamentally works within a space in time and seeks to engage with specific stakeholders' own experiences and understandings. It inarguably offers the opportunity for participants to dig deep within contexts as they wish.

> If a site-specific (…) study is required, then qualitative, less structured, word-based and open-ended questionnaires may be more appropriate as they can capture the specificity of a particular situation.
>
> (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 382)

The above statement is significant in relation to my research. The school principals needed time, space and a sense of safety to encourage the necessary openness to reflect on their own role while still ensuring that their thinking was sufficiently interrogated by the interview questions. My intention was that they reflected on their assumptions and context and that they were critical – or otherwise – of what was currently at their disposal to affect students' lives positively. Hence, my option to generate data via semi-structured interviews. My role, in this scenario, was focused on guidance linked to time, keeping the flow of the conversation centred around the research aims, eliciting further details when relevant, dealing with unexpected information when it cropped up and managing the wellbeing of participants to enable the best possible opportunity to generate robust data.

Davison's view (see Cohen et al., 2011, p. 397) is that interview questions are designed with the intention of "being clear, unambiguous and practicable, reducing potential errors in participants and data analysts, being motivating for participants and ensuring as far as possible that respondents are telling the truth". However, in relation to the latter, once on the ground it is impossible to be fully certain how respondents will interact with the questions and how they may emotionally react. I concur, therefore, with Cohen et al. (2011) that researchers need to accept this inherent ambiguity and live with its indeterminacy. In the case of this study, I kept with my key questions (see appendix page 264 for the semi-structured interview questions), transcribed the data as expected, analysed it and ideas and conceptions coming from me were noted within memos to compare and contrast with the data. This enabled me to minimise the effects of uncertainty and continue effectively with the investigation.

Furthermore, the questions were carefully planned, drafted and piloted to be ensure their efficacy in eliciting the most appropriate kind of data that answered the research questions (Cohen et al, 2011). One other issue to mention is that effective research may seek to go beyond its boundaries without abandoning its central purpose. For me, this meant that within each interview session there were moments when it was necessary to move away from a central point to explore different evidence, mainly due to extra information that was identified previously as auxiliary items - i.e., "the planning involves the identification and itemizing of subsidiary topics" Cohen et al. (2011, p. 379) - which gives flexibility to discussions without abandoning the central core of the research.

The time needed to draft, and pilot interviews should not be underestimated, and we must also consider their limitations, which I turn to next.

Interviews - Limitations

As with any method of data collection, interviews have their restrictions. Munn and Drever (2004, p. 5) underline the relevance this brings to a researcher as "this leads to better understanding of the nature of the information collected". They focus on potentially limiting factors. Firstly, the data collected, especially if they are structured, tends to describe rather than explain why things are the way they are. This means that the content will be less rich, more superficial and more factual than open scenarios within an interview context. To this issue, the nature of a research question, its goals, timescale and access to informants will decide what is most suitable

Interviews bring a host of possibilities to enable effective research to be undertaken, but they also come with a degree of challenge that, if not considered adequately, may deem a study to be unfit as a source of new contributions to a field. The following authors (Robson, 2011, Cohen et al., 2011, Gillham, 2000, Gillham, 2008, Oppenheim et al., 1992, Newby, 2014,

Munn and Drever, 2004) served as a key community of inquiry to my understanding of the limitations of the interview process.

In addition to the above, there is a further challenge for this research as it is located within a Hispanic (language) and Latin American (culture) context. Interviews should use natural language to gather and understand qualitative knowledge (Gillham, 2000, Oppenheim et al., 1992) and three out the four interviews were conducted in Spanish. This did not come without its challenges as, despite being a first language Spanish speaker, much of what I have learnt in and about education has come through the medium of English. Careful planning, pre-piloting and piloting was needed to ensure that the language employed was accurate and appropriate and served effectively to generate trust, confidence and mutual respect for what was being discussed.

The nature of interviews and the fact that they are by definition interpersonal and social means that most of the challenges described above can be managed, but not totally controlled. Practice and advice are essential prior to the actual event to manage expectations within the situation and, although success cannot be guaranteed, this is not a reason for not trying.

My belief is that interviews also serve a broader purpose in that, in Creswell's terms, they are a genuine and meaningful opportunity to provide agency to individuals within a system; to hear their voices and learn what their reality is and feels like to them. The challenge is always to be wary of the reductionism inherent in the process of coding any qualitative data that emerges and also accept that is so much that may be left out during this process. Participants are cognizant subjects acting on and being acted upon by society and culture. None is immune to this reciprocal influence. Interviews provide a space that validates and recognises further the participant's role in the making of this relationship. With this in mind, careful piloting is an essential part of any research preparation.

Piloting

It is essential to ensure that the instrument of data collection is effective and able to perform as well as possible for the research question to offer reliable results. Bryman (2008, p. 247) acknowledges that piloting is not just a trial "to ensure that (…) questions operate well", but will also highlight potential problems and/or emerging issues that can be dealt with ahead of the interviews.

The piloting process within my study started with working out the questions for the interview (see appendix page 269). This stage took a great deal of consideration and reading to establish a possible order, quantity, timescale for the interview itself, drafting and meeting with supervisors to come to a formal document. The intention was to produce a set of questions that were able to

engage with participants at a very deep level, had a logical and understandable flow and brought to the table the thinking that the research needed.

My pilot selection was conducted with two principals from two different international schools in Hong Kong where I was based at that time, one leading a highly innovative secondary school, the other heading a primary school which delivered International Baccalaureate's Primary Years Programme (PYP). Both schools, although serving different cohort of students, were highly regarded institutions due to the perceived quality of their education, their principals' leadership experience and confidence and robust results obtained in high-stake international assessments. My intention was to recreate similar conditions and find, ideally, similar stakeholders to the ones I would encounter in Chile understanding that "it is best to find a small set of respondents who are comparable to members of the population from which the sample for the full study will be taken" (Bryman, 2008, p. 247). I sent a copy of the interview questions to the potential participants as well as sending them the letters of consent. The actual interview took place in the principal's school in one case and in a hotel for the other. This was a convenient strategy as I was not sure where the interviews would take place in Chile, so I was better able to prepare for contingencies. The recording process – the 'voice notes' app on an iPad - was the same one I intended to use in Chile and the final timing was 40 to 45 minutes, which was my expected schedule. This stage was insightful as I could see straightaway the need for shortening or clarifying questions as well as noticing how the respondents in their role developed and produced information. It was difficult to take notes and listen concurrently, so I opted for listening and only when there were absolutely important points, non-verbal cues or interesting body language, did I make notes. This worked much better for the interview process and served to improve my personal connection with the principals.

After the interviews I wanted to ask further questions to ascertain the quality of my questionnaire and the interviews itself. For this section of the pilot, I utilised a set of questions taken from Oliver (2014, p. 148) along with some of my own. They sought to involve the principals in a learning conversation and actively use them as critical friends to ensure the highest quality of productive feedback. The questions were:

1. How interesting or otherwise did you find the interview?
2. What impact, if any, did the interview have on your own ideas about school leadership?
3. How did my manner as an interviewer make you feel during the interview?
4. How did you feel about having the interviews recorded?
5. Were you happy with being asked these all of the questions?
6. How did you find the length of time the interview took?

The overall assessment from principals interviewed was that the interviews were different from what was anticipated as they focussed not so much on the functioning of their role, but what their role meant to them and to others. They felt that such a line of questioning was appropriate but challenging as they needed to think about their actions and their effect on others. There were also areas that I needed to address leading me to edit or remove certain questions.

Both principals regarded the pilot in a positive light. I noticed how willing my they were to communicate and interact, regardless of the time the process took. It seemed that there was a need for a discussion on ideas about their actions as school leaders and beliefs about leadership:

> It is a curious fact that people are, in general, far more willing to devote an hour and a half to an interview (even of no benefit to themselves) than to give fifteen minutes to the completion of a questionnaire.
>
> (Gillham, 2000, p. 15)

As Gillham (2000) explains –reassuring to me that an interview process and not a questionnaire was the correct choice - large sections of the population do not enjoy written responses; they find it much easier to provide verbal accounts.

The next section focuses on the organisation of data analysis and how the information was handled to respond to this study's objectives.

Data Analysis

The project produced twenty-four interviews to be transcribed and examined through qualitative analysis. Within a positivist tradition, there are reliable methods to analyse information, but this is not the case in qualitative research. Bryman (2008, p. 358) explains that "unlike the analysis of quantitative data, there are few well-established and widely accepted rules for the analysis of qualitative data."

With qualitative research, although it may comprise a small group of respondents, each individual can deliver new and substantially diverse answers, which makes the emergence of themes laborious, time-consuming and painstaking. This can be very much the case with semi-structured interviews, where there is a close relationship with the participants, where their influence and input within the process would enable the research to grow in understanding of the issues they raised. In this sense, the amount of information delivered is significant (Oliver, 2014, p. 154), so the constraints of semi-structured interviews are necessary to ensure that data collected is manageable.

This reciprocal support and learning dynamic need a system that respects this relationship from beginning to end and to allow the researcher to acknowledge or corroborate new understandings. Thus, it was important to identify a data

analysis process that did not reduce but enhanced the input of all participants involved and allowed the study to encapsulate both small constituents and the larger whole. The approach I chose, therefore, was what is referred to as a grounded analysis, one in which I could allow the data to speak and the themes that would serve to illuminate and answer my research questions emerge, which I could then link back to the wider literature.

I would like to consider further how I conceived and organised my triangulation framework and how I managed the data collected. Currently the field of grounded theory analysis is being served by specialists CAQDAS. One of them ATLAS.ti 8™ was used to manage the information collected. The next section is about my triangulation understanding and process and the capacity of ATLAS.ti 8™ to enable and facilitate this.

Triangulation

For Thomas (2013, p. 146), triangulation is about "corroboration, which has to do with ensuring that there are sufficient types of evidence from different sources to secure certainty on what is eventually found and analysed". The same author defines it as "looking at things from different angles and using different methods for looking" (p. 45) when researching. Other researchers also testify to the efficacy of triangulation (Cohen et al., 2011, Newby, 2014, Punch and Oancea, 2014, Robson, 2011). However, this is not always perfect. Triangulation may bring degrees of challenge and conflict when analysing the data. As Robson (2013, p. 158) points out, it may open up "possibilities of discrepancies and disagreements between the different sources". Although he fully agrees with triangulation's relevance, methods may differ deeply making "their direct comparison problematic". Patton (see Cohen et al., 2011, p. 9028) explains that having multiple data collection is not a guarantee that they will "ensure consistency or replication". However, I consider triangulation an approach that enriches the experience of researching. It bestows a study with a wider level of participation and involvement of stakeholders via different means contributing to making sampling selection more varied and the scope of influence more robust. Additionally, I agree as well that "triangulation is useful when an established approach yields a limited and frequently distorted picture" (Cohen et., 2014, p. 9024). This last view is important as it demands from the researchers themselves to be in full grasp of what their study brings, acknowledging its limitations and opting thoughtfully for strategies that may enhance its potential.

Denzin (see Cohen et al., 2014, p. 9013) presents two categories: 'within methods' triangulation and 'between methods' triangulation and Robson (2011) highlights four of Denzin's types of triangulation as the most relevant for education.

- Data triangulation: the use of more than one method of data collection (e.g. observations, interview, documents.)
- Observer triangulation. Using more than one observer in the study.
- Methodological triangulation. Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.
- Theory triangulation. Using multiple theories or perspectives.

(Robson, 2011, p. 158)

Of these four, methodological triangulation seems to be the one most used and "possibly has the most to offer" (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 9018) to education. However, this might be due to the influence of quantitative paradigms on the social sciences rather than a judicious or pragmatic decision based on what a study requires and its realistic scope if it is a small-scale investigation. In the case of my investigation, given its size, time-scale, access to participants, scope and intended outcomes, I opted for observer triangulation.

Triangulation Framework for this Study

Given the discussion above and the complexity of incorporating other views in the process, I want to explain my triangulation framework, i.e., the different groups I engaged with in each school and the reasons behind it. This is not only to ascertain positionality, enrich the data collected and add validity and reliability, but also to welcome the potential to access varied responses in order to widen the possibility of claims, discussions and reflections via the inclusion of other participants' views from each school about their own leaders.

My main strategy of semi-structured interviews allowed me to work closely with principals within their schools and put to them the questions that sought to elicit their own understanding of how their actions and decisions influenced student outcomes and opportunities. I wished to enrich this experience by continuing with the same method, but this time to engage with key stakeholders in each school and all principals responded positively to this request. Most interviews were conducted in private premises and without the presence of the principal. However, in the case of sector three, as the interaction was conducted in the presence of the principal, I could not discount that some bias may have been present in the responses. It might have been the case that the views expressed were carefully crafted due to courtesy, respect or that they did indeed reflect the true feeling of the people of this school. I had no certainty, but I obtained what I believed were unprepared and spontaneous responses to questions on a subject they had not been exposed to before. Additionally, in all schools, the principals selected participants. This was accepted to ensure that I was able to gain access to participants and had adequate time for collecting data. I had no reason to think that there was a tactical selection as all of the schools had robust results and had a positive perception both inside and outside the schools. Nonetheless, this could be a limiting factor to my research findings and was something that I needed to

acknowledge whilst minimising its effect by comparing responses amongst participants and with the literature on the subject. The responses received, though, showed enthusiasm, value and responsiveness; all participants seemed willing, interested and saw the importance of their role in this research.

The groups involved represented key organisational areas within each of the schools and in each school - a middle leader, a teacher, a member of support staff and a parent, with interviews conducted separately. I chose middle leaders because their views were important since they had significant responsibility for changes and implementations to curriculum and pastoral care that branched out directly from the principal's vision. I chose teachers as they had a direct impact on students' day-to-day school life. Support staff were chosen as key members of the schools, who had a different insight into the actions and roles of principals. Finally, it was vital to include the parents as expected seekers of quality education for their children and, so, their decisions and views contained much of their personal experience of education at large and what it meant for their own children to attend what were perceived as well run and successful schools.

Finally, I have to recognise my own prism and influence during and after the study was conducted. My own visits, observations and first-hand contact with different principals and participants meant I learned a great deal and these new insights and experiences impacted on my worldview as reflected in my role as a school leader, something that positioned me as a contributor as well as researcher in the process. Rather than acting as a purely detached observer, my presence highlighted that nothing is value free and that my chosen method of enquiry was the right one that would best accommodate and benefit from my positionality. As expressed by Litchtman (2013, p. 21):

> All information is filtered through the researcher's eyes and ears and is influenced by his or her experience, knowledge, skill, and background (…) In fact, postmodernists, interpretivists, constructivists, and feminists acknowledge that the elusive objectivity often sought in traditional or scientific research is inappropriate in the qualitative research arena.

This is a valid understanding about the reality of negotiating points of view. All investigations are sifted via individuals. The notion of pure and unbiased research is a distorted and complex one. "Researchers know that they [always] influence the research and results" (Litchtman, 2013, p. 22). In the end the reality is that well conducted, and rigorously organised studies have the potential to inform us about a reality for its own interest and contribution to individuals or groups. It is important to recognise too that the mutual trust exchanged during the interviews added value not only to the analysis, but also to everybody's roles and that it in turn helped bring to the fore potential areas of unattended study within principalship in Chile that this research wanted to fulfil.

Once I had gathered the data, I needed to transcribe it and start a process of analysis and reflection. For this purpose, I utilised ATLAS.ti 8™.

ATLAS.ti 8™

ATLAS.ti belongs to the group of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) available to support analysis in qualitative research and was originally designed by Thomas Muhr (Friese, 2016) to assist strategically with the analysis of grounded theory, hence my particular interest in it. The use of ATLAS.ti, as with other software packages, has nonetheless encountered "scepticism and resistance towards its adoption by many scholars" (Paulus and Lester, 2016, p. 405). Authors in favour of its use (Paulus et al., 2017, Ang et al., 2016, Cantero, 2014, Crotty, 1998) agree that there are conflicts and the incorporation of assisted technology in the analysis of data is still in its infancy.

According to Cantero (2014), ATLAS.ti facilitates the interpretations of texts by helping the researcher both monitor a constant and simultaneous allocation of codes and also undertake ongoing analysis via reflections and ideas on a topic. The qualitative nature of my research yielded a great deal of information and its handling presented challenges as to how to approach it ensuring that time and effectiveness played a role without losing trust in the project itself. It is said that "the collection of unstructured data and qualitative analysis of those data (…) often raises a fundamental issue about the aspect of trustworthiness" (Ang et al., 2016, p. 1856). To me it was important to build on the learning and ensure that the research could have the best chance of success considering my status as a novice researcher and my confidence that by selecting the right software I would create better opportunities to support the analysis of the information collected with an efficient use of the time available.

The discussion as to the benefits and drawbacks has centred around applicability to the methodology that researchers wish to pursue. Paulus and Lester (2016) highlight that CAQDAS provide a feeling of distance from the data being studied rather than the customary manual approach to coding. Additionally, the technology may lead to non-productive practices due to its immense functionality and range of possible outputs rather than focusing on actual content and specific agreed research targets. The same authors warn about not having direct control of what researchers wish to do and achieve as the software packages comes with their own host of commands and analysis suites. Ultimately, there is the temptation to view qualitative data as a quantitative process, very much replicating a positivist approach to research analysis.

Those who advocate ATLAS.ti see it as a tool that increases levels of transparency during the analysis, better serving specific methodological expectations and aiding interpretation of the issues under investigation (Cantero, 2014). This occurs as it facilitates the organisation of a study (Cantero,

2014) via functions such as segmentation, quotations, concept, group-concepts (or categories), diagrams, memos, comments and outputs. If deployed effectively, all of these functionalities provide an explanatory power for any investigation. Paulus and Lester (2016) add that ATLAS.ti eases the management of different document families and quotations via a "line by line analysis through memoing" (2016, p. 409) within the written data and exploring connections across them all through the analysis tool:

> The use of ATLAS.ti does indeed help to substantiate the analysis and interpretation of the data. Additionally, by using the software programme, it facilitated the three strategies, specifically in capturing triangulation and audit trail (…) with its features of merging code and memo, and member checking with its thematic network viewing or an alternative textual report feature.
>
> (Ang et al., 2016, p. 1855)

The idea related to triangulation is further supported by Ang et al. (2016) in that the programme allows for diverse informants within a range of documents to be deployed to support reflections and conclusions:

> [With ATLAS.ti,] the researchers (…) managed to carry out triangulation of data sources and methods and succeeded in obtaining a clearer as well as a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information; and thus, enhancing trustworthiness of the research.
>
> (Ang et al., 2016, p. 1861)

And yet, there is no guarantee that the presence of all of these benefits will yield a successful analysis as dexterity, experience, creativity and theory building all dwell in the hands of the researcher who had the original face-to-face contact with the data collected (Cantero, 2014) and knows it better than anyone else. As explained by Carcary (see Ang et al., 2016, p. 1865) "CAQDAS is merely a support tool, but when used effectively it enables the researcher to concentrate his or her energy on the conceptual work of analysis". Above all, it is important not to lose sight of the overall vision of the project that, once fragmented by the software needs to be reintegrated to give an overall assessment of ideas to contribute to knowledge. Additionally, it must be recognised that software such as ATLAS.ti requires training and an understanding of an appropriate methodology, in the case of this study an analysis grounded in the data, to make effective use of its functionalities as per the intended research method. The software, though, acquires relevance when it is expressly and systematically applied within an investigation itself:

> Our years of experience with ATLAS.ti have taught us that it is only by committing to using the software in the context of an actual research study that its features and functionality can be fully understood and mastered. It is difficult to understand the differences between analysis by hand and analysis with software until one has conducted their own study using the software.

(Paulus and Lester, 2016, p. 424)

It is not the purpose of this research to provide such a complete study, but rather to give an explanatory account of possibilities and shortcomings when selecting technology to support research and, perhaps, to contribute in small measure to our understanding of the use of CAQDAS overall.

Within my research, ATLAS.ti™ helped me efficiently process the coding, segmentation and categorization of multiple texts and documentation from different sources on related issues. When managing, searching and comparing codes and group codes, it ensured that I did not solely rely on my memory of the interviews with its potential for omissions or distortions but also facilitated the process of highlighting and identifying potential patterns and themes with memos and comments. This level of inclusivity of sources, concurrent reflections via comments and memos and the production of network concept maps made it attractive to my overall decision to train myself in its use and apply it to my research. In addition, the software can securely hold transcripts in one space, available 'in the cloud' to be accessed anywhere in the world my personal circumstances where the subject of research, my employment and my place of study were ranged across three different continents. In addition, it is important to mention that ATLAS.ti 8 is GDPR compliant and fully encrypted. The large content of the data was kept orderly and organised to avoid losing overall sight of the aims of the investigation and I was able to produce relationships about a single concept emanating from different sources by clicking a single button (Paulus and Lester, 2016).

Fig. 3.1 below shows the overall interface, with the documents in the middle and on each side the tool suites to work on the data. Within the main body it is possible to see the quotations and codes. For each code and quote, it is possible to allocate comments that add to the analysis of the text as it is segmented:

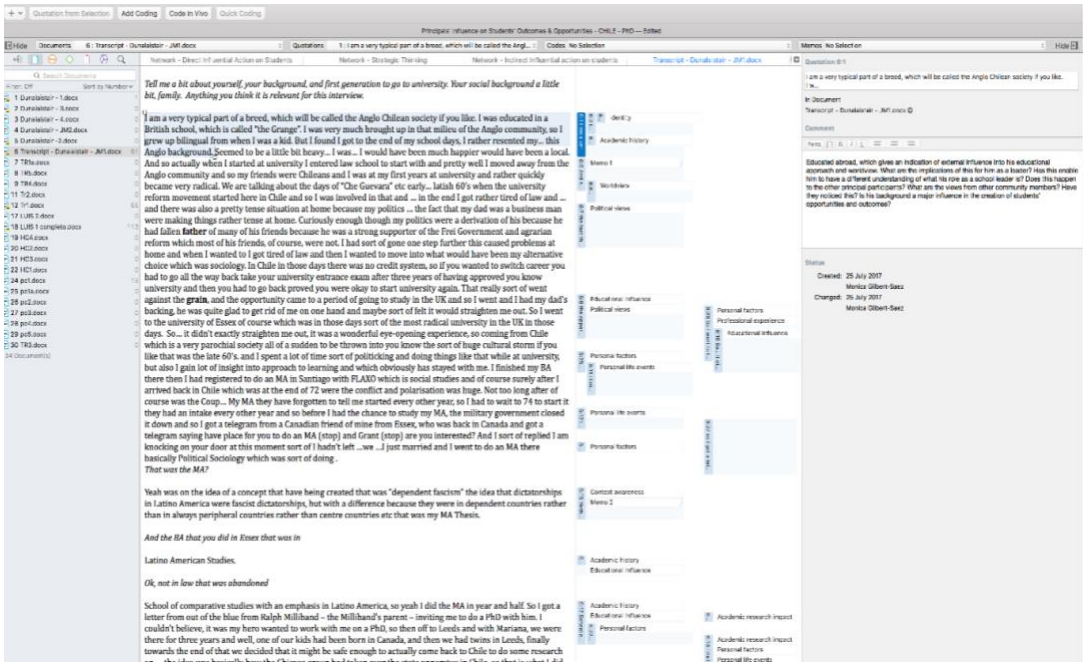


Figure 3.1: Overall interface – ATLAS.ti 8™

Figure 3.2 below presents a network output that creates linkages to a specific code. There is a huge flexibility of input and action by adding different comments and memo connections to quotations, codes and group codes. This helps to identify the relatedness of specific codes with participants' quotations, but also their relatedness amongst them that can go from connectedness to negating each other:

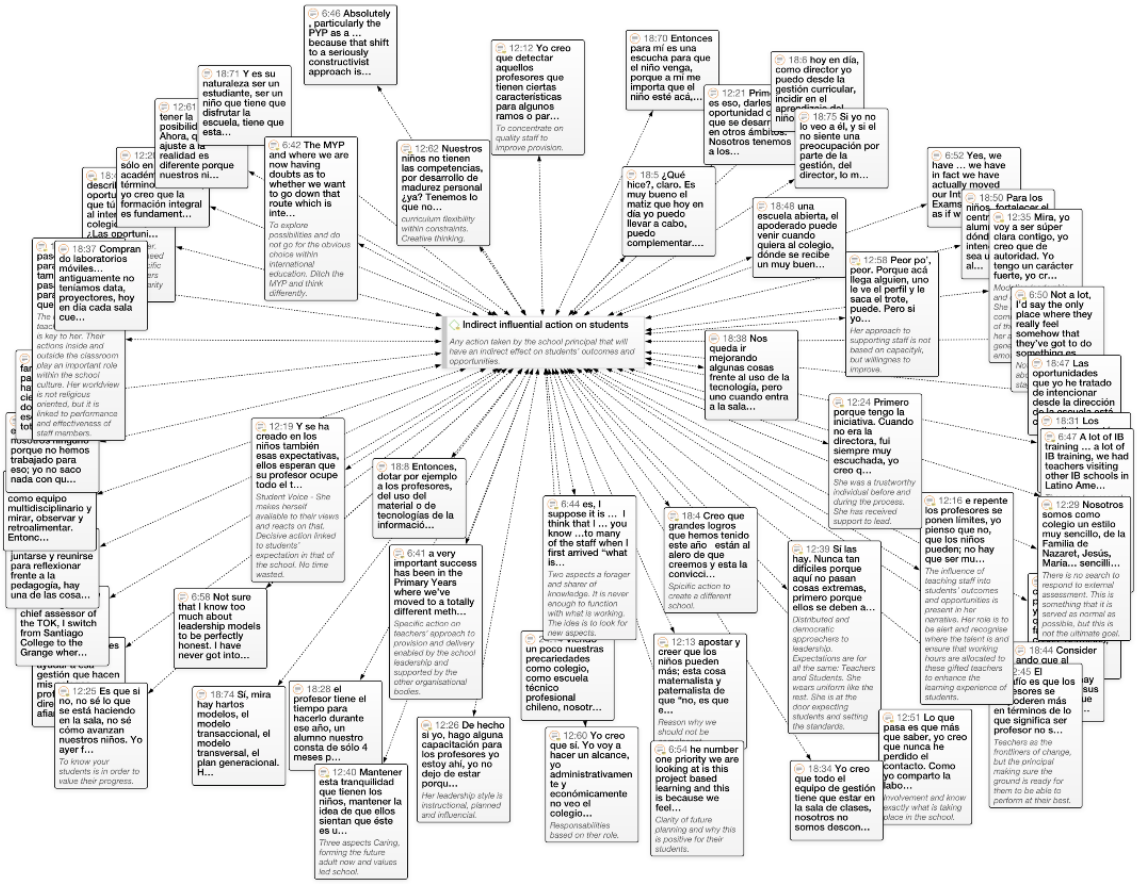


Figure 3.2: Network output – ATLAS.ti 8™

Figure 3.3 shows the Group Manager page. This enables researchers to cluster documents within different significant groups, in my case gender, age, private schools, semi-private and so on so that it is then possible to interrogate the data based on this requested framework for information:

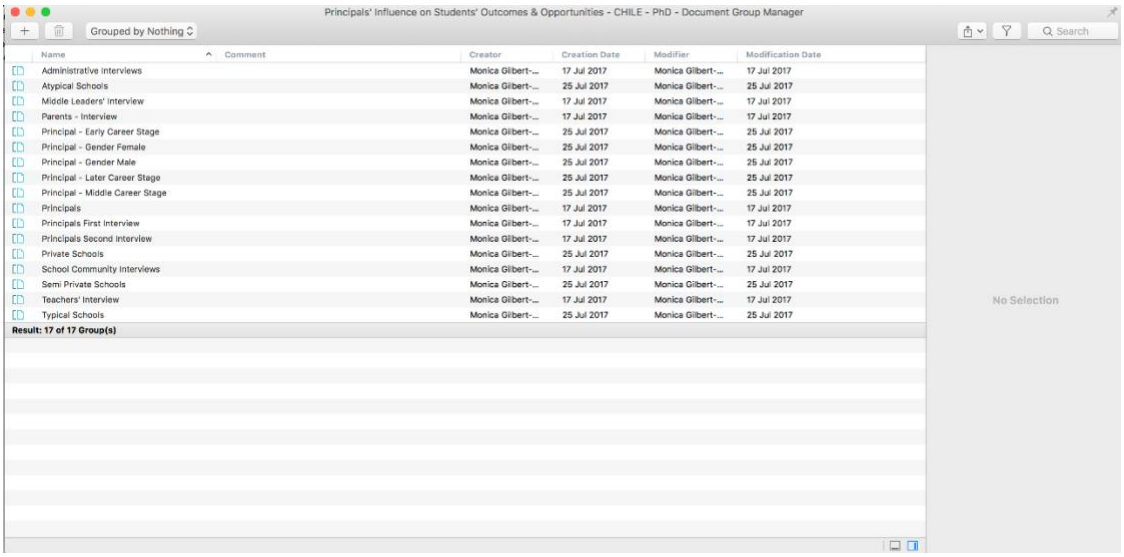


Figure 3.3: Group Manager – ATLAS.ti 8™

Figure 3.4 shows a conceptual map of a "Direct influential action on students" code linked with its quotations from different respondents. I also related it to Memo 2 and it is possible to see another code originally named "Extreme professionalism" (now called 'Strong sense of moral purpose') that has been connected to quotations 18.31. The latter is an observation that I noted about all principals. At this stage of my research they all shared a sense of duty that goes beyond the constraints of their job as principals:

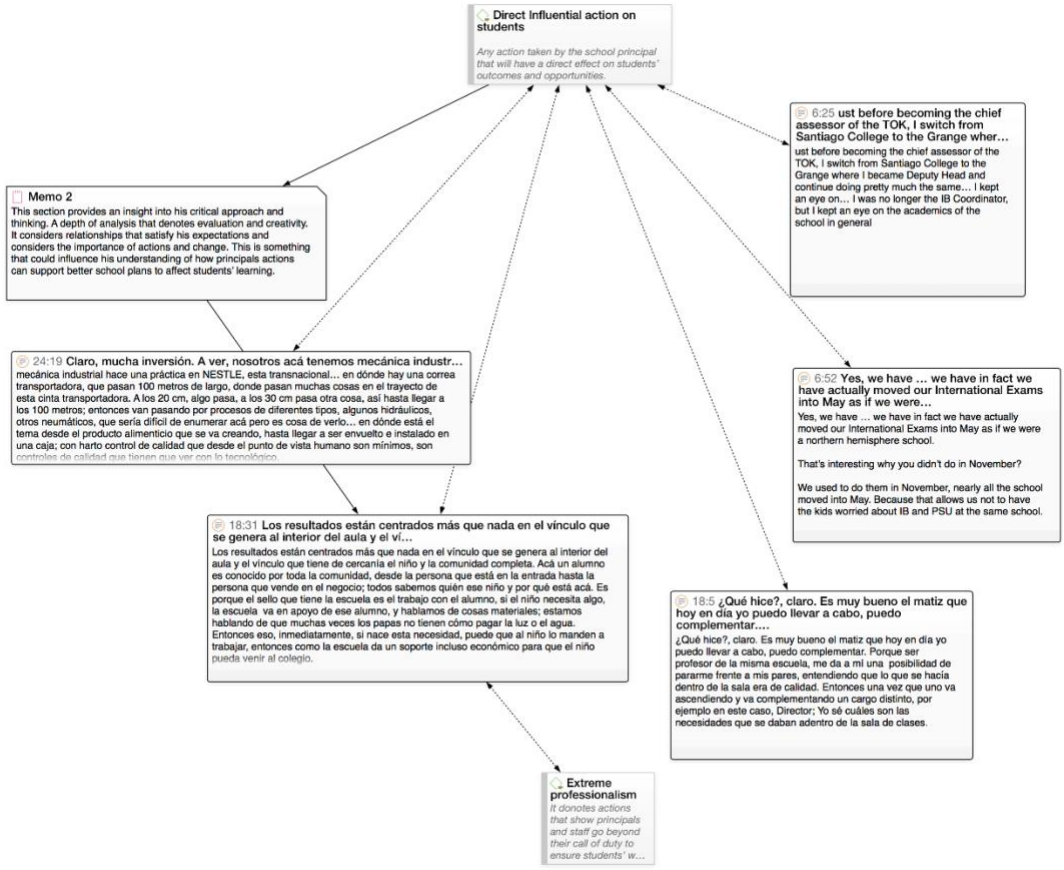


Figure 3.4: Conceptual Map – ATLAS.ti 8™

The whole process demands time, dedication, patience and continuous learning on the job. As concepts, properties, significances and dimensions emerge, there is an external and internal process of discussion between the data and the researcher. In principle, this process is prolonged (Cantero, 2014) until the information is saturated or it becomes repetitive and nothing further is obtained. Nonetheless, it is important to continue the process of interrogating the data to ensure the stability of concepts and the development of evaluations and findings that may lead to themes and theories.

All things considered, the software enabled me to organise the data, manage it and have the flexibility to be in different geographical places working on it. Furthermore, ensuring the the information was kept safe and secure was significant in complying with ethical considerations, an area I discus next.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is a serious research commitment to protect individuals whose involvement could compromise their safety and dignity (Halse and Honey, 2005, Robson, 2002). It is essential to balance the benefits of an enquiry with the rights of those involved.

I guided my approaches and decisions in relation to ethical research not by a necessary act (Giorgini et al., 2015), but by being very much aware of the dilemmas of making moral and ethical choices on others' behalf without their consent or knowledge. I had to assume possible needs without understanding fully what it was that I should not ignore, and it was important to bear in mind that potential participants had their own capacity to bring their own moral and ethical standards to my research activity.

Therefore, it is important that this investigation achieved a solid standard of integrity, significance and community service. To this end, it has adhered to the University of Nottingham's "Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics" (Nottingham, 2013) and has acquired ethical approval to conduct appropriate interviews in Chile. Additionally, by being a member of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) "Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research" (BERA, 2018), I have ensured this project responds to both sets of guidelines acting as regulatory bodies that give support and further credibility to this process. In the case of the BERA ethical guidance I have used the 2011 guidelines, cross-referenced with the 2018 update.

My plan to ensure full ethical compliance for my work was as follows:

- Delivery of a university-approved letter that introduced the researcher and the objectives of the investigation.
- Informing possible participants of their right to withdraw from the process at any stage. This applies to all stages; before, during and after the data has been collected.
- Once interviews were carried out, sending a copy of the transcript to participants for approval and the opportunity to change or add information as they deemed appropriate.
- Interviews to be fully confidential.
- Institutions and people's name to be protected.
- The above was further guaranteed by safely storing the data within ATLAS.ti.

The above took place during the groundwork phase of ethical consideration and further study and due attention was carried out to protect those involved whilst allowing the flow of ideas to be independent and serve a community of enquiry.

Data Collection Process Overview

During the period December 7th to December 18th, 2015, I interviewed principals and participants. During a second round of interviews, from December 15th 2015 to December 18th, 2015, I only interviewed principals.

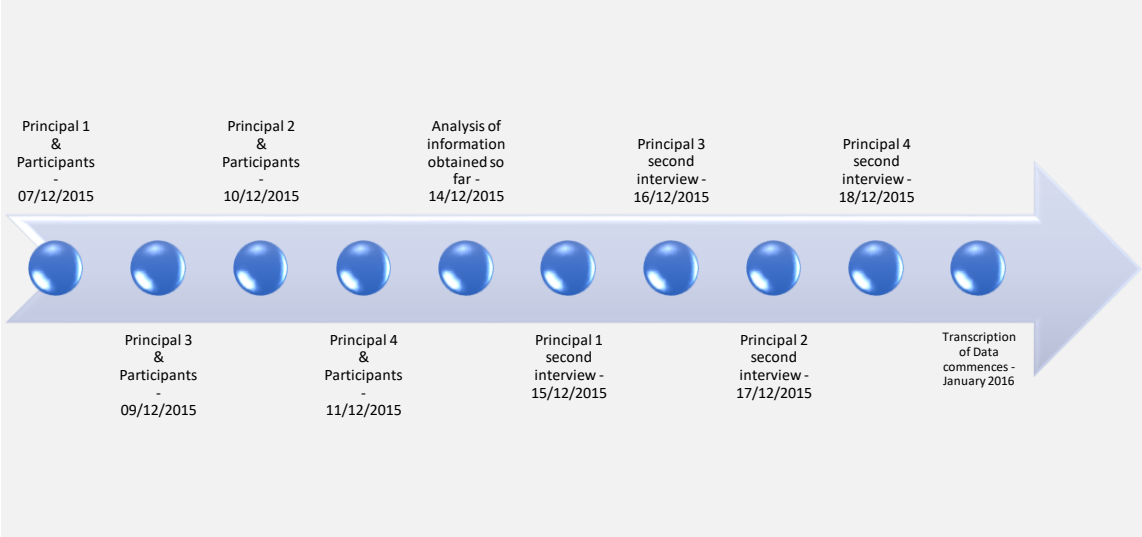


Figure 3.5: Data collection overview, December 2015.

Limitations of the Research

When considering any limitations of my research, it is important to bear in mind that "the phenomenological researcher is seeking to illuminate human phenomena and not, in the strictest sense to generalize the findings" (Hycner, 1985, p. 294). For example, this study does not introduce a random selection of participants, rather ones who have been chosen according to the needs of the phenomena, their suitability and availability. This could be a criticism, especially linked to a more positivist stance due, to the risk of bias. However, the principals were selected on the basis of being able to inform me about the phenomena investigated and all the participants in this study exhibited the ontological perspectives expected and, based on the principles of phenomenology, they delivered their views and reflections of the experience at hand. To add to the rigour with which the principals were chosen, the voices of additional participants were also pursued, and carefully chosen, and subsequent data analysis was also in line with the expectations of the research design, all designed to further enhance the reliability and validity of the study.

As stated earlier, the study may not be replicated exactly as the participants will be different and, even with the same participants, their views may have consequently modified for any number of reasons. This may limit its direct replicability but the general principle of focusing on the personal lived experience of successful principals and their impact on students could itself be replicated. Additionally, this thesis is of a phenomenological nature which cannot discount the positionality of individuals, including the researcher, within a specific moment in time. It is a snapshot and the period has now passed, but we learnt what the experience was like for them during that instant and how to observe, record and analyse it.

The number of participants may be regarded as small but, as this project was phenomenological in nature and the number of respondents was in line with the principles of qualitative research design, it succeeded in generating a depth of data to acknowledge the needs of the study's research question.

The study merely suggests implications. Generalisations or recommendations would not be appropriate. As such the results only apply to the object of study and the findings and analysis depict what was identified at the time of the data collection. However, these principals' experiences and viewpoints could serve to help others learn about their own worlds and these lived human experiences may be of value for others to compare and analyse.

Capturing the exact nature of experience, especially when analysing the data retrospectively, may be regarded as an imperfect process. Memories are not infallible and the spontaneous nature of the reflections of the participants may further contribute to the potential for forgetting. However, the nature of the questions asked was specifically about the wider experiences, lived over a period of time, not fixated on what was happening at the exact moment the

interview took place. Their narratives were already one step removed from the original experience and what remains are their reflections and beliefs that, from a phenomenological perspective, still serve the purposes of the study. This leads to the idea of "confabulation and psychological defensiveness" (Hycner, 1985, p. 296). The former relates to filling memory gaps with own current viewpoints and is generally done unintentionally (Hycner, 1985) by participants. However, phenomenology does not come to judge the veracity of their affirmations, but how the reality appears to them, and in this sense I have no reason to believe that either the principals in this study or other participants were presented with questions that necessitated detailed recall of specifics or minutiae which may have led to such distortions. Indeed, many of the topics discussed were daily news to the whole community. The latter relates to becoming defensive whilst being interviewed. I was not aware of this happening during any of the interviews I undertook, supported by my empathic positionality as previously described. Nevertheless, no researcher can guarantee it has not occurred. By carefully explaining the interview process that I then adhered to and giving them the opportunity to withdraw without question, I feel I enabled their messages to flow as openly as possible.

Also, the subjective influence of the researcher needs to be included as a limiting factor. Although much of the process was structured to constrain the influence of the researchers' own ontology, the reality is that no novice researcher can ever be certain that the findings, outcomes and implications of the thesis have not been affected in some way. Many of the views discussed here link to my own interests and passions that, although bracketed and quarantined as much as possible, could have inadvertently influenced ideas and reflections. Other researchers will need to judge them and use their own approaches to ensure that this research could represent a genuine source of knowledge and themes for future research.

Lastly, despite being about student outcomes, no students participated in the study. This is a regret and something that I feel, as a researcher, I would have liked to investigate. It is their positionality that needs more exploring. Any claims about these Chilean principals and their impact on student outcomes and opportunities will be limited by the absence of a student voice. This is an opportunity I would like to explore along the same lines as this study in the future.

Overview of this chapter

This chapter has explained how important it is to determine a researcher's positionality in the process of an investigation, the importance of ontology and epistemology when considering the reality being studied and their influence upon any chosen methodology. It provided an autobiographical overview of a researcher with knowledge, experience and understanding related to my Chilean heritage and also my school leadership experience outside of Chile. Such considerations, along with my exploration of research design possibilities, led me to a phenomenological approach that would allow me to acknowledge, but bracket, my positionality in order to better understand the reality experienced by Chilean principals. This chapter also explained the rationale behind the principals chosen and the sectors they served and, from there, the chosen data collection tool - semi-structured interviews. The chapter explained how their choices, preparation, piloting and delivery were organised and the final section clarified how the transcript data was analysed using codes, categories and segmentation. This process was aided by ATLAS.ti 8^{TM} CAQDAS software to ensure efficient and practical data management.

Limitations, shortcomings and the risk of bias were also discussed with an explanation of how such factors were mediated as much as possible through my methodology.

Finally, the chapter portrayed the ethical considerations taken into account to ensure privacy, confidentiality and protection as per University of Nottingham and BERA guidelines.

CHAPTER FOUR: SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter I will present the experience, observations and claims of four principals in Chile in connection with their leadership's influence on student outcomes and opportunities in their schools. I will organise their discussion around the four research questions as outlined below. The ten questions posed to them during our semi-structured interviews are linked to each one of them and can be seen in the appendix section page 261. I would also like to connect their claims with that of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) (Gurr, 2015, Møller, 2017, ISSPP, 2018) and School Turnaround Project (Corrales, 2017, Leithwood et al., 2010, Meyers and Sadler, 2018, Meyers and Smylie, 2017) in the discussion.

Research Questions

The four key research questions below serve as the anchors for engaging with principals and the participants. For ethical purposes, I identify each of the four principals with a letter and number, thus, P1 (Principal 1) to P4 (Principal 4). The representation of their school sector as described in the Context section within the Introductory Chapter will be sector one (S1) for *Private non-subsidised schools*; sector two (S2) for *Private subsidised schools*; sector three (S3) for *Municipal or mainstream schools* and sector four (S4) for *Schools with delegated administration* (or schools owned by the Ministry of Education whose administration is by public or private non-profit organisations).

The four research questions are:

a) How do these four principals enact educational leadership within the Chilean context?
b) How do the principals' views of their role and influence compare with wider current international conceptions of school leadership?
c) What are the perceived consequences of each principal's actions for student learning opportunities and outcomes?
d) How do principals engage with Chilean government policies to serve student learning and outcomes?

The Principals

Principal 1 (P1) works within sector one (S1). He is the one of the four with the most experience of working in education in Chile and abroad. He was educated in Chile in private bilingual schools, has a PhD and worked in Europe and the USA for many years before returning to Chile. He has a wide understanding of international schooling within the International Baccalaureate (IB), serves as an examiner and advisor within this organisation, and also demonstrates an

extensive knowledge of different conceptions of education delivery and leadership. He is not a teacher, but a sociologist who concentrated on education and built up his career to where he is now an Executive principal for a conglomerate of schools. He has also served as director of learning and behaviour management previously in another school in the city. He is highly regarded by local policy makers who seek his advice. He is a principal at a later career stage (ready to retire). He has been working in education for the last 40 years. His manner was at all times observed as friendly, personable and supportive. He genuinely wanted to provide the space to allow this research to have the best possible setting and participants in line with the aims. P1 was the only one able to converse in English. His responses were able to embrace specific aspects of practice within the school as well as reflecting widely on issues at a macro level that impact the school system in Chile. P1's school has a cohort of 1400 students and it is situated in a wealthy suburb of Santiago.

Principal 2 (P2) works within sector two (S2). She is the only woman in this research, and this is her first role as a principal where she is intending to stay until she retires. This is the second school she has worked in and she has built her career in this institution by working her way up from teacher to Academic Director until she was offered the role of principal within this religious school where, until now, the principal was a nun or a priest. She broke the mould and is proud of this achievement and the accompanying recognition of the school board. P2 does not have significant international experience apart from a year abroad to obtain a Masters. She is ambitious and open to innovation and change to support learning. She has a strong character and comes across as no-nonsense, practical and a doer. She believes in hands-on experience where observing at ground level offers the best scenarios to implement changes and interventions. Her personal reflections and curriculum changes were useful in understanding this sector's inputs into student achievements as a result of leadership activity. P2's school has a cohort of 520 students, and it is situated in a middle-class area of Santiago.

Principal 3 (P3) works within sector three, a special school; it is designated *Escuela de Segunda Oportunidad* (Second Opportunity School). These are schools for children who have not been in school for up to two years and come here to ensure they can catch up with the years lost and finish their secondary education. P3 is the youngest of the four principals interviewed and is at an early stage in this post and his leadership career. However, like P1 and P2, he has also worked as Learning Director previously and his performance and actions in the classroom enabled him to be recognised by the school board as an outstanding candidate within the school. The board of the school is led by a religious congregation and P3's school is placed within one of the most deprived and high-risk areas in Santiago. He was a very open individual during the course of the interview and supportive of my work and the chance to be interviewed. He was keen to do a PhD and questioned me about it before and after the interview. His international experience is limited to two weeks' visits to schools in the United Kingdom, but his knowledge and understanding of education not

only reflects familiarity with progressive conceptions of quality instruction and leadership, but also awareness of context and cultural needs in Chile's education system. P3's school has a cohort of 300 students, and it is situated in a deprived area of Santiago.

Principal 4 (P4) works within sector four (S4). He has close contact with the Ministry of Education to whom the school answers directly. He introduced a different curriculum to the school called "*Educación Dual*" (Dual Track Education). This approach is deemed to represent an innovative curriculum; his school operates closely with private industry to provide vocational courses in areas of depravation and high risk. The school is administrated by a religious congregation and supports children who wish to opt for a vocational rather than academic path. All of the students leave with a qualification and the training provided happens both in school and in the workplace. In this respect his school is atypical. He was friendly and supportive of me and the research I was conducting. He was inquisitive as to how vocational courses were offered around the world. His international experience was limited to short courses in Spain. P4's school has a cohort of 450 students and is situated in an area of high social depravation in a deprived area of Santiago that is considered both high risk and dangerous.

Research question One: How do these four principals enact educational leadership within the Chilean context?

This section looks at the principals' experience within the Chilean context as previously described and also now faced with a new school funding system. Their perspectives on the effectiveness of government policy and its effect on their capacity to lead and influence their schools are also examined.

New School Funding System

One such a key change in process of implementation at the time of this research was to move away from the state co-financing semi-private institutions by allowing them to opt to become either fully private or receive full government funding and become state institutions. This will affect 54.1% of the student population and their families that opted for this educational sector (OECD, 2017). However, not all of these families will be in a position to afford full private tuition and some schools will not be able to run without the parental top-up fees as it will be difficult to operate in a fully private manner with a small private demand that does not satisfy the school's financial needs. Thus, this is not a straightforward process.

P1 explained his experience and views on the new educational reform in the following terms:

> What they (the government) have done by making the public school *subvencionados* (sector two) no longer (…) able to charge extra (…) means they

> have made them as equally free as state schools, which seems to be pretty crazy when the movement at the moment for parents is away from the state schools to these private subsidised schools … you make them free, you make it twice as attractive for people to move away from the public to the private, so with things like that (…) the obvious priority had to be to strengthen the public system first and then do the other, because otherwise it is shooting yourself in the foot.
>
> (7 December 2015)

P1's experience demonstrated awareness and concern with current issues related to Chilean education, especially to the reality of eliminating sector two. He did not refer to the potential benefits of the changes which could provide a fairer school system, as claimed by the OECD (OECD, 2018a, OECD, 2017), one that is not linked to parental income. His narrative was built around personal experience and generalisations of events such as parental motivations and sector three performance. This is linked to the reality that his leadership will not be challenged by these events as he works within S1. The changes will not require him to think or plan strategically to respond to needs in the short term.

P1 concluded his view about the whole school system in Chile:

> Chile is still pretty parochial place and most people are, you know, looking at what's happening internally, but don't really tune into to the larger world [of education]. So, you know, there is a global perspective that it's missing which I think it is important.
>
> (7 December 2015)

P1's affirmation offered a further perception that the changes will not work as the country is still in its infancy compared to more organised, effective and wealthier educations systems. A funding reorganisation will not be sufficient to improve the quality of instruction and education which is the core of the problem in his view.

P2 provided an account of her experience under the new changes. She explained that the process is not about immediate change from semi-private to mainstream; it comes with a transition. Her school falls into a special category due to the high co-funding payments coming from the parents in her school. This means according to her that:

> The funding offered to us by the state, to us it is not going to be possible until 2030, this means that in 15 years we can be totally non-fee paying. Therefore, there is a period of transition where we are going to have to readjust the budget.
>
> (10 December 2015)

She added that discontinuing the shared-funding process - bearing in mind her school belongs to the group with the highest parental top-up fees - came with a transition with categories to manage the parents' co-payments contributions,

a process she suggests will take until 2030 to be fully implemented. She reflected on how the task was difficult and the chances were that she would not be in the school by then. Nonetheless, the school needs to have some selection criteria:

> Everyone feels that regardless if we are *gratis* or not, we will have some degree of selection in some way (…) [because that favors [school] results. Why? Because, while other parents will not pay anything or will pay 20 (…) [in this school,] they will continue to pay the maximum that can be paid; that is not going to change - although it is true we will not increase [top-up fees] - we already enter this process with this reality of ours, [and] this will not change.
>
> (10 December 2015)

It will not change, because they have a programme and the school needs the current budget to sustain its growth. Her rationale was that the school needs to charge top-up fees. This reality, according to her, stays and the government knows that, hence the progressive implementation for schools like hers.

Another aspect to note is that, despite being a sought-after school, the school operates very much like a state school. It has one grade per year group and class size varies from 38 to 40 students. She informed me that as a semi-private school, the Ministry of Education can request her to have 45 per class. But she has refused this push as she explained that classrooms are small and due to the rick of earthquakes, it is unsafe. She won this battle with the local authority.

Given the numbers of students, she relied heavily on teachers to deliver well. This was supported by students' good behaviour. She mentioned that personalised learning is not possible given the circumstances. She felt that this was too much to ask of teachers and also it was not possible considering the numbers of students per class. Finally, she added that the school has stable numbers of students, there are few available places and the selection procedures always applied. Once parents enter the school, they stay.

The above discussion highlights the premise that parents choose to stay in this semi-private school regardless of the quality of provision. They did not seek smaller classroom sizes, better resources, personalised education or modern facilities. The school provided the education the parents wanted which was a focus on good results on national tests. However, this was guaranteed by a selection process that creamed off the best students with the best potential results.

Overall, P2 feels that the new school funding will not significantly affect her day-to-day management and leadership. The government has strategically considered the school and the contentious issue of funding for schools that have heavily relied on expensive parental top-ups due to their provision, prestige and results. P2's school fully falls into this category, so their financial

stability in the long term is assured for the time being. That said, 15 years is a long time and as she was aware that things can change.

Principal 3 (P3), representing the state sector, agreed with the new changes for sector two schools. He described them as necessary to provide a fair educational system for the country. However, he believed in parental choice for those who can afford it. In his experience and knowledge, many schools were opting to become free of charge and have changed their legal status to become foundations. His questioning was centred around inclusion:

> One of the things that matter to me is that (…) [schools] can effectively serve [students'] diverse [needs], and that is my doubt… Can they? There are schools that due to their facilities do not have the provision, there are schools with no ramps for disabled students, students that have visual or hearing impairment, can they opt for any school? Or are they going to continue in a different school?
>
> (09 December 2015)

P3 continued his reflection on inclusion. He believed that there should not be different schools for different people, but all be part of a whole community. He felt that parents should take risks for a mainstream school that offered a good education. P3's view of education was that it should be free, no-one should pay to have an education. It is the government's responsibility to fund national needs in education. There should not be separate schools for high-income or low-income bracket families.

P4 shared this sense of unfairness with P3, but he identified quality as the root of the need for change. He gives an interesting account of travelling on the Metro from the east to the west of the city (effectively from poor to more affluent suburbs), observing the schools neighbouring the stations, and noticing how the national test scores improve as the journey progresses. He explained this by emphasising the huge social division in Chile:

> There is geographic segmentation in terms of those that live here and those that live there, then this is a theme that it is self-evident, and everybody is measured in the same way.
>
> (11 December 2015)

He felt that, in education, measuring everybody equally is unfair and that we needed to be wise and recognise efforts made, especially in students who come from less privileged backgrounds.

P4's view provided an opportunity to observe a wider issue: Chilean education has contributed to social division and it has been used as a reference of social status, prosperity and social connections for family groups. The changes to sector two are aimed at bringing communities together and improving the quality of education for all.

Effectiveness of Government Policy

This section presents how these principals perceived governmental actions and their effectiveness as strategies for school improvement.

There is a concomitant view from P2, P3 and P4 that sees a disconnection between national expectations and the reality of working at ground level. For example, P2 was disappointed by the lack of preparation and training that the government provided for principals:

> I believe that these posts [principals' jobs] cannot be just given away, there should be accountability. I think, here in Chile, there is a lot of irresponsibility. A principal comes and sits in his[/her] office and does not have a clue what is happening outside it.
>
> (10 December 2015)

She continued, explaining that it was true that leadership teams have a support group, but there is no teamwork as they work in silos without direction. P2 identified rigour and dedication as key hallmarks for principals but stated that she believed that there were not many school leaders exhibiting such qualities. She saw the current situation as one of mismanagement and internships that do not serve the context in which principals work. For her, a principal should be fully involved with the school and its community. It is possible to say that P2 had identified a need for principals to have better training, targeted at the schools they serve. P2's frustration was with the ineffective actions of policy makers and local government to create approaches that led school leaders to improve leadership of their institutions.

P3 presented the same discontent. The Ministry of Education does not recognise his school as a Sixth Form, just a secondary school, despite their clear offer of A-Level equivalents. The ministry does not understand their cohort type (students who have been outside education for two years) and are measured by the same national standards as students who have been in education without interruption. The situation was exacerbated when the government decided on a nation-wide "traffic-light" strategy to assess the quality of education as per district area. This meant the schools' performance was classified as green for good schools, amber for satisfactory and red for underperforming. According to P3: "This school was the reddest of any school in the area, then unfortunately to us still we are measured with these [standardised] tests." In the end, he communicated that national assessment did not mean much to them as it did not reflect what the school achieved with its students.

P3 also showed his disapproval towards how the local government managed funding. They, according to him, do not invest directly into schools and it is not clear where the funding went:

> There are lots of [TV] documentaries where there were children who were extremely cold because they did not have heating provided to them, or they were not fed… So how are the municipalities managing funding that are destined to schools? (…) to me this is shameful.
>
> (09 December 2015)

The same concern was raised by P4 about assessment. The national indicators for the quality of education are not specific to the type of education the country delivers. Schools such as his are measured in the same format as a private or semi-private school when it comes to the type of student cohort.

In light of P3 and P4's approaches and their commonalities, it seems that the current testing system seeks to provide an overall indicator of performance of Chile's education system, i.e., it does not seem to highlight specific deficiencies in the system, but overall progress (or not) year on year. Given the current approach to tests - PSU (A Levels) and SIMCE (GCSE numeracy, literacy, Science and English) - where students are prepared for them and/or parents pay for extra provision, especially in the case of PSU. These two principals share the view that results will not vary significantly as schools with fewer resources will lose to schools with greater funding and parents that can afford for extra shadow education, i.e., tutoring. In their view, this defeats the purpose of assessment as a tool that delivered information about the quality of learning.

P1, on the other hand, was concerned with policy implementation overall in Chile, feeling that it seemed to be dictated by polls and issues linked to student protests. P1 has been involved with policy implementation at ministerial level, but not currently. He did feel that schools within sector one needed to play a role in supporting other schools by being models of good practice. They should be more supportive and proactive towards the overall education system in Chile and he was "very open to visits from anyone who might be interested in seeing what we are doing". His reflection showed a different perspective to P2, P3 and P4, which is relevant in that his positionality is leading a sector one school with different needs and challenges from the others as his institution represents students and families from upper middle-class and high-income social groups. As a school, they are not going to be subjected to the need for educational change unlike the others; they operate fairly independently.

The message above demonstrated that the private system does look after itself. Their provision enables small class sizes, better salaries and state of the art facilities that would not happen within the semi-private or state sector in Chile. Nonetheless, and although they perform well in national tests, their results are not significant enough to attain the PISA average. For example, P1's school has more funding, a different and selective student population and access to better training for their practitioners, which for most of sector two and sector three is impossible to replicate and, yet, the reality is that some schools within the state sector have matched the same PISA average scores as private schools such as

P1. This brings us back to the premise of perceived better provision that not only affects parents but, it seems, also principals.

Within this aim, all four principals demonstrate awareness of key issues affecting their schools and provide circumstantial accounts that go beyond their school's experiences. Their narratives show a discontent and misgiving towards policy makers' effectiveness and their perceived failure to implement changes that take into account school contexts or to recognise what the real issues are in the education system such as common national testing, appropriate training for principals and targeted funding. It could be said that these principals are articulate and prepared to express a personal opinion within the prevailing educational climate. They all also demonstrate resilience and the capacity to continue leading their institutions, regardless of external challenges. The premise here is that principals continue with their routine job within their organisations, ensuring they continue performing. There is an inward-looking approach for safety for the sake of students. This is due to the fact that changes are fast and persistent and with little information or support given.

Principals' Capacity to Lead and Influence Their Schools.

P1 shared that his main concern within instruction currently was the final year of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP), where students show motivation and engagement. However, when they move into the Chilean local curriculum with its didactic emphasis, despite being happy to come to school because their friends are there, they lose interest and passion for what the school offers them. He said that they seem to adapt quickly to the new system, however:

> They are pretty switched off in terms of engagement and that's very typical of the pre-adolescents and pre- and early adolescents in school everywhere and this is what project-based learning offers, that it has been discovered that it's a way to engage kids at that age.
>
> (07 December 2015)

P1 is committed to this pedagogic strategy, as he feels it gives students choice and the opportunity for meaningful collaboration with peers, combined with the teacher support for exploring and working on authentic real-world issues. He was hopeful that this approach would address student disengagement with at least some if not all of their subjects. Teachers might move with the methodology into Year 10 and Year 11 and keep students engaged well into their final two years, where school regains their attention as they are more mature, and the prospect of university starts looming:

> So, our main target it is going to be this middle area [i.e., Y8, Y9 and Y10]. So, we have the top and bottom are pretty successful, but it is this middle area needs serious re-tweaking.
>
> (07 December 2015)

There were no constraints in P1's discussion. There was a need for action focused on students' needs to reconnect with their education and it needed to happen as a matter of importance.

P1 has the capacity to enact change with determination, but caution. He was clear that there were undisputed needs to improve what was offered to these year groups. His observations yielded concern for its current state. It was not enough for students to come to school because of their peers. The school needed to offer a meaningful and effective programme of study. His leadership reflection showed strategic thinking when considering options. P1 was not willing to rush and recognises that. although the current national curriculum is not responsive enough, neither was the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme, which would have been the other obvious option for international schools.

P2's narrative was centred around the recognition that her involvement enabled her to identify areas for action. She was proud that she knew all her students and saw their progress year on year from pre-school to the present. She was able to visualise whole groups and provide an account of their strengths and weaknesses. To her, this knowledge was fundamental to her role in supporting them.

P2 talked about the pivotal role of teacher training and how this was something that she was fully involved with. If she offered workshops for teachers, it meant she was there with them. She learnt what they trained for and she could later on request them to apply new skills into the classroom context. She saw that her participation in training enabled her to better support teachers:

> I know what their weakness are, what it is they want to do and, perhaps, I could help. I have to be there listening to them and that takes time.
>
> (10 December 2015)

P2 also talked about students' long school hours. This is something that has always worried her: "It hurts my soul to see them eating here from the lunchboxes when they should be at home." However, she seized this opportunity and felt that, as this was the case, then it was necessary to use their time effectively. This did not mean more of the same lessons but to enrich their learning experience via special sessions that the school called Curriculum Workshops. She decided to break Y10 and Y11 groups into different, smaller mixed groups. Each group attends a workshop that lasts three months. She monitors the quality of and attendance at each session and ensures staff gets the support needed to deliver them. She was proud of her 'stage not age' approach, where students meet other students from different groups. According to her, this helped students develop self-confidence and a greater sense of identity. She explained the strategy in detail:

> I have had a variety [of workshops]. For example, in a day there are language labs, others are body development related to theatre and the arts. Every two years we change. We don't have art [anymore], [but] we have debate, philosophy and in this way, we continue changing.
>
> (10 December 2015)

She continued by referring to the school's educational project that "has to do with family relations, to belong and feel safe". Students get to know their peers, and this is what she believes adds value to their education. This was further emphasised when she talked about the external high-stake assessment - SIMCE (GCSE). "What is the point of being asked for SIMCE scores if our children later on cannot survive a year at university and feel they [don't] have enough competencies [to succeed]?" She reflected further by indicating that a child will be grateful, perhaps not now, of what s/he received in this school when looking back and that is what she cared about.

P3's actions stemmed, according to him, from being a classroom teacher for three years serving students before an opportunity opened for a leadership position as Learning Director. He worked for a year in that post, the year after the principal left, before being offered the role of school principal. He was conscious of his rapid ascent into school leadership and talked about being able to complement his new role as a school leader with his time as a teacher:

> To be a teacher of the same school [I lead now], it gives me the possibility to stand in front of my colleagues, understanding, though, that what I did [originally] in the classroom was of quality. Then once you are progressing and you go along complementing different posts, for example in this case, principal; I know what the needs were inside that classroom. Then, nowadays, as principal, I can, from the curriculum management, affect student learning. How? Supporting practitioners' training, buying concrete materials, ensuring that the national curriculum is covered. And for that, [I can] also provide teachers the tools [they need], [and the] technological tools to meet students' needs.
>
> (09 December 2015)

P3 was in his second year as principal. He believed that the effective management of school resources would enable him to create projects for teachers to improve the quality of instruction. He also reflected on his experience so far and the fact that he was a teacher primarily and that this has influenced his approach. He said he was committed to his own continuous professional development focused, currently, on school management. He talked about his strategic achievements this year. He said that his school team believed that they needed to create different types of learning, hence this year they have put in place projects based on food, lesson quality and curriculum change and training to ensure teachers acquire pertinent skills to support students' needs in those aspects.

P4 shared the same impetus for provision for students and teachers. Firstly, he highlighted his reflections on the state of the school when he arrived. There were substantial differences between what they offered in the school and what the world of work was asking from students. The reason was related to infrastructure. The school provision was outdated compared to those in use in big companies. This posed a challenge for him and the school community which is focused on the teaching of theory rather than the practical outcomes. It was from this need that the school created a dual track education where private companies delivered the technical training and the school provided support and theory:

> The students go for a week to a company and learn the technical part, which is supervised by the way, we don't let them go just like that, but, we supervise them, and we try for this to be a rotation plan and they go through the content that we want the student to experience.
>
> (11 December 2015)

This approach is to ensure the students are fully supported during this work experience. He admitted that there were learning gains for the school. The students were expected to have competencies that the school did not provide because it did not work with the same dynamics as private companies, such as teamwork. As a result of this, "our methodology, our way of working, our manner of confronting issues, had a fundamental change". To him, this was a helpful realisation, but he knew that he needed to get staff motivated to embrace the classroom changes needed to better prepare students for this new way of working. As a result of this new curriculum, there had been considerable changes. He explained:

> Many things changed, these are changes that are still taking place in this school, but at the same moment, which is often incomprehensible for the rest of the community, the staff [I refer to] … but facing this [the question is] why do we make schools? Are they made to teach students or hire teachers? I think there is a different between them both, being both very important, but I believe that schools are for students, to make them grow from a cultural point of view, from a humanity stance with all the needs this implies.
>
> (11 December 2015)

It is here that he advocated the need to engage with staff by motivating and establishing dialogues that facilitated the necessary changes. He talked about his passion and obduracy as key tools in achieving what he thinks is right. "I get into a topic and I go for it", he signalled. His conviction was that no process will have an effect if it is not understood by everyone. In turn, teachers will promote this need for change to students. He said that it was vital to constantly reassure teachers and be transparent. It was the case that some thought they would lose their job as a result of the new changes so, in cases such as this, reassurance cannot be underestimated. He was conscious that this was the second year of

this process and it was still important to legitimise the changes. He described the whole process as growing and still in its first stage. Next year would be different as there would be more courses on offer to all grades. He was confident and positive in his narrative and manner.

The circumstances and strategic episodes the principals describe above are different and significant for their schools. Each principal seems to be at a turning point in their organisations. The above narratives show an emphasis and focus on the quality of teachers and their teaching. The principals identify them as the key recipients of their actions for any change to have an effect on the student experience. They are all student-centred and their vision is to ensure that their schools are fully focused on significant – not incremental - change as a tool for improvement. It is possible to say that their role is centred on continuously monitoring what is currently on offer and constantly seeking out areas of vulnerability to fix. For this they rely on their observations, experience and knowledge of their institutions, especially when it comes to the curricula on offer and how this affects their students. These principals seem to be proactive individuals who, once having assumed the influential role of principal, do not hesitate to use this role to enact their own vision and direct all their efforts to make it a reality.

Research Question Two: How do the principals' views of their role and influence compare with wider current conceptions of school leadership?

The principals were asked about any leadership model they felt inspired to adopt and implement in their schools. Here, they all shared a common element in that their perception of leadership did not show a full commitment to any given approach, something that denoted that the whole organisation was run with a clear direction that went beyond simple management. However, they all felt inclined to support the importance of leading organisations effectively, but all from their own positionality as individuals within their organisational experience, cultures and realities as schools in different sectors. They all ensured that their actions played a part in their institutions, one that placed the students at the centre.

P1 was committed to improving early secondary years to serve the student learning effectively, he did not want to the obvious transition route into the International Baccalaureate offer of the MYP (Middle Years Programme) framework. He looked for something different that appealed to students and followed on the good work done at primary. The students lost motivation at KS3 according to him. He believed that their current age, teaching strategies and local Chilean national knowledge-based curriculum affected their engagement and enthusiasm. Nonetheless, he did not see that the MYP offered the flexibility to reconnect with students either but was another further restriction on teachers' methodology and student learning experience. He was faced with two

extreme models and neither offered adequate choice and freedom for the students. He reflected:

> [it is important to give students] (…) at this age a choice that they can elect for a project to allow them to collaborate with their peers who are the only people they care about; adults are not exactly high up in their list of priorities, except the adults helping them, you know coach the team, work with their peers, they take on an authentic real world problem to work towards, they produce something in their project and they present their final results to an audience.
>
> (07 December 2015)

P1 was the one with the most international experience. His views offered an indication that his priorities lay not in specific leadership models, he simply saw his role as key to the good functioning of the schools and it can be said that he acted on this. His claims denoted awareness of acting on his role by delivering guidance when it came to leading school conglomerates. His understanding of coaching as supporting others to lead showed that trust is important for him to enable institutions to grow. He also talked about the idea of sustainability and referred to "succession" showing his awareness of the importance for schools to have in place continuity of processes and plans at the top level of administration.

P3 offered a more committed connection to a leadership model:

> Yes, look there are different models. (…) There is one model that calls my attention and I see myself reflected in it that is the Subtle Management (*Gestion Sutil*). Subtle Management is centred by putting the person at the centre, so for a teacher to give one hundred percent, he has to be committed to his work, he has to be a teacher who has a different characteristic, resilient, who is able to succeed despite adversities in the classroom. (…) If I don't see him [as a principal] if he does not see a preoccupation from the leadership, the principal, the most probable thing is that that teacher does not see himself considered. Subtle Management takes the teacher and puts him in the centre and tries to give him support about how he feels today. (…) Subtle Management allows conversation and dialogue on the different spheres of a person, here we are as persons, we spend a lot of time here and if we don't keep an eye on each other, sadly we will become cold and, in this way, [as a result] I will only have a teacher that will do his contract but will not give a 100%.
>
> (09 December 2015)

P3 also added:

> The principal has to be an active agent within school, because this allows closeness, if you get closer and (…) [teachers] feel that they can count on somebody who trusts their decisions, they have nothing else to do, [they would say:] "Good that the principal listened to me. Isn't that good that the principal listened to my needs or listened to my problems? I know I will find some solution."

(09 December 2015)

P3's overall assessment yielded the following conclusion:

> If I had a different type of leadership, I would not be bothered about anything else and the teachers will be queuing by 5 o'clock to leave for home. Here the teachers always stay longer because they enjoy what they do, but dependent on how one (the principal) stimulates them positively and explaining why… because they are very good.
>
> (09 December 2015)

The three quotations reflect that, to him, leadership is vital in ensuring teachers are able to go beyond expectations, especially as the school operates within demanding circumstances. His actions seem to enable practitioners to offer only the very best by working constantly with them and making them realise that they matter as individuals and their role is key to the success of the whole organisation. This recognition of his role is further supported by his belief that principals need to be active participants in this process of close relations. There is also the implication that this needs to be a genuine act; a real commitment to listen and motivate individuals to believe in themselves and that this will have an impact on students. He also talks about how a different leadership model would not yield the same results. It seems that "Subtle Management" (Majluf, 2011) has struck a chord with his strategic leadership; it offers the tactics and vision he sees will work for him and the school. However, it is a model that he feels attracted to that has provided him with an understanding that supports his already existing approach to enable others to grow and continue their jobs in the best possible circumstances and that he sees his actions as fundamental in guaranteeing this.

P2 had a similar narrative of involvement and action, but not centred on a leadership model:

> I am going to be very honest with you, I think about authority…I have a strong character, I believe that they (teachers) have realised that I am a very consequential person, I will ask no-one to do something I have not done myself. So, if I am here, tidying up the chairs, picking up papers, hosing the football ground because we have a ceremony the day after, I won't ask that of anyone. This can have costs, because you get tired as time passes, you would feel that you would prefer to stay at home or would arrive late or perhaps to do an errand during the time you are expected to be in school. I am not, I have promised to myself that I am not going to ask anyone what I have not done myself, therefore I have always experienced every task in this school.
>
> (10 December 2015)

P2 continued:

> I am in the canteen, I supervise lunch hour, I am at the door and I am not pretending to be a victim here, but the point is if I don't know how the receptionist works because I am not there, how I am going to know about it?

> The same can be said of dinner time. How I am going to know if I am not there? Therefore, I am finding myself that I am involved in everything. So, if they feel that I am there, authority starts from there.
>
> (10 December 2015)

I asked P2 about a specific model of leadership, but her answers return to the above, however she also added that it is important that a school principal needs to value the school and its educational project, which in her case is rooted in Catholicism:

> [As principal] I believe that it has to be key, almost innate, to care about the school, to care about the congregation and to care about its [educational] project but also (…) [the relationship works] because there is a mutual openness from the congregation, the trust that you are the first [secular] principal is not to be ignored.
>
> (10 December 2015)

She was appreciative of the trust the school's religious congregation has put in her to lead the school and, although she considers herself a Catholic, it is clear that being secular has enabled her to bring a more down-to-earth slant to the school management.

For P2, leadership experience is based on her commitment to her school's vision for education. She understands it and sees its validity. Her leadership actions seek to model behaviours for others in order to encourage participation and involvement with the school's needs from the top down. Her we-are-all-in-this-together approach stems from her strong work ethic, faith and the pride she feels in being given the opportunity to lead the school. Her actions go beyond the job's expectations and she is in her comfort zone delivering leadership by modelling at all levels of the organisation. When she refers to authority, she does not signify a punitive role, but rather as a figure of respect that teachers trust and turn to for guidance.

P4's leadership is different in that he has been in the role longer, in different institutions, however he also works for a religious organisation. He has received some leadership training and is aware of the importance that leadership has in schools:

> Well I think that, there are a lot of [leadership styles]. Currently they have names for the types of leaderships. One of the things that catches my attention is the distributed leadership type. Where in one way or another we can have the capacity that the one that it is next to you is doing what you need without having to check on them. I think that in this system, there is also an issue of trust, of the teams [in schools].
>
> (11 December 2015)

P4 also explained how the above works:

> Our vision here is to provide opportunities to students, firstly, as I say … at the beginning to be able to insert them in the world of work and at the same time, to offer them opportunities to be able to have a life plan, that grows via their education.
>
> (11 December 2015)

P4 provided a concrete example of how he worked on the above:

> I came to make [this school] more vocational; that was my objective, this is what I have done in the other school and obviously when we got here at the beginning of the year, there were lots of things that were not favourable - people (teachers and parents) opposing us; this is because they did not know us (…) My target was to present a project that had perspective, that goes towards a point we could define and, as we've been working together getting to know each other, we have been working well.
>
> (11 December 2015)

He acknowledged the difficulty of the process, but he understood that the vision of the school needed communication and support. He was aware that early setbacks do not mean failure, but rather were to be expected. P4 moved from an "I" to a "we" narrative, not to denote importance, but to show accountability. He had a vision, but he could not do it alone and his plan was to communicate and gain supporters amongst parents and staff. I noticed that he had a courteous, hospitable and attentive demeanour, which helped to ensure support for the new school vision, but he made the point that it needed to have concrete results with visible impact on students' lives.

All in all, the four principals value their role as school leaders, and they believe that it is significant to the success of their institutions. There is no evidence that they adhere to strict leadership models or that they follow rigorous criteria delivered to them by their school boards. In fact, they all value the institutions they work for within the overall conglomerates.

Research Question Three: What are the perceived consequences of each principal's actions for student learning opportunities and outcomes?

P4's actions were centred on students' employment prospects after their final four years of education, with a dual provision of in-school pastoral and theoretical support and on-the-job training. According to P4, the results showed an enhancement of students' skills, such as teamwork. Students also had the opportunity to undertake meaningful work experience that led to a level of professional knowledge that overtook that of their teachers in some cases. Students had the experience of going to school, to work and of receiving a small wage. Most of these students were also opting to continue their higher

education studies. This was a success that P4 acknowledged. They were positive results for the school, not recognised in the league tables.

According to him, he had one single objective in his mind. He came with a mandate from the congregational board to change things based on his experience of vocational colleges. When he came to the school, he explained, he instantly recognised what was needed to change. Therefore, the first two weeks in his school role was to communicate and explain the need for this change.

His actions were to motivate colleagues by saying to them: "Let us try it, this is my project as well. I would like you to accompany me on this (…) I don't come with bad intentions; I don't come to disrupt anything… let us see what happens." He said that the staff were still doubtful about the new programme because of student behaviour around punctuality and attendance, i.e., their levels of responsibility and maturity. He responded: "But, let us try, because it is us who are not motivating students [now], but let us see if there is an external motivation" for them with this new system.

He also discussed his relationship with private industry. As a principal, he had to visit these organisations to enlist potential work experience providers to build up the curriculum programme. This required a different role from the one normally expected of principals in Chile. Before starting the programme, it was all about "preparing the ground of how you entice companies to participate in this system". In order to manage this challenge, they instigated a system of "mutual cooperation". This is under the understanding that the private companies needed quality individuals and the school needed the industry's modern and updated infrastructure. According to P4, this generated a synergy that had enabled the school to move forward with their plans.

P1 found himself in a similar position when he started working in his current school in that he had a strong mandate to introduce the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma programme. He was highly experienced having worked for the IB as a TOK (Theory of Knowledge) examiner and led the programme in another school for twelve years. P1's brief from his current school board was to "improve the overall academic level of the school". The overall state in P4's school, he said, was of a well-established KS3 with a Primary Years Programme (PYP) Framework and KS5 with IB Diploma Programme and local A-Levels being currently delivered. He celebrated specifically the achievements in KS3 for the school conglomerate:

> A very important success has been in the primary years where we've moved to a totally different methodology; a constructivist methodology moved away from disciplines to transdisciplinary lines of enquiry… unit[s] of enquiry. We've got the PYP approved in two of the schools and (…) in [city district] where [it is] on the verge of being approved in two schools.
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KS3 was presenting the biggest challenges for P1. He was researching how to make it more appealing drawing on practices borrowed from the IB Primary Years Programme. He expressed doubts about the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP):

> We've basically falling in love with another idea, which is actually closer to the PYP model "on steroids" for the kids between 5th grade and 1st *medio* (KS3) and this is basically project-based learning. I just went to visit schools (..) [abroad] absolutely amazing (…) Finland [has] decided to ditch subjects and go for project-based learning, so the problem with the MYP is that although it has interdisciplinary work, the IB's become more to my view a bit of corset on schools.
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> (07 December 2015)

P1's interpretation was that the IB via the MYP had become restrictive for schools. They had their own way of doing things. P1 believed that given this scenario, they would still obtain their MYP accreditation, but he felt strongly that the school would also move in a different direction.

He talked also about staff and how to involve them when going through a change phase: "I think that (…) too many of the staff when I first arrived [said:] "What is this IB thing?" His view highlighted a personal belief that in a management job "you should be listening and tuning into what is going on". He said that he surfed the Internet and was constantly providing his heads of the different schools within the group with educational articles to read as a form of professional development.

Strategically for teachers, P1 talked about how he also engaged with them at a professional level with a special focus on practice. He talked about video lesson observations supported by a multidisciplinary team feeding back collaboratively. In this way he sought actively to improve practice, but also to enhance transparency between the leadership team and staff. He added: "I could have [the school's windows with] curtains, but the school does not have curtains because transparency is key to us". This was also a metaphorical reflection that indicated how much he valued openness, closeness and support in his institution for all.

P2 also reflected on her beginnings and her relationship with the school board and staff when dealing with organisational change. She felt that she always had the initiative to do the things she felt needed doing. When she was academic director, she shared that she was always listened to by the principal in charge (who happened to be a nun), something that did not happen before for others. "Ultimately, the last word resides with the principal, but there was trust in me and my proposals", she said that now, as a principal, she has not relinquished her role as academic director, this is meant that the quality of teaching and learning is her core business, something she saw as fully connected to her principalship role.

She felt that she has never lost contact with staff and kept herself in tune with what was needed and what was developing in the school. This was fundamental to her and staff played a big role when it came to a mutual awareness and learning:

> If nowadays there is a new programme for Y8 and Y9, I am the first one to know what is happening; if I don't know, I, myself, go to the teacher and together, with this teacher, we feedback to each other, and we exchange ideas. This is not about the teacher or the coordinator, it is about all of us.

(10 December 2015)

At this point, she also mentioned the quality of teachers and how important this was for the school to progress. She was emphatic that she could tell what the teachers were doing, how much they knew, what methodology they deployed in the classroom. She said that in other schools, teachers were not ready for their role. She felt that she could talk to teachers about their delivery by working out new ways of challenging students with different questions, so they can think more. To P2, this is not something that happened in other institutions. Ultimately, she was strong in her view: "I think teacher training is very bad. There are lots of shortcomings."

P2 was honest that her role did not involve financial administration. This was a positive situation as it allowed her to concentrate on the quality of instruction and give a greater focus to pastoral care. As she said: "That gives me a lot of time and it eliminates a lot of responsibility." Reciprocally, the school board did not set her goals. There was a clear demarcation of responsibilities between the two sides. She believed that this was not the case in all schools and that this was a limiting factor for them.

P3's views concurred with P2's in relation to the role of the school principal, but with a focus on the actions of the leadership team. He felt strongly that the leadership team should also be in the classroom. The idea was not to be an unknown individual to students. Namely, for P3, a school principal needed to be an "active agent within the school". This built close relationships with students as it was important for them to feel that they genuinely matter to the principal and the larger community, especially when the circumstances for these young people can be harrowing. P1 explained that any student (he constantly referred to them as a "child" in Spanish) is known by everyone in the school because the school's overall purpose is to always support and work with this young individual. P3 explained that this has led to actions such as:

> If the child needs something, the school is in support of that student, and we talk about material things. We are talking about how many times the parents have no means to pay for electricity or water so that, immediately, if this need arises,

> the child may be sent to work. Then the school reacts by providing financial support so that the child can come to school.
>
> (09 December 2015)

The above is an example of extreme moral purpose; it denotes actions that show principals and staff going above and beyond to ensure, for example, that students attend school regularly. Furthermore, P3 admitted that this was a regular event in his school.

P3 also highlighted the importance of close interactions with community members. He said that when there is a clear presence with effective lines of communication, help can be offered in a timely fashion. He expressed the following idea about his daily job: "I can tell you that 80% of my work every day is talking to people." This included parents, guardians and teachers.

All the principals interviewed show an understanding that their position involves the need to change things in their institutions. They all understand the mandate given to them because of their role and act to create strategies focused on quality of instruction. A commonality to their implementations is the need to connect at all levels. Their comments also show that they want students to enjoy their school and their education. However, it is teachers who are the object of their actions in order for change to have an effect on students. From P1's need for a new Middle Years Programme, to P2's personal involvement in workshops due to long school days, to P3's extreme professional actions and to P4's dual track programme - they all ultimately want students to reconnect with their school and their education.

Although they talk about challenges, it seems that challenges are not a problem. They are part of a school's normal events. They are confident that things need to change to ensure adequate progress and care for all students. These principals show that their role means they are in a position to implement new strategies and programmes to enhance provision for students that are not linked to high-stake tests but that go further, leading to a provision that is about new opportunities. However, they do not rely solely on their 'principal' title. They feel that their own education and their personal teaching and professional experience afford them the reputation, trust and confidence to lead their institutions. The implications of this are linked to what it is already known internationally about successful school principals' practices that enable their school to perform and achieve, regardless of circumstances for their students.

Research Question Four: How do principals engage with Chilean government policies to serve student learning and outcomes?

This research question seeks to uncover the relationship between the principals and government policies and its effect on their schools. The factors that came

out of the research were linked to national assessment policy and educational reform policy linked to student activism and pressure groups.

National Assessment Policy

When reflecting on how these principals were able to make a judgement about the success of their schools, P1 explained that since his arrival the school, now a conglomerate, had moved from quite a bleak picture to be a highly regarded school. However, he said: "We are not [at] the top (…) and we don't pretend to be schools competing with" other prestigious schools. He added that their fees were smaller, and they did not hire staff from abroad; most of the staff was local, but bilingual and capable of delivering in English when needed.

In terms of national tests, P1 affirmed that his schools were defined by consistent good results when "externally assessed, be that at SIMCE (GCSE) level or in the PSU, the university entrance exam, and I think that it's turned around the pride the kids feel for the school when they leave". He added, nonetheless, there were other, more qualitative, factors that he valued such as students' views of what made their stay in the school special, with students often praising the atmosphere and the positive relations between students and teachers. According to P1, this was not something that happened in every single school. He analysed student feedback by saying: "They [don't] feel second-class anymore."

I asked about the IB Exams and PSU and how students managed the pressure, with both sets of examinations taking place in November. P1 recognised the impact on student wellbeing a few years ago and that it was the case that students opted to put their efforts into the local examinations. P1 came up with the solution to move the IB assessment to the May session, i.e., as for northern hemisphere schools. This, P1 said, has alleviated the burden for students.

Another set of exams in the Chilean context is SIMCE (GCSE) and P1's view was that it was a high-stakes test that provided useful information; "I think it is good to have a thermometer every so often" but, as the test now happened every year, it was losing its informative influence to become instead a tool with which schools were being held to account. He was frank about the reason: "I think this is the American phenomenon of overkill of assessment."

I asked him to explain how he was dealing with the strict national curriculum in Chile and P1's project to implement a more project-based approach given that local national tests measure learning based purely on national curriculum content. He was emphatic:

> You can do it. You can… for instance with the PYP (KS2 – KS3), even though you are working with units of enquiry, … we obviously have to do those, we have to map those units of enquiry so that the learning objectives that are part of the national curriculum are included. Ideally, we will do the national curriculum-plus [in KS4]. The same thing is happening now, we have one pilot project going (…)

> [on in one of our schools.] Because, basically, we have the most gung-ho management team [there] and it is a smaller school, so for a pilot project it was the ideal place to start. Just yesterday, I was watching a huge bunch of teachers in this classroom, all sorts of mapping out different learning objectives on the [Chile] national curriculum on different subject areas building them into projects.
>
> (07 December 2015)

He was excited about the above project and he did not see any negative effect on final school results. For P1, it was the same, but better when it came to student engagement.

P2's is also a consistently highly performing school within the semi-private sector. The year I visited the school came first nationally within sector two in PSU. When asked about the school's performance, she explained that it was not her priority to focus on league tables. For P2, her satisfaction was for students to have the tools to succeed and promote a lifestyle that was family orientated. She was very frank about the school results this year - she does not know how they got this outcome. They described themselves as a humble institution inspired by the 'Sacred Family' (a Christian term to refer to Mary, Joseph and Jesus as a holy family):

> I do not know why we appeared somewhere, I do not know why, because maybe they started a ranking. They call us from the magazine *Qué Pasa*, we fill out the form, the ranking, but it is not the intention of the school or the congregation, nor is it our character to boast or to promote this.
>
> (10 December 2015)

She added that in relation to SIMCE (GCSE), it did not offer anything to the school and they also were not obliged to do it, which is why she opted not to do it. She explained that any average school could do well at it as it was very basic according to her. She developed this further:

> [SIMCE] is a test that they apply from Arica to Punta Arenas ("from Land's End to John O'Groats") from the poorest extremes to the richer extremes and I tell you that it is not a sample of how good a school is, also because you can prepare for it. But regardless of that I am very sure, it is not much more. And it's the same with the PSU.
>
> (10 December 2015)

She described PSU and SIMCE as examinations that apply to all students without considering any differences and resources available to schools. For SIMCE preparation she explained that there were schools where they provided SIMCE hours, where they hired special teachers and there were special textbooks that local publishers promoted. She was emphatic that she did not do that, and her approach applied equally to the PSU. She said to sum up: "If we do well, good, and if we do badly, so be it."

She acknowledged that, in general, when it came to school results, they did not look at individual students, but rather at the overall picture.

P2 also talked about other internal forms of assessment employed by the congregation she worked for. Now that they did not deliver SIMCE, they used a "*Prueba de la Calidad de los Aprendizajes*" (Quality of Learning Assessment) which can be used in all subjects, but she was honest in explaining that they had not yet worked in detail with it.

Despite all of the above, P2 was clear that her school was a quality institution. The reason had to do with the need to progress and, here, P2 came back to the quality of instruction. She focused on teachers and their ability to deliver. For P2, to recognise gifted teachers and support others when, for example, parents have a poor perception of the quality of their teaching, was essential to the school's progress. Furthermore, she said that it was important to believe that children, in this school, can achieve more. This was associated with the reality of the area and the social group they served - a prosperous suburb with professional parents:

> There are no priority or vulnerable children here. All children have access to technological elements, to a good diet, to a stable home. While it is true, in the emotional part it could be a bit more complex and we know that this may trigger something in the children, they have the basics. They have a cultural capital that is not insignificant, they have professional parents, working mums who motivate them, so, I think the basis has been to take advantage of that and know that they can do more.
>
> (10 December 2015)

When I asked her to clarify who was putting in such limits, she said it was the teachers. She believed that progress for students was not related to intelligence, but to their dedication and perseverance. P2 said that she had seen students who struggled with reading in Year 1 or found it hard to transition through the key stages and, yet, they had been able to prosper. P2 associated this result with gifted and dedicated practitioners:

> I believe that is fundamental, to believe in students, to believe in what they can do. And on the other hand, yes, the school is giving opportunities to a child and having staff that are perfectly adequate for the job; I believe that one has to really bet on (…) [teachers] that one sees with certain characteristics, assign [them] more hours and here you see responsible people, but you have to really bet on them.
>
> (10 December 2015)

P2's emphasis on there being no excuse for a student not to achieve shows a focus on process and the day-to-day experience of students in school. For P2, if students were taught properly with teachers doing their very best, school results would reflect that.

P3 experienced the opposite reality to P2's school, with a different cohort of students and a very different district profile. P3 explained that they served students who had left school for a number of years yet, within national tests, they were measured in exactly the same way as any other school: private, semi-private or state institutions. There was no consideration given to the diversity of issues and challenges faced by his students, so they could not compete with students who had had consistency of delivery, extra provision and whose teachers had the time to deliver their curriculum content for a year. Instead, they had just four months to ensure students were ready. Under these circumstances, his results were not focused on standardised national tests, but were "more on the bond that is generated within the classroom and the bond that the child has with the wider community". He was explicit that the fact that students came to and stayed in school, that they finished their year and performed well with their internal assessment, was indicative of the quality of instruction in the school.

When he talked about SIMCE, he lamented that, again, as a school they underperformed. When inspected by *Agencia de la Calidad de la Educación* (Chilean school inspection agency), 60% of their analysis was centred around SIMCE. Inspectors came to visit the school for three weeks where they observed lessons and met members of the school community. And, yet, despite hearing successful outcomes relating to classroom instruction and pastoral care, these aspects did not influence the overall assessment of this organisation. P3 said: "It is impossible for us to get out of this categorization that we have as a school." In the end, P3 decided that his school was about ensuring that students do not desert education and that this was their main focus, something not measured in national tests. He defined school success in the following terms:

> When the child comes from his townships, he comes with a tremendous armour, because he has to be valid in front of his neighbourhood peers. But imagine the work that he does, because once he enters the school, he leaves all that outside and returns to his basic condition as student. (…) it is his nature to be a student, to be a child who has to enjoy school, he has to be with peers. And this is seen, when they leave [the school every day] as they put on the armour and reach their community, where there are shootings, where there are assaults, there is crime, where there are drugs. Then, tell me, how can a child who decides to be here not be brave? In front of all the prejudices of his environment, where it is frowned upon that he decides to study.
>
> (09 December 2015)

P3's impassioned description sought to highlight that the school's success needed to be acknowledged and recognised differently by the Ministry of Education. The current state of school assessment was leaving the school behind – and, with that, the students too.

P4 has a similar cohort of students to P3 – a school in a non-affluent and high-risk zone, but, P4's students have not been out of the school system. In P4's school, students learn a trade that enables them to leave school with clear job prospects. P4 shared P3's analysis that the current key performance indicators (KPI), i.e. national tests, for Chilean Education were not specific enough for the range of types of education delivered in Chile. Schools receive funding for students on-roll, regardless of the type of cohort, school sector or curriculum or vocational or academic stream. This is something that P4 felt needed to be reviewed by the people in charge.

When asked about the quality of his school, he said: "Let's see, there are things that tell us that we are [a] good school, [in] some indicators. And other indicators tell us that we are [a] bad school." To this, P4 explained that he is focused on what they do well within the school. P4 explained that historically, the great majority of his students did not continue into higher education choosing instead to go straight to work, but they had noticed, since the running of the dual programme over the last two years, a significant number had opted to continue their studies at university or college level. He mentioned that some students also continued working to pay for post-graduate courses to improve their employability as the world of work demanded increasing specialisation. Therefore, for P4, his school delivered meaningful vocational education and the initiatives in place were not only effective but also ground-breaking in the wider Chilean context. As a result of this, the Ministry of Education had demonstrated an interest in what the school was doing:

> Today, the ministry was precisely trying to come here to see how we were doing it and to be able to have a standard, with our contribution and that of many others, of what dual teaching is, especially in schools where they do not have many resources to be able to have the technology inside the classroom.
>
> (11 December 2015)

That said, P4 continued to highlight the current unfairness of the system and he hoped for action from the legislative system to resolve this. P4's school made a meaningful provision for vulnerable students through vocational education. This was the case for all schools with vocational courses in Chile. He believed that these students should be given free access to higher education for them to build up a strong professional profile. These students deserved the attention of policy makers.

In relation to the PSU, he defined it as an unfair way in which to place students within higher education. However, P4 indicated that the government had a pilot project for a small group of schools called PACE (*Programa de Acompañamiento Acceso Efectivo a la Educación Superior* or Effective Access Programme for Higher Education) (Mineduc, 2019c) led by the Ministry. This scheme allowed 15% of his students to opt for free higher education without PSU scores. He valued this strategy as it fitted his school needs and this percentage

represented the relative number of his former students currently pursuing their further studies.

For SIMCE, he felt that it was positive that it had evolved, but it was an instrument that measured the academic stream, not vocational education, as there were substantial differences between the type of reading expected for students in private education and those in his school. He summed up the whole discussion: "Things have not worked out here yet. I imagine that there is more pressure, in any case, in the other sectors, but we, meanwhile, are doing our thing."

When reading the principals' narratives, there is a gap between what they do in their institutions and what policy makers expect in terms of national tests. P1 and P2's schools achieve beyond expectations in national examinations, i.e., quantitively, they remain as consistently performing entities. However, they neither show a marked preoccupation with national tests nor any commitment to league tables. Rather, they demonstrate a focus on enhancing the day-to-day quality of instruction and student experience within their schools. P3 and P4 share the same view about national tests and their impact on the daily life of their schools. As national instruments of school performance, they do not provide an accurate picture of the successes that they felt were evident to them in their schools. Therefore, they tended to ignore them, concentrating instead on what their own vision, strategies and programmes delivered.

Educational Reform Policy and Students Activism

The above aim seeks to discern how these principals deal with the student protests, school occupations and barricades and the government's new policy implementation for dismantling sector two.

P1 was critical of how the government was responding to current events, suggesting that making decisions based on public opinion polls was not a good start for drawing up legislation. His view was that eliminating sector two's fees to strengthen mainstream education was making private education more appealing to parents. Given this potential scenario, P1 said that policy makers should concentrate their efforts to strengthen public education by investing in it.

P1's analyses covered the full Chilean landscape with a bird's-eye view and gave a reflection that denoted awareness and a considered understanding of current issues. His overall assessment was given to the student movement itself:

> The fact that this [student] movement became a bit of tidal wave has made for a quite a bit of zigzagging in public policy and not the best decisions in many cases. But on the other hand, at least education is … everyone agrees that education is a central issue and that was not the case before people were … I

> don't know whatever… health and security and another things education was not very much on top.
>
> (07 December 2015)

P2 explained that, above all, the student movement did have any effect on her school. She recognised that it was important to draw attention to issues and the student movement had achieved this. Her school did not experience strikes, but the events did cause them to question their full-day school provision, where they had previously simply provided more of the same; more English or more maths. This motivated her to re-think the curriculum and the organisation of the school year into three terms to shorten the teaching segment periods and enable assessments with less content. She acknowledged the strain that this was causing to students. Hence, she also decided to incorporate enrichment courses: workshops that were more appealing to students such as sports, drama, dance and choir. P2 said that the need for educational change was always present, but with social media networks, students were able to come together and build a movement. However, she also had a strong message: "There are things that I find exaggerated and out of tune and I believe that unless you improve the quality of the teachers, this movement will not succeed."

P3 shared P2's view that the student movement enabled education to be placed at the centre of national priorities. It was as if the blindfold had been taken off Chile's eyes and the country began to notice that education was "sadly (…) very segmented". P3 felt that if this movement had not occurred, nothing would have changed. He celebrated the capacity of young people to organise themselves via social media: "They can clearly bring a country to its knees and that happened in Chile."

P3 described that the call for the students to strike was very much sector specific. Those in the private sector did not become involved nor did they need to, they enjoy a degree of comfort that, he felt, should equally exist in mainstream education.

P3 also linked the student movement with his own school intention to strengthen student voice via their student council:

> We have intended it to be a democratic student centre and focused on the needs of the classmates, so they have spaces where they meet and also go through courses giving information, something that was not previously done.
>
> (09 December 2015)

P3 showed sympathy and support for the student movement and their actions in Chile. He believed that they brought a degree of awareness that did not exist before and this would benefit everyone. P4 shared P3's view on the relevance of current changes brought about by the action of students, emphasising the

power they had to make the country stop and listen. This was an achievement as, until now, government organisations were not used to such actions by young people. P4 talked about the levels of injustice in the country and said: "I believe that the students woke up first, then the people and the workers." And, in the end, people had had enough. However, he offered an analysis about his own worldview of the current social Chilean climate:

> I believe that in all systems there is a social stratification and maybe that is absolutely legitimate, if we measure it in terms of the efforts, of the projects... I'm not so deluded to think of a system where we all live the same, I think it would be boring, too, so here is a system that has those characteristics, in the pyramidal. For example, most of the world has a religion and religions are pyramidal, it obeys a little to our way of life, but here in particular it has been abused. It has been really abused.
>
> (11 December 2015)

P4 identified that tolerance had been tested to the limit within the country. He did not seek radical changes in his narrative when talking about national events, but a recognition that there were not enough meaningful and fair opportunities for young people to succeed. He also talked about his mistrust for some religious institutions. This is perhaps down to revelations about the sexual abuses committed by members of religious organisations which came to light during the time the interview took place. And, yet, he had a balanced view about the government:

> Nowadays the efforts go (…) [towards education and health], that side, finally the government understood and, regardless of political colours, any government will understand that education is a time bomb. If you do not solve it today, this will explode at any moment when you least expect it. So, I think it's a topic that today is advancing well.
>
> (11 December 2015)

The principals demonstrate awareness, insight and involvement with the current situation in Chile. They display a balanced view about the issues and exhibit a sympathetic approach towards the current conditions of the Chilean education. Nevertheless, despite the complex circumstances that surround them, they continue managing their institutions with a "business as usual approach", ensuring that learning continues, unhindered by external events outside their school domain. P2 was the only principal directly affected by the student movement and she was inspired to make changes in her curriculum which led to the creation of skills-based workshop. The Chilean educational climate does influence their thinking, actions and support for relevant issues, however their capacity to lead and continue their individual strategic plans are not unduly affected by it. External events can be seen to enhance rather than unduly disrupt their professional trajectory, serving to reaffirm their views that schools need to constantly examine their focus, especially with regard to efforts to make school life meaningful for all students.

In this way, complex socio-political events do not seem to shake these principals. Instead they use them as inspiring sources of change, to enhance normal curriculum offerings, to create new disciplines and to make fundamental changes to pastoral provision.

My next section seeks to learn about these principals, but from the perspective and experience of specific individuals as participants within this research. This is the discussion of my next chapter.

Overview of this chapter

This chapter presented the ideas, experiences and view of four school principals in Chile. They delivered their understanding and reflections about their influence to support students' opportunities and outcomes. This segment connected with the ISSPP project and School Turnaround initiative research to provide a first engagement with the literature review. This section also offered accounts about each principal to explain their context, experience and educational background. The chapter was organised around the four key research questions. For each question, the principals' own reflections and responses were highlighted to bracket their experiences in relation to their educational leadership experience in Chile. This included finding out about their view on the effectiveness of government funding and policy; learning about their influence in their institutions; ascertaining their conceptions of school leadership and discovering their actions to support student outcomes and opportunities and how they dealt with an education system in constant change and social unrest.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTERVIEWS WITH OTHER KEY PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

This chapter seeks to connect the principals' ideas, reflections and conclusions, seen in the previous chapter, with those of other members of their school who were interviewed. These participants have the potential to enlighten us further on how student outcomes and opportunities benefit from the actions of their principals.

As discussed earlier, in all schools I interviewed a teacher, a middle manager, a parent and a member of the support staff and the choice of each one was made by the principals. For each, I was left alone to conduct the interviews apart from P3's school where P3 was present. The explanation for this was for support, reassurance and at the request of his board.

I will explore each research question as I did in the previous chapter. Thus, I will compare the views expressed by principals about the different objectives and their relationship with the experience of the participants. After I conducted these interviews and reflected on them, I was able to go back to the principals for a further round of short interviews to obtain more details on ideas and views raised by the participants. These reflections are embedded within this analysis.

Before commencing the next section, I would like to present the below table to facilitate attribution details to each interview quote to show who the speaker is and when the interview was recorded. This is to trace the quote to the transcript of an individual participant.

Sector 1 Private	**Sector 2** Semiprivate	**Sector 3** State funded	**Sector 4** State funded - vocational
Principal 1	**Principal 2**	**Principal 3**	**Principal 4**
Pa1 = Teacher	**Pb1** = Teacher	**Pc1** = Teacher	**Pd1** = Teacher
Pa2 = Middle Manager	**Pb2** = Middle Manager	**Pc2** = Middle Manager	**Pd2** = Middle Manager
Pa3 = Parent	**Pb3** = Parent	**Pc3** = Parent	**Pd3** = Parent
Pa4 = Support staff	**Pb4** = Support staff	**Pc4** = Support staff	**Pd4** = Support staff

Table 5.1 – Interview participants attribution details.

Thus, "Pa1, December 2015" denotes teacher participant from Principal 1's school in Sector 1, i.e., private.

Research Question One: How do these four principals enact educational leadership within the Chilean context?

Principal 1 – Participants' Experience

P1 was regarded by all participants as an open, receptive individual, able to engage with issues. The parent participant highlighted his capacity to listen and, where possible and appropriate, enact change. There was a recognition of his ability to spot talented staff and be quick to promote them to key academic positions. The provision for professional development was a key aspect of his work in schools and valued by all interviewees. Three out four participants delivered a clear message regarding P1's educational vision and philosophy. One teacher commented that he constantly transmitted this message, emphasising his level of communication permeated the whole school, enhanced by being constant.

All participants valued clear expectations regarding teamwork and collaboration. They felt that they were all part of the assessment, re-organisation and implementations of new ideas, were listened to meaningfully and much of the progress in the school was down to their involvement. P1 was seen as a pedagogical leader – participants identified him as a good teacher and knew that he had been a Learning Director - who was striving to create practitioners with equal capacity. There was a huge trust in his actions, rooted in years of educational experience, something he achieved through promoting strong teacher participation, effective communication to all areas of the school and through his personality, as summarised by a middle leader:

> Everybody likes P1. He has charisma and that is especially seen when he talks about issues related to education in meetings.
>
> (Pa2, 10th December 2015)

P1 seemed to offer leadership that was people centred, recognising that many of his ideas would not work without a clarity of objectives and the subsequent involvement and empowerment of all school members:

> Well, I think that in general terms his leadership is ... [about] showing the vision and how that can be implemented in each of the sections [of the school], in each of the programs, in each one of the schools, I feel that his leadership is about [motivating you] that you can do, that you can work, that you can even make mistakes, but in any case that allows you to go on experimenting.
>
> (Pa1, 7th December 2015)

P1 delivers leadership with a clear vision of what he considers education to be and a realisation that this objective cannot be fulfilled in isolation. His actions promote innovations, involvement, the establishment of positive relations with all stakeholders and building internal capacity, especially with talented teachers. He ensures that his communities are not only informed about issues,

but also about how they can contribute to this plan. There was a great deal of respect in the participants' content narrative for P1's trajectory, views and input into the life of the school and the certainty that his actions were rooted in his belief in the capacity of others to achieve the school's educational project. The school seemed to know that P1 cares beyond professional limits about them and this was valued above all else.

Principal 2 – Participants' Experience

P2 was characterised by her participants as an effective conflict resolution person. She dealt upfront with needs and problems and she did not seem fazed by the demands of addressing whatever was necessary to do. Three of the four participants said they admired her honesty and how she dealt with demanding parental expectations. There was a sense that her ability to deal with conflict stemmed from her ability to negotiate conversations without abandoning the school values and mission. Two participants suggested that her confidence came from her deep knowledge and understanding of the school and students and that she knew every student and their families.

A member of support staff highlighted P2's commitment to being accessible to everyone in the school and there was a perception amongst the teacher, middle leader and support staff that she could deal with any needs, generating a trust in her actions that was recognised and appreciated. This responsiveness was seen also when relating to the sponsoring organisation (a religious congregation) that saw her as a reliable presence when dealing with school matters. One such a representative view came from a parent who openly explained that P2 had bridged the gap between leadership and parents whereas, previously, there was distance. P2's presence was felt from dawn to dusk:

> I see in the morning when I arrive, if there is an event to be done, she is here. That is, she is no longer a distant person, she is in all the chores of the school; extracurricular activities, activities carried out by the parents' centre, activities involved with the students, in this school ... (…) the director is a close person.

(Pb3, 10th December 2015)

Also referred to was her capacity for leading instruction in the school. Every participant in the interviews mentioned that she had been a Learning Director for many years before becoming principal. This gave her an insight into and understanding of teachers' daily demands and how the curriculum works. To three individuals in the interviews, this had allowed her to recognise the need for innovation such as the inclusion of workshops and how to ensure their effectiveness through giving students agency in their choices and acting quickly to ensure these new courses responded to student interests.

This would explain her commitment to recruiting quality teachers. Her careful staffing selection process when it came to practitioners was noticed. She looked for individuals who were student centred and able to meet the school standards. This was stressed by teachers and support staff:

> …she has an eye when choosing teachers who are going to help with students' development. She also observes, along the year, how a teacher has also accomplished what it is requested of him/her. But this applies to all levels, be it administrative, support staff or teacher. Then she is concerned with everything.
>
> (Pb4, 11th December 2015)

She was also recognised as being a rapid analytical and strategic thinker, making decisions quickly, especially when it is related to students, and constantly observing where things could be improved or discontinued. This latter view kept repeating in the narratives, that P2 did not seem to have any problem with ceasing a process that she felt was not working. She was perceived by some as a leader with a bird's eye view of the school, always looking for areas to improve. However, it was also remarked that as a doer, this could put people on the spot. It is difficult for some teachers to follow her rhythm and not all teachers could work in P2's school. She was hands on, and her fast actions could lead to some practitioners feeling unable to meet her standards.

Clearly putting students at the centre of her work, she negotiated well the needs of all to work together, even putting systems in place to support former students at higher education. Due to her leadership, the reflection seemed to be of a school that was working in unison, i.e., where teachers, leadership, sponsor and parents know and value the expectations set by P2. There was a sense that, as a leader, she wanted everybody to meet high standards of work and she was committed to the core values of her institution and religious congregation. She was recognised as firm but fair, building positive and constructive relationships with all students, and also capable of dealing with demands from parents and policy makers. Her commitment to her work was unquestionable. The joke that she 'brings her mattress to school' symbolised her commitment to her work and how she would go above and beyond to serve the school. She combined a strong sense of moral purpose with, as one participant mentioned, a charismatic personality that understood individuals, situations and needs:

> I believe that yes, she is in everything, be it human, academic, professional ... and is always concerned about the courses, for teachers, at all levels she, from what I see, she wants an integration of everything, she wants to maintain a high level, a good level.
>
> (Pb1, 10th December 2015)

This reflection delivers a message that P2 has forged her leadership around high expectations for teachers to deliver quality instruction to students.

Nonetheless, she does not abandon her duty to support and listen to others, especially to foster innovative provision for students.

When it comes to understanding the demands for reform and change in education, participants in the interviews described her as well informed and knowledgeable, something supported by her experience as a practitioner. This gave her strength and credibility, especially because they all acknowledged that her actions were taken to ensure an adequate provision for students. She was constantly thinking about events such as university fairs, student preparedness for university or counselling, drug workshops and other supportive structures. Her constant activity and presence led to the fact that, according to some, she was never in her office, even wearing the same overalls that Chilean teachers are expected to wear. Despite this constant presence, there was still a sense that she was prepared to delegate and had trust in her team. She seemed to understand the benefits of giving others the space to act and would listen to their suggestions for new initiatives and modifications to existing practices. However, she knew she was ultimately accountable.

Principal 3 – Participants' Experience

P3's participants' interviews generated the most explicit narratives in relation to the generic expectations of the role of principal.

He was praised for his capacity to be close to parents and his peers, with parents describing him as a father figure for his students, 100% of the time there for the students. This was significant as in this school, as I was informed, there was little family support. P3 was described as the pillar that held the school together, concerned with everything related to the school: students, school and the community. This was compared to other schools in which the interviewees had worked, where principals neither knew the names of the students nor their staff:

> At a national level, municipal (state) schools, the principals are never in the schools ... in the subsidized private sector, the principals sometimes go to the schools, they do not know the students, they rarely know the teachers because they are hired by an external corporation ... this is how education works in Chile, nowadays.
>
> (Pc1, 9th December 2015)

The situation in P3's school was different, with the principal establishing relationships with everyone. There was strong sense that everybody could contribute to school growth and to student experiences. This was especially noted in admissions: "When a young person comes to this school, the initial interview is done by the principal, then the principal knows that the child has these characteristics and what is looked for (…) in this school" (Pc4, December 2015). This initial process led by the principal enables him to know a student's realities and call upon the different school units to work together to make a suitable provision.

Another aspect appreciated in P3 is his pedagogical experience, having also been a Learning Director and gifted teacher:

> The idea that the principal we have now was our teacher, that he was a classroom teacher and that he is now a principal helps us enormously because he understands the teacher's problems of "you know what? This or that happens to me" or "I have had this failure or this success," he understands it, because he already lived it.

(Pc4, 9th December 2015)

As a former teacher, P3 was successful in combining leadership and instruction to support practitioners working in very demanding circumstances. One interviewee mentioned P3 had the capacity to navigate the dynamics of such a school well, making him different from principals in other schools. Furthermore, staff felt that he was accessible both to parents and to them: "We thank God we have an open doors office with [P3], where we can talk clearly about things, what bothers us, what does not bother us, ideas, he listens to us a lot" (Pc2, 9th December 2015).

There was a mention of the pressures P3 was under, especially when balancing the needs of school with those of the sponsor. There is a recognition from some participants that if he had more autonomy, "it would be more positive, and the situation would be freer" (Pc2, December 2015). "Freer" in this case meant quicker decision making and subsequent action. He was seen to be responsive, listening to teachers, a necessary element of the job as highlighted by a middle leader who underlined that, as it is the teachers who are at the front line of delivery, not listening to them would mean the loss of key information related to the school. One participant went further, highlighting that it was the practitioners who build a principal's knowledge of the school:

> The principal's perception is built through what we [teachers] say, I believe, that (…) P3 has so many responsibilities that he can pay little attention to what is happening directly with the students, [he needs] (…) what we can make him see.

(Pc1, 9th December 2015)

Another respondent added that "teachers (…), are [the ones] (…) with the children, those who have [and build] the relationships; then, as we open the table for a conversation, the decisions are more enriching" (Pc2, December 2015).

For all participants, a school leader's role was to foster teamwork, give clear direction and communicate this to all concerned. It was also mentioned that principals needed to give meaning to the role of practitioners via dialogue and decision making that takes into account their views within the school. Given

these reflections, there was clearly a feeling of trust in P3's leadership. Teachers were listened to with, one respondent highlighting that vertical leadership in a school like this one would not work as there was a heightened need for more horizontal structure of communal decision-making and support to benefit their students. When it came to innovation and change, P3 had created an atmosphere where colleagues were not scared to innovate. Furthermore, results did not refer to high-stake tests, as I was informed that teachers did not teach to the test here, but reflected personal growth and a safe journey for students towards adulthood:

> [teachers in this school want students to feel] accepted by society, being able to pass the year, feeling that they have achieved something and feel loved. [The school] (…) wants the kids to leave the street and can develop at the school level, we do not ask them to be professionals, but that they do overcome themselves and leave certain street behaviours to be able, in priority, to do things that children do: study, be with friends without the need to get high (drugs), share experiences, etc.

(Pc2, 9th December 2015)

All respondents highlighted that the biggest challenge to student progress and achievement was drug addiction. "We cannot teach (…) if I have five children that are on drugs... So, that is the main priority, to attack the issue of drug addiction" (Pc2, December 2015). The leadership team managed the effective and close provision of counsellors, social workers and teacher training to provide strong support to ensure student attendance and necessary action, such as a phone call home, was taken quickly with a sense that every child mattered. For example, "*once*", a Chilean tradition of tea and snacks at 17.00, was given at parent conferences, something not common in such meetings in Chile. The school also supported some families financially to ensure students came to school. The school knew of the families' individual challenges and provided accordingly. Such action was led and fostered by P3 who was proud of this action.

Finally, there was an unequivocal message as to the commitment of the school under P3 to ensure it was student centred:

> Here it is always about looking after the children; the main focus is the students, sometimes you want to put yourself and other projects first, but no… it is a school that really works with children, that does not want to earn cash to go into the sponsor's pocket (…) but, that it is about students' development.

(Pc2, 9th December 2015)

This is a salient point as all the participants had experience working within the state sector and shared a mistrust that some individuals were taking advantage of the system for personal gain.

P3, however, had built a positive and trusting ethos, something recognised and valued by key participants. The school was growing in numbers and the leadership team and teachers worked closely to ensure this new influx was addressed in the school provision, including a thorough admissions process to ascertain children's state of mind and family background to determine a profile of support shared by all and led by P3.

Principal 4 – Participants' Experience

P4 enjoyed a great deal of respect, trust and support from all those interviewed. He had been instrumental in establishing the school's new Dual Education Programme which, at the time of the interview, was in its second year, having made headlines in Chile due its innovative partnership with private industry.

P4 was recognised as a leader with vision and he shared this with the school community. As a leader, he was described as a guide, articulating his message with clarity and involvement, understanding the school, recognising and addressing areas for improvement radically turning it around to improve its offer:

> [As a principal, he is] the one who tells us where we need to go, if we see negative results, try to search together, solutions. (…) The principal is a visionary, so that he sees an opportunity and tries to make the most of it; He did it in (…) [another school] when nobody believed him what the dual system was and there, he achieved success.

(Pd4, 11th December 2015)

There is a great deal of trust in moving the school based on his experience and respected background, but also in his capacity to involve others, listening to all members of the community and facilitating participation in the educational project. When asked if this was innate, the answers pointed to experience as an explanation; "He has been a principal for a long time" (Pd1, December 2015).

He was also valued for his ability to let others do their job, as long as there were results. Interviewed parents noted a great difference in how positive the relationships were amongst the school members, i.e., support staff, teachers and student and greater participations from parents. The atmosphere was one of respect and care for the students. They acknowledged that they had been part of the school for a year within the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) and they witnessed the faith P4 had placed in practitioners when implementing changes. They saw that the new educational offer had the potential to attract more students and give stability to the school's growth. P4 is described by a teacher (Pd1, December 2015) as a democratic leader who puts a project together and then selects staff carefully in the management of specific areas, whist one middle leader reflected that he works with others and knows where to go to get advice, knowing that he is trusted; P4 "allows me to do what I think is convenient, in case of any situation where I have to make a decision, I am of

absolute confidence and he knows that my decision will be correct" (Pd4, December 2015). But also, P4 was able to ask the right questions and provide more explicit support to others:

> I have been taught "this is done like this", "this documentation must be presented in such a way, in such a place, with this person you have to talk, this is what you have to ask for" then, I think the key to him is that he has the clarity and experience to manage and achieve a perfect mix of what the company and the school have to be in a process of formation
>
> (Pd4, 11th December 2015)

Specifically, he demonstrated a leadership approach linked to staff development and empowering others to deliver within a new curriculum and programme, where professional challenges and growth were met with support and guidance. P4 also knows the demands of engaging with the private industry and how to deal with them. Staff seem to be aware that the ride has not been smooth, they all commented that it was difficult at the beginning with the timetable, but it was solved communally. These issues are outweighed by the benefits. Funding was scarce, yet by working with private industry, it was possible to access technology, machinery and work experience for students as young as 16. The bottom line was that his commitment to change and working with all stakeholders was driven by his focus on building meaningful student opportunities for all to succeed:

> I believe that … he has a goal that is related to the students, his focus is the students and how to achieve better results, better learning, better experiences and in the end to get a technical school like this one, to deliver to the country a young professional technician better prepared.
>
> (Pd2, 11th December 2015)

Another recognition was that he has brought a stronger sense of identity to the school. Some participants were proud to be firmly seen as a technical college as, previously, this was not the case and there was no clarity as to what the school was meant to be. There was a sense that this new programme was still in its infancy, but the narrative was of a process that had moved beyond an initial state and was ready to be rolled out further. One respondent reflected that within the chaos there had been order:

> I know there is much to do, we need to change the mentality of the student to stop being so adolescent and change to the world of work, but I think that is a process. [It is a] minority of students who do not adapt to that process.
>
> (Pd1, 11th December 2015)

P4 delivered leadership based on vision, communication, experience and involvement. His commitment to a programme was based on the need to support young adults' future by providing training, work experience, preparing

them for the world of work and competing on equal terms with others from traditional schools. However, there were some regrets as some students had not been able to benefit from the programme as it had started for Y11 on the year of this interview with Y12 still working under the traditional model. There was a desire to expand the current offer and start from Y10 upwards. Furthermore, P4's student centeredness was palpable, as one interviewee described the situation as follows:

> Apart from the fact that the kids can go out with a career, which is the main thing, they already leave with a base, with a knowledge, then that helps them, but if they don't necessarily develop in that field, maybe they can develop in another. However, they already have the experience of having done something, they do not arrive there with nothing ... responsibility and punctuality have already been formed, so in any job the main thing is that they are going to ask you for that.
>
> (Pd2, 11th December 2015)

The reflection above had to do with skill developments and preparing individuals to deal with basic demands. Also, the school had a strong programme of pastoral care focused precisely on skills at work. This was brought in as a necessity as P4 learnt that students were unready to meet basic levels of dispositions when at work. This realisation for staff was new and P4's actions were precisely geared towards growing the necessary skills for a student's future success in the workplace.

All in all, P1, P2, P3 and P4 did not ascribe to any specific leadership model, opting for a more extemporaneous approach. They responded to their school needs through a combination of their experience both as educators generally and also with a history of working within the Chilean context along with their values and drives, their professional wisdom and bringing to bear their own very different personalities on their unique school setting. The implications of this summary are important for this study as it describes how these four individuals fulfil research and evidenced-based criteria that describe successful principals as sensitive to their context, with no commitment to a specific leadership model when making appropriate choices for the improvement of their institutions.

Research Question Two: How do the principals' views of their role and influence compare with wider current conceptions of school leadership?

Principal 1 – Participants' Experience

The staff members interviewed shared that P1 had a strong focus on communicating long-term targets and visions. He shared a constant message that allowed individuals to know where they stood in the process. Risk was welcome, but there was a solid understanding of direction. A participant commented that P1 was capable of:

> Delegating (…) either in the department areas or with regard to academic direction or even in (…) the coordination of the programs [or] (…) in the search for new elements and new tools to get students from pre-school primary [to] achieve the best results (…) there is little room to get lost, that there is space for creativity, but little space to get lost, because the line is super clear.
>
> (Pa2, 7th December 2015)

When asked about what was meant by 'line', the explanation was 'direction' - some others used the word 'vision' - that enabled others to participate because it was understood by all. P1's priorities were student emotional wellbeing, their academic success and being a high performing school. It was said by a teacher that the school now embraced a commitment for quality instruction, training and personal development when serving students whereas, with previous administrations, this was not clear.

There was an overall perception that, with P1, "the job is being done" (Pa1, December 2015) and the school had a direction that touched every aspect of the organisation. One participant acknowledged that there was some work yet to be done such as consolidating the current programmes with their interdisciplinary approaches and the emphasis on group work.

Two participants felt that there was no specific leadership model apparent and perhaps this was something that needed more work. But they believed that leadership and leaders were important for the school:

> I feel it is relevant, I feel that it is fundamental as long as they have the potential to be pedagogical leaders, leaders in what is the vision of the evaluation, vision of education, vision of what kind of person we want to help to be built.
>
> (Pa1, 7th December 2015)

The idea above denotes a need to have leaders with pedagogical experience. It may suggest that teachers need somebody who understands and knows the complexities of classroom practice and instruction, especially when it comes to implementing school projects or going through a change process.

Much of what was said by participants revealed ideas that related to openness to discussion. P1 had an open-doors approach to listening and acting on ideas; he liked to consult others. In this respect the participant parents not only seemed to agree with P1's approach, but also approved of the school values when it came to instruction and provision:

> We as a parent centre, we have faced everything and many times we are surprised by what we (parents) want or need or are looking for (…). Some of the aspects they [parents] are looking for are academic excellence, [and that] their

> child be number one and hit top national scores, therefore they got the wrong school.
>
> (Pa3, 7th December 2015)

They understand what the school is about, and they share this value with P1. It was said by the same parent:

> P1 is a person that transmits tranquillity and experience that leaves parents calm that the children are in good hands. I think that is the most important thing, that is, that the head reflects the spirit of the school and P1 in this case is the reflection of the school.
>
> (Pa3, 7th December 2015)

He was also described as a charismatic leader, something defined as being able "to communicate without communicating" (Pa1, December 2015). Everybody knows P1; he is respected and recognised for his positive, influential and calm manner that allows other to feel comfortable in his presence:

> You have the confidence that you can talk to him … chat with him about anything and give some answers that is just what you need … clear and concise and of course, he will never raise his voice or challenge in anger and make you feel fearful of talking with him.
>
> (Pa4, 7th December 2015)

Support staff and a teacher thought of him as a non-hierarchical principal. This made their work in the school pleasant and enabling for all.

There was also consideration for his own beliefs in education. His thinking about educational philosophy was highly regarded and his message around it was never doubted or questioned in the narratives heard. He was described by one teacher as having a philosophical leadership style; this linked to his insightful reflections about educational models, especially during training. This is an indication of how much confidence P1 delivered to people allowing the school to move forward and give the feeling that the good functioning of the school was in safe hands:

> I believe that the perception is that the job is being done; this sounds very colloquial, but yep, we are achieving things (…) obviously [this is because] there is a vision that is transversal to the whole school and generates a search for making it work, obviously we have to polish it, we have to work at it, we have to make modifications, but it is working…
>
> (Pa1, 7th December 2015)

The reflection above delivers a message of confidence that the school is building a provision that it is in tune with staff expectations. There was a strong sense among participants of feeling empowered to be part of what needs to be done, because the school was looked after if things were to go wrong; "the school is

in good hands" (Pa3, December 2015). It was said that P1 wanted teachers to lead:

> I feel that it is empowering teachers to be able to be leaders in the educational process in a way that is novel for us, that is to work via projects, which is interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary or multidisciplinary… and we have been able, as teachers, to transfer this strongly and safely to the students [and] also to the parents and that this [change] did not create any conflict.
>
> (Pa1, 7th December 2015)

Principal 2 – Participants' Experience

One teacher indicated that, when she was studying for her teaching degree, her observation was that principals did not provide any influence in schools and had entered managerial positions not because they wanted to lead or "generate changes in that role, (…) but because in practical terms it meant more money" (Pb1, December 2015). This teacher's ideas changed when she started working in P2's school. She described P2 as a constant presence in the school, receiving children in the morning and going around the classrooms. This individual recognised the capacity of the P2 to know her school community and members well: "[she] knows the families, knows the student, knows everyone" (Pb1, 10th December 2015).

Parents, teachers and support staff talked about the positive relations within the school and the confidence in the curriculum and the school, demonstrating that P2 recognised and valued input from others. This matched P2's discussions about her commitment to be fully involved and know her school at all levels.

It was noted by various respondents that the school was committed to listening to new ideas, but they also recognised that the school was traditional in some areas, which P2 admitted herself: "I am a traditionalist, but also with a lot of thinking about innovation" (Principal 2, 10th December 2015). However, the teachers and middle managers interviewed found that any proposed workshops for students were welcome and supported as long as it was well organised with assessment criteria and clear student benefits.

Some participants talked about trust and fair support. This was especially marked when parents and students needed to hear that a teacher's decision was supported by P2, sending a message that gave confidence to practitioners to do their job. Two participants valued the capacity of P2 to explain and reflect back to teachers and students her rationale for everything; from behaviour to changes in school strategies.

Some teachers referred to P2's approach to delegation and her difficulty in doing this. This was down to the fact that she invested a great deal of time being involved in every aspect of the school, something perceived by all participants. However, the justification stemmed from her leadership qualities:

> [P2 exhibits] such good leadership that she tends to be over-needed, it is difficult to delegate for her; and one could say "Let's do this (…) … no, I better go to the director (…)" and that would be the only thing against, but these are things that I believe someone [in her position] (…) [will experience], this can happen to anyone.
>
> (Pb1, 10th December 2015)

These accounts matched P2's views on delegation that, as school principal, you need to support those in key positions to act but without abnegating yourself of ultimate responsibility for what is happening:

> In fact, one delegates, but you see that behind that delegation there is also a responsibility, you have to see how it works. I want to delegate but I will never leave it ... "The watchful eye of the owner fattens the calf " as we say in Chile.
>
> (Principal 2, 10th December 2015)

P2's leadership relied strongly on her input and the need to observe, to know, to guide and to give directives. An explanation to this approach might originate in P2's background as a teacher and Learning Director. She knew that much of the changes needed to happen within teachers' classroom practice, hence her constant influence here. This was perceived positively by participants because, having been a teacher, it gave her a grassroots insight that other principals may not have enjoyed. Interestingly, confirmed by P2 in the second interview, she originally had been a primary teacher as it is unusual for primary teachers to become secondary principals. This could also explain P2's emphasis on early years education as described by her teachers.

There was a recognition that P2's leadership had affected the school positively. She said that without P2's actions so far, the school would have continued within its comfort zone, focusing on what it was known and proven; i.e., success within high-stake tests. Changes in the curriculum were the highlight of P2's action in the school. A teacher claimed: "I cannot imagine another person fulfilling this role" (Pb1, 10th December 2015) as principal in this school.

Principal 3 – Participants' Experience

The teachers and parent interviewed described P3 as a good listener, supportive of his staff but also needing to respond to the sponsor. There was the perception that this was a challenge for him. P3 had to negotiate his autonomy with the overall religious foundation in charge. This brought certain restrictions such as teacher contracts, school budgets and procurement practices. Nevertheless, there was an acknowledgement that, due to P3's leadership, teachers felt heard and understood in their role of working within challenging contexts.

The teachers underlined that they were the front line for what happened in the classroom, and this was important for P3 to know and use appropriately to manage the school, especially as P3 does not work directly with students. Teachers worked face to face with students, so P3 relied on teacher observations and those of other school members in order to lead effectively.

For some participants the P3's role was one of authority:

> [A principal] can grant permissions, the times for a meeting in which we have to discuss a strategy for a student. From that (…) to know how the teams work in terms of their harmony, that is (…) fundamental. In fact, we thank God, we have an open doors policy with (…) [P3], where we can talk clearly about things, what bothers us, what does not bother us, ideas, (…) [P3] listens to us a lot.
>
> (Pc2, 9th December 2015)

Again, the link to P3 being a practitioner was emphasised, somebody who knows what it feels like to teach and appreciates the challenges and needs for practitioners working in the school: "[He] is a teacher, so he knows, and he knows what the school dynamics are. Therefore, it is a situation totally different from other schools" (Pc2, 9th December 2015).

Principal 4 – Participants' Experience

In P4's school, the participants' answers focused on the new "Dual Project" and its effect on their practice, knowledge and learning. The new curriculum for Year 12 and Year 13 had enabled them to work outside their comfort zone, but it was made easier as the members bought into P4's discourse due to his experience and charisma in the implementation of the programme.

All participants valued P4's leadership as he acted "as a guide and leader of the school, to encourage us all towards a clear goal" (Pd3, 11th December 2015). P4's school vision was said to be understood by the whole school and some also felt that P4 provided them with new opportunities within a job that seemed to be the same year after year. One teacher moved from a librarian and cover teacher role to be a form tutor and headed a new course called "Corporate Analysis." This is a course created in the school for students to have the opportunity to reflect on their learning about their work placements. She was evidently passionate about this.

Clearly, the Dual Track Education project brought challenges for the school, however, the fact that P4 had had experience and knowledge here meant there was a sense of trust in the project. This helped the success of the implementation according to most interviewees. The current school focus was to develop further the vocational courses and to establish themselves with a clear identity as provider of technical competencies for students. Two participants mentioned that the teacher body was proud of this achievement and also highlighted P4's capacity to involve parents, especially as this was

important in improving results. This was a reality that did not happen in every school according to one teacher. She said that the need for a clear school identity was delivered by the principal, however, there was still much to do, especially in changing students' capacity to adapt and respond to the world of work.

Overall, the perception from participants seems to concur with all the principals' reflections on the subject of their leadership. The teachers, staff and parents did not perceive any leadership model being used, nor do they seem concerned about this. Despite this, there seemed to be a clear vision and direction within the schools that seemed to have been established by the principals.

Research Question Three: What are the perceived consequences of each principal's actions for student learning opportunities and outcomes?

Principal 1 – Participants' Experience

The actions of P1 are centred on building teacher confidence in curriculum design or modification. This comes as a result of training that delivers innovation and educational information and awareness leading to confident practitioners capable of organising learning that involves students in the delivery. P1 does this by building up positive relationships with all members of his school and personally delivering training that leads on learning.

P1 had fostered a great deal of training and professional development. As an International Baccalaureate school, the expectation for P1 school was that the delivery of the curriculum was inquiry and concept based. Much of the discussion from participants was centred around critical thinking developments in the school and how P1 was transmitting the importance and impact of such an approach:

> [P1] has also conveyed to us the subject of "critical thinking", as he has given us training (…) that, in the end, one grows to appreciate. All this process starts making sense; it informs us to where we are going and in the background shows you as a projection or a way to change education and not stay stuck in the same way as always and that is being transmitted and I think he has been doing it for years, (…) ... is something that shows that he has studied it, that he has read it, that it makes sense to him
>
> (Pa1, 9th December 2015)

The message above seems to indicate that P1 is able to emanate confidence and strong convictions when it comes to educational projects. All interviewees appeared as active supporters of his project, engaging with the message on a daily basis within the classroom. There was a positive recognition of P1's experience and knowledge of education. which gave them confidence to

innovate in an educational system still geared towards rote learning and student passivity (OECD, 2017), e.g. when converting the content of a Chilean National Curriculum from knowledge-based into inquiry-based units.

Another aspect of P1's work was his capacity to recruit teachers capable of delivering within constructivist, more progressive, approaches. In addition, he was also valued for his ability to open up posts within the school to retain gifted teachers ensuring that their aspirations were met and used to affect student learning. One interviewee said there was a recognition that "I had a place here" (Pa1, December 2015). For P1, teacher job satisfaction was the key to having "happy students" that explained the consistently good results the school enjoyed. This need for positivity was not only discussed by teachers, but also support staff, who were aware that P1 wants students to enjoy their education. This was seen on the school admission services for children coming from abroad, where there was a protocol for receiving students and parents, and a welcome for the children to make them part of the community.

P1 was also prepared to have an open-door discussion with examples of actions related to areas of the school life that had been based on the community's messages and reflections. This was recognised and valued by parent and teacher participants. Much of this had to do with his personal approach to others. According to support staff:

> It is that P1, although he does not say anything, he is the leader, (naturally) (…) P1 is known, that is, you know who P1 is and all the people know the respect you have to have with him.
>
> (Pa4, 9th December 2015)

It was difficult to strike a balance between delegation and accountability, yet it seemed that P1 had the capacity to communicate educational values, knowledge and needs and obtain a positive action from his school members according to his participants. According to one interviewee, he was able to enthuse others in this search:

> [He has] an internal conviction that he is not transmitting all the time, no ... because [he] is not like that, but he has to see that when he transmits it; he knows what he is talking about and he is convinced of what he is talking about.
>
> (Pa4, 9th December 2015)

The quote denotes strategic thinking by deciding on the appropriateness of scenarios and when communication should or should not happen. This has to do with empathy and an understanding of his school culture; a recognition of what needs to be done, how and when. One respondent commented that P1's role as principal was to effectively devolve responsibilities to the different curriculum areas in the delivery of the different programmes. A difficult task for P1, as he needed to balance assurances this was actually happening whilst also

fostering the levels of creativity, consistency and direction to obtain positive results for students academically and personally:

> The line is super clear, that is, we have to get good results with emotionally healthy students who manage to challenge themselves and who are not afraid of this challenge and that challenge can be academic, it can be work, it can be personal.
>
> (Pa1, 9th December 2015)

P1's actions were centred around teacher capacity to lead learning by providing a meaningful provision for teachers to grow (such as through quality training), recognising the strength of specific practitioners and deploying them strategically within the school management and balancing his leadership expectations with great care and awareness of his school culture. All of these centred around the enhancement of the student experience and diverse needs across the school. As explained by one participant, P1 wanted to empower "teachers to be able to be leaders in the educational process" (Principal 1, 9th December 2015) and another one added that teachers in this school "have the potential to be pedagogical leaders, leaders in what is the vision of (…) education, vision of what kind of person (student) we want to help build" (Pa1, 9th December 2015).

Principal 2 – Participants' Experience

P2's actions to support student learning experience were linked to her strong involvement and active participation in the running of and decision making within the school and all its areas: curriculum, pastoral, teaching practice, recruitment and responding to policy makers' directives. P2 monitored closely the delivery of teaching and learning by concentrating her actions on the optimal functioning of all aspects of school life. Her actions had enabled consistent positive results at national level and had added continuity to the positive perception of her school's performance.

Three participants gave her much credit in the selection of staff, especially those that openly would enhance student opportunities via extracurricular activities. Although it was not yet perfect, P2 had clear expectations for the school:

> Sometimes it is difficult to select through an interview, this filter is sometimes not enough to select the best, but this does not happen often… [if] teachers have not lived up to expectations, eventually they leave.
>
> (Principal 2, 10th December 2015)

These outlooks were not limited to appointments, but to observations in terms of the performance of all staff (including support and administrative staff) to deliver high standards. This strong involvement by a principal is unusual in Chile as conveyed by some participants with experience in other schools but it was

appreciated. Some considered this, perhaps, the result of the need to perform for parents. However, the impression was that P2 had always been like this, even when she was a teacher and, later on, Academic Director. The view was that everyone needed to follow protocols, including her, to enable everyone to work effectively. This could be explained by the rigour with which semi-private schools need to operate as, unlike P1's private school, P2's school must adhere to state regulations and, also, be mindful of parents who pay top-up fees.

P2 had been instrumental in the implementation and leadership of directives coming from central government. She had led the establishment of a full-time day for students (as opposed to a continental-style day), curriculum changes and innovative approaches within the restrictions of the systems such as using the new extended time to deliver workshops by teachers with a three-month rotation. In this respect, it was said that the good performance of the school allowed her to have the peace of mind to incorporate further additions to the curriculum. As one interviewee highlighted, parents knew that "no year group leaves the school without having covered the last comma or full stop of the [national curriculum] programme" (Pb3, December 2015) and P2 saw to that. This facilitates the incorporation of workshops and courses that range from traditional maths enrichment to more unusual speed-reading classes. In the words of one respondent, "much is left to teachers to decide what to do with these hours" (Pb1, December 2015). This demonstrates a great deal of trust in practitioners, as the requirement for any new course is a meeting with P2 that details a solid rational, clear benefits for students, a scheme of work and a formal assessment.

The above demonstrated the fact that in P2's school, there were always events that showed the need to enrich what the school could offer, especially with projects such as university fairs, counselling or drug talks. There was also a rapid response to policy change if there is a new instruction from central government. This was the case with a new bullying regulation, which was quickly addressed within the student handbook. There was a recognition that the school did not have greatest resources compared to other schools, but P2 had been instrumental in ensuring that what was available was optimised and deployed effectively.

She was regarded by those interviewed as supportive of them. The school has strict rules that enabled the good functioning of the school and she had been helpful during difficult conversation between staff and parents. Teachers recognised that P2 will be there for them in their defence if she believed that this was needed. The interviewed parent expressed the same level of confidence in her when it came to engage with her on issues.

There were comments that not all teachers could follow her rhythm, so not all teachers were able to deliver to the school's standards. P2 in that sense was seen as practical, "Let us go for this today," she would say, so some teachers may struggle to follow her cadence, which may lead to some dissatisfaction. It

was pointed out, however, that this approach did indeed lead to benefits nonetheless:

> I can say that not everyone likes the principal, (…) but from my point of view and of all the years that I have been in the school, I could say that, that she is innovating constantly and that goes hand in hand with the current educational climate.

(Pb3, 10th December 2015)

This approach was in evidence when another teacher wanted to enhance the presence of music in the school. P2 listened to him and the need for action:

> As a church school, there was no choir at Masses, one or two children sang, so I started looking for strategies; (…) to see possibilities, to put things together, to ask for guitars, to see a space somewhere where I can rehearse. And knowing the students one tries to (..) enhance their skills, then this has allowed us to give new life to the subject.

(Pb2, 10th December 2015)

P2 listened and provided the space and resources for this. This seemed to show P2's capacity for listening and making a provision for a gifted teacher who sought to enhance the life of students, with limited funding and resources.

There was agreement that may denote P2's interest resided clearly in student enjoyment and opportunities provided by the school. She worked with restrictions presented but found ways to overcome them and rallied behind practitioners to ensure they could enhance the student learning experience. As the teacher stated: "The school management sees this need and maybe later, we will have a music room built where we will make more noise and have better results" (Pb1, 10th December 2015).

P2's school, by her own admission and ratified by the participants, was a strict educational environment, with rigorous admission criteria paired with top-up fees, and some students were unable to deal with these demands. In return, students received an education that delivered higher education expectations with a provision that enhanced young people's skills daily.

Overall, the perception was that P2 was accessible to all, always willing to engage when others needed her. This was especially recognised by parents. P2 was regarded as experienced, trusted and knowledgeable about what was taking place in her school and beyond. She was able to listen to others, but she was the one who decided what was to be done in the end and this decision was trusted according to the participants. She did consult staff, but there was a feeling that ultimately her decision was final. This did detract from her capacity to involve others in strategic decisions; however, she would always consider the

benefits to students. All participants agreed that "[her] objective (…) is the students and that they come out the best prepared" (Pb4, 10th December 2019).

There was a need for staff to know how to work with her, to recognise what the expectations were and to always live up to the high expectations of students and parents. There was no obvious intention from P2 to implement changes simply to address school test scores. This was noted by all; the school was in a safe place in the long term and this was attributable to the efforts and dedication of P2.

Principal 3 – Participants' Experience

P3 leads a school with a young work force hired in the last two years. The staff that I met and those interviewed demonstrated a commitment to use their expertise and continuous learning to support student welfare. Here I encountered the biggest number of multidisciplinary specialist staff, notable, considering the small number of students.

P3 was noted for his capacity to maintain a strong ethos for a school with a student population with extreme emotional and social needs. The parent summed up the actions of the school as "love and understanding" (Pc3, 9th December 2015) towards the children. It was recognised that staff in the school showed respect for each other as practitioners and for student emotional wellbeing. A member of support staff highlighted that, although her job was not in the classroom, she knew the students' names (learning all students' names was acknowledged by all as a must for working in the school) and the challenges that some of them presented, but also noted that the job of teaching "ain't easy" (Pc4, 9th December 2015); it was hard for teachers and she tried to give words of encouragement.

There was, in the comments and reflections, a sense of injustice as the school was measured under the same criteria as the state sector without consideration for the type of cohort they provided for. One participant mentioned that the school offered students the opportunity to do two years in one, a provision presented to students who have been out of formal education for two years and for whom, "It was very difficult to keep (…) in classrooms" (Pc2, December 2015), and yet the school was successful in enabling students to finish their secondary education, even if we consider the lengthy school day; from 08.00 until 17.00 explained as necessary to cover the national curriculum content. The day included breakfast and lunch with tutors, a constructivist approach to teaching, a mentoring programme and 'fun' workshops. The word 'fun' was used to indicate a different approach to entice and keep students coming to school. The school was aware that their provision needed to be different as the odds were against them.

There was a great sense of pride from the staff about what they had achieved and how their students progressed. They were conscious of the challenges

involved and this was a motivating factor. For all interviewed, this was a vocation and a mission. As pointed out by one member:

> The traditional system does not accept these children, who are constantly on report, who are very aggressive, who answer back, who are irreverent, who are impulsive; they do not accept them in a traditional school; therefore, we accept them here.

(Pc4, 9th December 2015)

The school principal needed to bring together all staff as a team to make the school ethos possible. The many and varied needs and specialist interventions meant that there was a necessity to establish close dialogues to ensure all areas were informed and prompt action taken to ensure students did not leave the school system again. The principal's role within this complex landscape was explained in these terms:

> I feel that the principal (…) has to be a person who is always present in the school. That is, able to absorb everything that happens, both with children who are successful and with children who do not come to school, who are not comfortable, or who are forced to come by the system.

(Pc4, 9th December 2015)

When asked about P3's input, the reflection was that he had been able to bring the school together and ensure that the staff and systems worked collaboratively. Every day there was a work-schedule meeting, led by P3, where all teachers analysed the previous day's attendance, actions and what now needed to happen; very much a 'find and fix' approach. There was trust in his actions and consistency through time. Once more, it meant a great deal to all participants that he had previously been a teacher and a Learning Director in the school. There was a recognition that he was able to understand the staff's needs and school dynamics. It was also emphasised that P3 was always available to the students. He was always present in the school and engaging with them:

> What I have experienced is that this has to do with his approachability [towards students.] It has to do with knowing the student, it has to do with that, if you are going to give a student a dressing down, the first thing to know is the student file's content.

(Pc4, 9th December 2015)

There was much discussion among participants about the need to know the students well. For example, P3 was the first one to meet new students and families during the admissions process. This gives an indication of his participation in the process of bringing students back into education. For some of these children, the role of a principal had been an alien one and perhaps

distant. This in itself gives a different type of opportunity to these children; rebuilding trust with meaningful adults and authority figures in their lives.

Part of the discussion was based on the capacity of P3 to access an accurate understanding of the organisation. He needed his staff's professional insights to build a profile of the school and its impact. According to Pc2 (10 December 2015), the "principal's perception is made up of what we say, I believe, I think he has so many responsibilities that little can he pay attention to what is happening directly with the students" (Pc2, December 2015). Same participant believed that what works for the school was "horizontal leadership" (this was not a concept taken from literature, but on-the-spot thinking), a process that was more democratic, and in which they could all have an input into what was needed. That said, another interviewee added that P3's role, and that of the whole management team, needed to serve as regulatory body when there was no consensus, i.e., somebody needed to make a decision.

The message from those interviewed was that there was a horizontal and democratic approach to leadership enabling them all to have a say in matters relating to students. Much of the discussion centred on the capacity of P3 to make this possible as the complexity of the type of student cohort was such that participation, collaboration and involvement was paramount in having an impact on student learning. The strong ethos, sense of moral purpose and passion enabled a great spirit for action considering the state of the school building, limited funding and resources available.

Principal 4 – Participants' Experience

P4 was a popular principal with all individuals interviewed. He was highly regarded for his vision, experience, connection and passion to create and implement a programme that seemed to genuinely provide the skills, experience and opportunities for students to succeed at a young age and leave school ready for the world of work.

As with P3's school, P4's technical college had an emphasis on a strong multidisciplinary action to tackle pastoral care and learning for students. There was also a mentoring programme as well as planned option counselling to help students select courses that were best suited to their expectations. The emphasis was on guidance and ensuring that they were able to make mature choices with the support of mentors.

This was achieved due to P4's democratic leadership and his strong faith that the staff could deliver a new curriculum. The participants' perception was that much of the school improvements had been due to the actions and input of P4. He had been able to share his vision for a partnership between the college and private industry, something very new in Chile. It was noted that P4's gift in this respect was his ability to convey a convincing and humane message about the need to build a different provision for the students and a plan that had a strong

impact on their future opportunities by providing genuine work experience and the opportunity to acquire skills that gave them better chances and life prospects within a work environment.

P4 was considered a democratic leader who allowed his staff to come up with ideas, which they needed to then grow to create an impact. One interviewee asserted that this freedom to be creative came with restrictions. P4 has been heard saying: "OK, you want to do this project, do it, but you have to be responsible for the fact that the project is going to give a result that will improve something here in the school" (Pd2, 11th December 2015). The openness to engage in dialogue, to motivate staff and establish clear outcomes, demonstrate a leader confident that building capacity amongst staff leads to better chances for student achievement.

It had not been plain sailing. P4 encountered opposition and negativity yet it was his caring demeanour that engaged the school at large. He was always honest about the difficulties of implementing something new, but he constantly gave information to staff to keep them motivated to be part of a process that needed them. The focus was on results; "Let us see, let us try" (Principal 4, 11th December 2015). The main motive was to have an impact on students' lives. Teachers and support staff acknowledged that the changes were difficult; there was a constant need for honing actions, due in part to their own lack of experience, the students' capacity to deal with real work needs such as arriving on time, a new timetable, more mentoring and creating subject courses linked to the new work environment. This last was celebrated by the teacher who delivered it. She felt recognised and this had enabled her to feel part of something unique and meaningful for students. According to some respondents, "now teachers see the results in students who will be graduating, (…) that was the main challenge and [teachers] (…) realized that it was not that bad really" (Pd4, 11th December 2015).

The above has led to the cohort of students increasing. There was a positive interest in an innovative programme that could have potential for young people and their families. This was recognised by the participant parent - the school is in an area of social deprivation and high social risk; thus, it offers a real opportunity to families. As explained by a teacher, there is much: "desertion, repetition (of school years), drug problems or vulnerability ... then all of these problems are being put aside. (…) This school, (…) gives students a chance to really succeed" (Pd1, December 2015).

The view was that P4 had been instrumental in the school. He had been able to guide the institution not only towards change and innovation, creating a new way of working that ensured that there was participation when it comes to searching for solution, but also towards working together when results have been negative. He was regarded as democratic principal in this respect:

> The principal is a visionary, when he sees an opportunity, he tries to make the most of it; he did it [in another school] back in 1998, when nobody believed him that the dual system could work and, there, he achieved huge success (…).
>
> (Pd4, December 2015)

P4 was able to balance delegation and accountability skilfully aided by his evident charisma. He knew exactly what was happening in the school and where there was much work to be done. The freedom that he provided helped create projects centred on the school needs and what practitioners saw as necessary.

P4 was also commended for his ability to relate to students and engage with them at their level to support them. There were many stories where his actions had secured the future of certain students in their workplace or a reference that enabled their successful appointment in others. P4 had a strong sense of moral purpose when it came to education as a catalyst for positive change. Some participants even described him as spiritual, although not openly religious.

When all participants were asked about the force behind the school changes and improvements, it was unanimous that P4 had brought what was needed for the school to be different and effective. It was also noted that his capacity to engage with private companies and convince them to be part of a project to aid students in a high-risk zone was a testament to his leadership and vision centred around better outcomes and opportunities for students in his school.

Research Question Four: How do principals engage with Chilean government policies to serve student learning and outcomes?

Principal 1 – Participants' Experience

Educational Reform Policy and Student Activism

The message coming from P1's interview participants, was one of respect, fairness and consideration for students, regardless of national trends and also the management of policy-induced pressures to manipulate the system. P1's participants' message was that the school provided fair access for all students. As an oversubscribed private school, they had a formal admissions policy, but for those spare spaces, there was a tombola system to help with impartial student selection, despite the pressures on such high-performing schools to game the system. It was indicated as an example that, in order to show the school in a better light, it would have been enough to select students based on entrance exams, or to get rid of students whose predicted grades would not deliver to appropriate national test standards. Yet the school was committed to not doing that, as one participant said: "the school does not [do this], that is, the school welcomes a student and takes him/her from the time [s/he] arrives to the school until [s/he] leaves and that is the policy" (Pa4, 07th December 2015). This message was delivered with pride and certainty. It was also explained that many of these unscrupulous actions were caused, according to

one interviewee, by policy-making legislation as we have seen described by Falabella (2020). Schools were under pressure to perform and deliver yet, P1's school did not partake in such activities. This was highlighted by three participants, including the parent:

> [These] changes come from government policies. Are they good? Are they bad? I do not know. But they are things that have to be managed and the principals obviously have to take control and have to be hungry for information and (…) to know what is coming [like] fortune-tellers.
>
> (Pa3, December 2015)

There is recognition that the system puts schools under pressure with its top-down decision making. Principals were constantly chasing what was required of them and their institutions. But it was also said that this school wanted to be transparent and credible. This was accredited to the current principal and his capacity to manage the system's needs.

Another respondent (Pa2, 7th December 2015) added that the cause of the problems with the system resided in the performance of teachers. There were deficiencies and this individual pointed out that universities had a responsibility to deliver good practitioners with stricter criteria in the admission of potential teachers. There were many universities with obsolete curricular programmes, and they were stuck with these approaches. Given this scenario, the role of the principal here was very much to retrain teachers for them to deliver the type of education the school expected: inquiry and project based.

The effect of the sector two gratuity reform did not affect P1's school, but one respondent (Pa4, 7th December 2015) communicated that having her children in a semi-private school provided her with a degree of insecurity as this school did not know if it were to become fully state or fully private. The potential costs of private schooling were a concern to her. Adding to this were the constant student protests and there was a sense of desperation in her message: "I just want a bit of time to pass and for this (protests) to calm down and be solved. My son is in the Sixth Form and I do not know what will happen. There is uncertainty everywhere" (Pa4, 7th December 2015). This sense of uncertainty and mistrust towards the system permeated the message of all participants when asked questions relating to assessment, student activism and policy reform. As a private school, the issues related to school reform brought conflict within the interviewees' private lives rather than school life. In the latter, there was a sense of calm and continuous work in the running of the school. The national reform agenda was not a priority for school leadership strategic planning, but it was noted, observed and experienced by some interviewees as an ongoing element of their day-to-day lives.

The student protest movement received support from interviewees. Students wanted an education that was free, of quality and equitable. The parent

participant (Pa3, December 2015) recognised this right of the students and he valued the intentions of the movement:

> I believe that the Chilean educational movement is born of a need of students and parents from low socioeconomic groups to have a higher quality education, which they are not getting [at the moment]. Today, to be able to access a school of this level, unfortunately it is only open to an elite who can afford it.
>
> (Pa3, 7th December 2015)

He also acknowledged the reality that the lack of equal access to quality education was depriving capable students of fair opportunities. This was something that other participants also recognised, however there was a strong view that quality education was a contested field. The teachers and middle leaders agreed that there was no clarity within the movement to what they referred to when they talked about quality. In this sense, one respondent said: "I do not know if they know what they are asking for. I think they have an intuition, but I think they are not so clear what they are asking. (…) There are a lot of slogans, [but] little depth" (Pa3, 7th December 2015). He added that quality only happens when there are good and well-trained teachers. They should be able to prepare a delivery that invites students to be active participants via good questioning, discussions, contesting ideas, this gives a strong role to students in lessons. There was a perception from participants that this was missing from the student movement; i.e., a depth and breadth of ideas. Nonetheless, it was the students who brought issues to the policymakers' table, not teachers. There was a sense of disappointment, amongst them, that practitioners had not been able to respond to the core needs of the Chilean educational system.

National Assessment Policy

The school had no strategic programme to direct teachers' actions and attention to respond to Chile's two major high-stake national tests - SIMCE (GCSE equivalent) and PSU (A level equivalent). There was a recognition that schools in general measured themselves via these national exams and this was important for them. P1's school has appeared within the national league tables as a result of the programmes implemented and the overall direction of the school. "There has not been a focus on PSU or SIMCE, but, as I say, as a consequence of curriculum implementation" (Pa1, 7th December 2015), one teacher asserted. There was also a reflection that the statistics delivered by these assessments were just the beginning. Much critical thinking needed to take place and sometimes, depending on the lens of analysis, the data can serve different purposes. There was a suspicion that the information provided served better the purpose of the policy makers than the schools.

However, it was felt that the national assessment system did not provide a viable means of assessing different pedagogical methodologies. If the school based its progress via project-based learning or a transdisciplinary offer, it

would be difficult to assess student progress via high-stakes tests whose only focus was content. The school needed to develop its own forms of assessment that showed a development of content, skills and dispositions in students that matched the school's vision and profile.

It was highlighted that the school had a strong bilingual programme that enabled Year 2 students to be bilingual. The national assessment was too easy for students, so the school needed to adjust its approaches to measure students successfully. There was an indication that the students' background supported and enabled this. Parents' socio-economic background facilitated the school's input in this respect as parents seemed to support and understand their role and that of the school to contribute to students' current and future prospects. However, this was not clear-cut as indicated by Pa4 (11 December 2015). There had been parents that had rejected the school's provision due to the lack of appropriate infrastructure such as the lack of a football pitch. This is symptomatic of an education system that operates on free-market principles.

In relation to national assessment, a school middle leader explained that the situation was complex. Although there was a commitment to deliver a curriculum centred on students, parents did ask questions about national performance and their expectations were high. Therefore, P1's school was subject to the same pressure as other schools. Pa2 (10 December 2015) proposed that national league table results needed to be analysed more: "If we make the best preparation, but how [is it the case that] this better preparation does not give us better national scores, and that is also a question that comes from parents" (Pa2, 7th December 2015).

All things considered, P1's school participants saw themselves with strengths when it came to assessments and results within the national exam system, but this did not seem to offer them the potential to fully measure the constructivist provision they offered, something that put them in opposition to the wider Chilean approach. The school seemed to have negotiated these challenges well so far, and it seemed that many of the strategies put in place enabled the school to perform successfully. The school community appeared certain that the educational philosophy would not change; it was the national curriculum content that demanded readjustment to work for them. In this sense, P1 had been effective at negotiating the needs of the system and that of the school by keeping the integrity and addressing the needs of both.

Principal 2 – Participants' Experience

Educational Reform Policy and Student Activism

In P2's school, the community members interviewed all agreed that the educational system contributed to the social inequality in the country. However, Pb3 (10 December 2015) argued that the middle classes had been forgotten in this process and the current reforms affected them more than other groups. They already struggled to pay for a semi-private school, and given

the changes, it meant that they would struggle even further and would have to opt for a municipal school, something seen as an unfair outcome. The rationale given had to do with the difference in social skills from state school children and that of the semi-private sector, with the latter group performing better in this respect. There were anecdotal stories of poor hygiene, poor care of children and foul language used by students in municipal schools. In addition, the student-teacher relationship was poor; it was "often contemptuous, insolent, without respect [for teachers]" (Pb1, 10th December 2015). To this latter point, it was commented that this was something that P2 would not tolerate in her school.

Another view was that the current message from policy makers was complex and unclear: "the big question of the schools, (…) [is that] they are not very clear about the future; we are not clear, as parents, as principals" (Pb3, 10th December 2015). The implication was that as a result, the whole process was difficult to follow for all in the school and much of the discussion between parents, teachers and principals was centred around the future; P2's school would have to decide eventually to become either a fully private or state school. The major problem here was with keeping the integrity of the school's profile and vision that responded to the spirit of the sponsor's Catholic congregation. The intention is that all students were able to leave with this stamp:

> So, what I see is in the future is that [this stamp] can perhaps be diluted, if we become (…) a state school, if we discriminate, because I do not want to discriminate, but we will be handled differently.
>
> (Pb3, 10th December 2015)

There was a doubt that municipal schools could deliver a solid education based on values and with a strong student profile. Therefore, principals in the semi-private sector were struggling to understand if their school's mission and vision would be intact with the changes. There was also uncertainty from the sponsor, a Spanish religious organisation, and they were not involved in Chile's day-to-day educational story. So, this caused uncertainty for parents, teachers and the school principal.

However, some participants indicated that it was not all perfect in P2's school; there were challenges. They had a great deal of contact hours, an average of 38 students per class, and long working hours. However, it was noted that the leadership was not to blame for this, but the system. Pb3 (10 December 2015) implied that these difficulties were made easier by the good behaviour of students, respect for teachers and the support of the principal. There were comparisons related to the richer social capital of children from semi-private schools. State school students enjoyed fewer holidays – rarely, if ever, going abroad - and fewer activities such as cinema visits or participating in sports, compared to students from semi-private or private schools. In the view of one respondent, they had "access to the culture" (Pb1, 10th December 2015).

Although the teachers and the middle leader interviewed had also worked in other schools, their experience was most positive in P2's school.

There was an acknowledgement that, within church schools such as P2's, there was no union that supported teachers. This is something that was put forward to the school sponsors. It was necessary to have a representation that protected the interest of practitioners. However, this had not been resolved and the thinking was that it would remain unchanged.

Pb1 (10 December 2015) added that problems with the education system included the number of universities offering teacher training, the lack of technical college education and the paucity of strategic thinking from policy makers to determine what was needed. The expectation that the market could regulate this was unrealistic and an intervention was needed to inform needs and take appropriate action to train specific professionals.

P2's school presented a great deal of reflection related to the current reforms. Of all sectors, hers was the one most impacted by the changes. The parent (Pb3) had strong views on the need for choice, of which they were deprived. This was based on the type of values to be inculcated in her children. The explanation given related to, admittedly, anecdotal evidence about student behaviour in municipal schools, with Pb3 (10 December 2015) at pains to point out that this was not discrimination, but centred on an entitlement to choose. Religion also seemed to play a big role in the exchange; municipal schools could not deliver this in this respondent's view.

In relation to student activism, there was an understanding that the student protests succeeded in making people think and enabled Chilean society to have a closer look at its education system. There was positive support from participants towards the movement's objectives of quality, equity, and free and secular education for all, but not towards the protests themselves and the loss of lesson time. In fact, the students in this school did not get involved in any national action. There was a degree of gratitude that they were spared this scenario, as many schools in the state sector lost almost a year which, as Chile operates a grades-based transition system, led many students to repeat a year.

Pb3 (10 December 2015) recognised that students felt compelled to be part of the protest, but they were discouraged by the parents themselves. The school tackled the issue via the creation of student agency opportunities, providing forums and meetings to allow space for students to engage with the national agenda, to promote student voice and participation and also to gauge the perception of the students confronted with such social upheaval. The participant parent commented that her advice was that there was no need to go to the streets, as she felt there were other practices that would have a similar impact:

> Talks and forums were organised between students and teachers discussing the subject. Because there were some students talking to us, with the PTA, who told me "You know what? I feel like I have to go to the street," and I said, "But, what you are doing in the streets you can do it here; you can make a forum and propose ideas, think about it".
>
> (Pb3, 10th December 2015)

Interviewees in general, had strong messages for policy makers that the reforms had failed them, and this was not going to change. There was a strong sense of discouragement, that the changes did not promote and support teachers or parents. One participant raised the view that the coverage in Chile had improved, but "the next step is the quality [of teachers], (…) in what they do in the classroom and what changes they can generate" (Pa2, 10th December 2015). The implication was that real changes should be focused there to improve the current state of the system.

National Assessment Policy

There was pride in the results of the school and how it was perceived externally. There was also satisfaction in relation to the efficiency of the school and how effectively it operated.

There were also reflections on how effective the school was at balancing academic needs with assessment and the human aspect of this. It was said that there were cases of performative stress, but the school had a positive and supportive role towards students who struggled to meet high expectations. It is worth noting that, in the Chilean national context, many students are heavily tutored at home or in institutions dedicated to preparing students for high-stakes exams. P2 always responded with compassion and encouragement when students burnt out and the school strived to be kind, welcoming and courteous, not just academic.

In general, assessments such as SIMCE mattered, but not to the detriment of classroom practice, and the school remained focused on the quality of delivery within normal lessons, accompanied by planned mock exams and, if necessary, counselling, to help students. The school and its students did perform well in national tests, so there was no need for a concerted action here. There was also a sense that P2's school had a strong and reliable internal system of evaluation providing data that correlated with national performance. For example, they had their own assessment for reading comprehension that occurred before SIMCE (GCSE equivalent) and this test provided an analysis of student performance that acted as a precursor to the SIMCE results.

According to some participants, the content and approach already delivered enough to support external assessments, therefore, there was no expectation for alternative actions in lessons: "You know, it is very curious, but we here in the school, we do not prepare for SIMCE nor are we suddenly worried about how the student will do in the PSU, that result comes *per se*, naturally"

(Principal 2, 10th December 2015). There was a confidence that not openly teaching to external assessments but delivering consistent quality lesson content in line with the national curriculum programme worked well in the preparation for higher education entrance exams. This gave a degree of peace of mind to parents who sought an education that led to university and P2 played a key role in guaranteeing that the school delivered to these expectations.

From the parent and one teacher interviewed, P2 did experience a degree of pressure due to parental expectations. They were committed to seeing their students going to university, so they wanted results. The expectation was that they went to "Russell group-type" institutions for which the scores needed were very high, but nowadays, private universities were offering scholarships, so the market was becoming competitive. This was changing the higher education offer in the country. Private institutions were capturing students with high scores, which pushed the school to deliver the results parents needed to access the scholarships of the private sector or aim for the country's most prestigious universities.

The message from P2's school participants was that the educational field was complex and unclear despite the information available. Considerable uncertainty surrounded the policymakers' reforms and the student movement added to an already tense educational scenario. According to the participants, P2 had managed to balance this by discussing issues with stakeholders, being informed and managing the expectations of teachers, students and parents in all areas. There was a feeling that schools like P2's school did not participate within the national agenda and yet they were the ones directly touched by the changes. Within national examinations, P2's school presented itself with a solid programme of studies capable of delivering results, without disrupting the normal school process. There was confidence in her actions and decisions.

Principal 3 – Participants' experience

Educational Reform Policy and Student Activism.

Here staff believed in the possibility of change and supported it. The reforms were regarded as confusing but looked upon positively and the wave of student protests were respected and admired for their influence on these changes. There was the belief that, without the reforms, working class groups would never have access to quality education. It was currently impossible for families to cover the costs of a five- to six-year higher education course without going into debt. Despite this, the new generation was becoming aware of their entitlement to education.

A member of support staff was proud of her role and how she had the freedom to act for families that struggled to provide opportunities for their children and for whom this school represented their last chance:

> From my position as a secretary I can do more than what I could be doing in another place, from the reception of the parents when they come to look for a place, from guiding the children who arrive here with school refusal, for a long time I have come to think that I found my vocation here.
>
> (Pc4, 9th December 2015)

Educational reform is experienced via an eye-opening process in which students have access to opportunities that were no longer pre-determined by their working-class background. Students from these backgrounds had started to access higher education, to enter colleges as well as universities. Education was seen as a provider of a wider range of paths for students to succeed:

> How do I see education? The idea is to form a person for life, so that he learns to defend himself in life, so that he learns to have his place in life and can say "I am such a person and maybe I will be a kindergarten assistant, maybe I'm going to be a mechanic, but this is what I am and I'm not going to walk the streets stealing."
>
> (Pc4, 9th December 2015)

The focus on enhancing opportunities and aspirations of their students was shared by nearly all participants, although there was a frustration that their aspirations were not considered as the result of a system still geared towards those with the means to pay.

There was also an indication that the current reforms were still in their infancy in terms of impact, with more work needed to change professional understanding and actions. One interviewee described how school leadership in general still had much to address for it all to work:

> At a national level, in municipalized schools, the principals are never in the schools ... in the subsidized private schools, the principals go sometimes to the establishment, they do not know their students, they rarely know the teachers because they are hired by an external corporation…
>
> (Pc4, 9th December 2015)

The scenario above led to frustration and discouragement. When asked what the principals should do instead, the reply was involvement and empowerment as a key feature of their roles. As for policymakers, the expectations were assertiveness and knowledge:

> [The policy maker should] say "This director I want her/him to run this school, because s/he has these characteristics and these and these" and within those characteristics [the principal] has to be able [to say] "I'm going to choose my staff , I want to know with which students I am going to work and I want to know who I am working with".
>
> (Pc2, 9th December 2015)

The view from the participants was that P3's school was different. He worked visibly in the school and knew the students, parents and teachers. His strong capacity to form teams that acted as middle leaders was commended by all. Additionally, and related to the sponsor, was security. There were negative experiences from past jobs but, in this school, the sponsor managed the resources, so all members were paid on time and contracts were respected. This allowed teachers and support staff to focus fully on the students:

> In the previous school, I had to be begging for my salary, do you understand? So, it's terrible and that's something that happens in general (…) How can you worry about children, plan or prepare a nice lesson if you have the worry that they are not paying your salary?

(Pc2, 9th December 2015)

This reality matched much of the research that, in countries like Chile, policymakers have much to do to entice and support educators whilst ensuring labour agreements are respected and upheld. In addition, the system started to deal with different types of education in poor areas that firmly focused on performativity and exams as a way to improve student progress. This led to unfortunate situations where schools became extremely intolerant of student behaviour. There was a sole commitment to performativity with little focus on the development of the child. "If a child laughs, 'No, this child cannot be here,' [then] s/he's to leave" (Pc2, 9th December 2015). This was seen as contradictory to P3's staff concept of schooling and actions needed to ensure student care.

P3's role within the system of reforms was to ensure that sponsors and school activity supported staff via a respect for working conditions and a building up of trust in his actions. This applied to all his relations with school members internally and externally and was aided by his background as teacher, Director of Learning and now a principal. He knew that he needed a work force whose basic needs had been addressed so they could better focus on affecting students' life positively, regardless of what was happening at a wider systemic level.

National Assessment Policy

There was a sense of unfairness towards policymaker's assessment system and expectations of the school. "Here we don't deal with the topic of SIMCE or PSU, it is not an indicator that makes us modify strategies" (Principal 3, 9th December 2015). P3's school is supposed to perform at the same level as mainstream schools, yet the school has students who dropped out of school for two years and need to catch up with content in a year. The school day is strategically long, from 08.00 to 17.00, to get students out of the street and allocate a caring provision with a pedagogical methodology and resources to match. As a school, they had just had a cohort going through the PSU, not to access university *per se*, but to have the experience of taking their final secondary exams. It was felt that, according to P3 and its leadership team, the assessment system did not

reflect the context in which teachers work in this school and that these examinations were too standardized and decontextualized to be meaningful to the school, its teachers and students. When it came to national curriculum content, they tended to provide succinct content for students to complete their secondary education. In relation to external assessments, there were also curious events, such as when students sat an official Ministry of Education exam yet never heard again about it. The word 'PISA' resonated with this interviewee (Pc1, 9th December 2015) who suggested that it posed important questions about how informed schools were of external demands to participate in these assessments with no brief or timeline.

However, there was pride that last year when, although low by national standards, Year 12 students obtained their best maths SIMCE results ever. Pc1 (09 December 2015) was delighted as she had taught them. This idea of celebration permeated the messages of all respondents, as it was clear that these successes meant much to the wellbeing of the children and their families, who indeed endured very demanding life experiences. Pc3 (09 December 2015) had strong aspirations for her child; a desire for her student to succeed and achieve beyond expectations. She saw this school as enabling her to obtain good results in the PSU. The education system, without the reforms, was costly and untenable, however there was a personal commitment from the parent to find the means for her child to succeed. She had personal frustrations: "I would do what it takes for my daughter to pay for college or what she wants to study, I'll do it because [my parents] did not do it for me and I want my daughter to be more than me" (Pc3, 9th December 2015).

Without the reforms, the system was not offering fair opportunities for families and their students, nor was there a range of possible career paths. Assessments were not offering any element of choice or awareness of other possibilities for potential jobs. They were centred entirely on academic achievements with very little focus on vocational careers. It not only seemed that the educational system needed to reconsider its expectations and plans for an assessment system and higher education provision that matched student interests, but there was also a need for policy makers to have a strategic approach towards long-term labour needs to manage a market with potential workers without job prospects.

Principal 4 – Participants' experience

Educational Reform Policy and Students Activism.

In P4's school, the participants felt that their school offered opportunities that the system failed to provide. Chile did not provide enough opportunities for young people to grow. There was still much work to be done and the rush to pass reforms and legislation through congress sought precisely to facilitate this process. Many of the respondents had a commitment to work in schools of high vulnerability. They wanted to create genuine opportunities for secondary level

students to access the world of education via appropriate internship training that led to a secure job.

One respondent mentioned that students here had better opportunities to find a job with a better salary. This was an achievement for them as many of them came from households where their own parents had not finished their secondary or even primary education. These children were the first generation to complete their studies.

The school recognised that they did have limited funding, resources and access to expensive technology within a traditional system. The big companies could deliver genuine opportunities to expose students to the world of work via a blended approach of college theory and pastoral care and the internships provided by them. The school had built a partnership despite the constraints of the current educational system which prioritised academic rather than vocational outcomes.

Some of the respondents also talked about how their role was not valued across Chilean society, that the system did not value principals or teachers. There was much discussion about teacher morale and the need for support in a job that was not easy:

> The system initially has not had the capacity to raise the profile that education has had for the development of the country and, therefore, the importance of teachers, the management teams and the principals themselves, who lead all these processes (…) People see principals as just another person in the school, who signs documents and nothing else; you are discredited in a certain way because the system has led to this.
>
> (Pd2, 11th December 2015)

This creates schools with little expectation from students and little development of opportunities for their student cohort. In fact, some interviewees highlighted how the current system was geared towards the creation of cheap labour, poor social mobility and the failure of students from poor backgrounds. There were scholarships, but this was not adequate for supporting a meaningful group of individuals to access the full range of educational opportunities.

The current reforms that sought to create a fairer access by providing free higher education were seen with hope but linked to the efforts of the student movement rather than policymakers' actions.

There was much discussion about the need for quality education, but this expectation could not be put entirely in the hands of practitioners who have 35 to 40 students in small classrooms, especially if that included young people from high-risk environments. As explained by one interviewee:

> Students here (…) are young, agitated, impulsive, hormonal; where there are four or five of them that did not sleep at night because their parents were fighting, because there was shooting in their neighbourhood or they had to sleep with four or five or six, or eight more people or because they have to sleep in the armchair or they really come to school because they come for breakfast or lunch.
>
> (Pd1, 11th December 2015)

Scenarios like the one above denotes a system that for many years was failing to address the needs of an important and sizeable group of Chilean society, a failure that led to anger and discontent. The current reforms were seen as an attempt to address these issues, at least in spirit.

That said, P4's school's innovations meant that it was working ahead of the systemic reforms. The school had created a provision that built future possibilities and choices for students who would not otherwise have such options. It looked for innovation and motivated the private sector to participate with education in a partnership. This in itself is different, as the private sector normally led the schools rather than acting in partnership with them.

In addition, the parents who participated in the interview commended the school's effort for its caring role in providing an environment that safeguarded and protected their children. This was something that parents valued under the helm of the new principal with a zero-tolerance approach towards any action that disrupted the school's need to grow and provide students with meaningful opportunities:

> How can I not rejoice and recognize the work they are doing? When I find out, they have detected a person who is armed, or who is stealing, or tried for a joke, for a nonsense, throw a match and set fire to a room with children inside. Then, when I see that they take action (…) and I take them seriously.
>
> (Pd4, 11th December 2015)

There was an agreement that the systemic reforms were needed, but the school was intent on ensuring that any new national direction would not be allowed to disrupt its current innovative trajectory. A duty of care for those wanted to access and participate within the new school mission was paramount.

There was also a mention of social discrimination. Just because their students came from a "*población*" (shanty town) should not mean they did not enjoy the same education as the children of a congressman, senator or president. Both groups deserved equal opportunities, and this started with education that was free to all, not a commodified commercial transaction:

> Many people are tired of seeing that education is a business, health is a business ... and they are the two things that make the world and affirm the world. Because a person who has no education, becomes a puppet.

(Pd3, 11th December 2015)

Some participants also mentioned that there was a great deal of corruption, with individuals who abused the educational system for their own benefit. This affected students in schools, especially for students like those in P4 who struggled to have access to an education in line with their abilities and passions.

Other views highlighted the systemic impact of student action and the part it played in provoking the current wave of reforms, legislation and acts of parliaments. These new changes caused by them were more in line with the expectations of the great majority for a fair educational system:

> I believe that the Chilean student movement has the positive characteristic of having awakened us from a long lethargy where everything was in the status quo without movement, without change, without initiative and where it was necessary for the authorities, that families, the teachers, that all the country in fact, would be shaken and begin to rethink the education that as a country we need.
>
> (Pd1, 11th December 2015)

That said, P4's students did not participate actively in the movement and student perception of this movement is an area worthy of further academic investigation.

There was a sense that the steps taken so far within the reforms and social upheaval were meaningful and had created a seismic shift. However, there were concerns about the pace of these changes and there was uncertainty about the implementation process and their management amongst the principals interviewed.

National Assessment Policy

National assessment tests were of little impact or consideration for this institution's overall achievements and progress. The PSU and SIMCE were not strong enough indicators that could lead to changes in education according to some participants. They acknowledged underperformance but felt an assessment system was not able to produce changes in the educational field in the way the student movement was able to.

The school, instead, strived to make a provision for the development of student skills and opportunities via internships with a focus on preparing students for a working environment. P4 did not promote national test results as a way forward for the school. It delivered "tools [for students] to develop in the business area in the future, which is what a professional technical school aims at" (Principal 4, 11th December 2015). The school felt that they accomplished their objectives as technical college regardless of SIMCE or PSU results. They admitted that they were not the best results, but they promoted a different type of education. It

did not mean that they ignored their impact and some remedial work was undertaken within areas of underachievement in maths or language:

> Our SIMCE is bad (…) [but] it allows us to take remedial measures to improve, so that we work hard on language and communication, (…) but it does not end up reflecting the final objective of the school; because this is a [vocational] school and (…) we fulfil our goal (…) to train technicians.

(Pd1, 11th December 2015)

It was said that the content of assessments was too generic and did not deliver the opportunities for students to sit tests whose content was more pertinent to a technical narrative. There was a source of frustration that national assessment policies were not fit for purpose for schools like P4 and so did not represent the true value of the school. They simply offered a statistical message that did not take into account qualitative work in relation to student outcomes and opportunities. What they needed was to open up career paths and promote vocational courses as valid opportunities for students. One teacher added that these assessment instruments created the illusion of having a more professional education system, but did not necessarily guarantee a certain economic future.

However, the parents interviewed had a better perception of the PSU, as it offered them the opportunity of higher education for their children, primarily university:

> The truth is that for me, it is relevant that they can have access to higher education (…) Certainly, as parents, we believe that the most important thing is that our children have (…) [something] for their efforts; [so they can have] a life a little lighter, not so complex or complicated.

(Pd3, 11th December 2015)

All in all, P4's interview participants were broadly supportive of current reforms and saw student activism as the source of these changes. The assessment system delivered some degree of information and the school acted discreetly to remediate areas of underperformance, but the school was moving towards an identity that was not centred around academic performance for universities but preparing individuals within a vocational strand. The participants were supportive of the changes implemented by P4 as a whole and the direction taken. The national reforms did not affect them directly as their efforts were geared towards a type of education centred around skills and an early career offer. This did not mean they ignored the current national agenda, but P4 had provided a strong sense of identity that allowed the school to move forward within a turbulent field.

To sum up the messages from the various school communities regarding their perceptions of their principal's effectiveness, there are a number of common

themes that resonated with international research findings about successful principals:

- Trust.
- Vision and direction.
- Balancing compliance with autonomy.
- Importance of having been a pedagogical leader retaining a focus on instruction and learning to raise standards.
- Presence, either directly or indirectly, through meaningful, values-driven relationships.
- Reliance on others to lead and act, which could be translated as a distributed leadership approach.
- Thorough knowledge of all stakeholders in the community.
- Permitting others to have a voice in the school.
- Strong relationship with sponsors.
- Strong sense of moral purpose that goes beyond the confinement of a job in order to have an impact on students' lives.

Based on the participants' interview reflections, these principals' experiences and actions seem to resonate with much of the international literature on the subject of successful school leadership. They focus their influence on teachers, curriculum design, fostering new leaders in schools, building teams and strong channels of communication that are based on face-to-face actions or physical presence within the schools. One aspect common to all is they are in schools actioning their messages and leading by example. In addition, they do not allow the current wave of reforms and the student movement to affect the stability of their institutions or their agendas for change and improvement. The schools and its students matter above all.

Overview of this chapter

This chapter sought to connect with the experiences of the principals' interview participants in order to verify, from their perspective, what these principals do to deliver school leadership that has a positive effect on students. The section was organised around the research questions and brought together the understandings of community members from each school. The main messages were that the principals did not ascribe to any leadership framework or model when leading their institutions taking, rather, a more spontaneous approach. They were guided by their experience, their knowledge of Chile's education system, their values and a sensitivity to their settings. On the whole, these principals seemed to build trust, rely on others to accomplish their objectives and had strong sense of moral purpose. Lastly, despite the turbulent educational landscape, these principals did not allow it to destabilise their institutions and they ensured a "business as usual" approach, despite ongoing reforms and significant social protest and disruption.

CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter draws together the findings of the study and links the analyses of the principals and communities' interviews with the Literature Review section.

After the previous finding sections from principals and the reflections from teachers, parents, middle leaders and support staff about them and their input into their schools, the analysis shows the emergence of seven themes that might show how these principals could impact student outcomes and opportunities within the Chilean context:

- Theme 1 - The principals show evidence of a strong sense of direction that can involve a sense of a vision for the school.
- Theme 2 - The principals strive to work with all individuals across the school community, mindful of that community's particular context.
- Theme 3 - The principals have a strong sense of moral purpose that influences their actions, despite a wider social climate that was often resistant to change.
- Theme 4 - The principals do not follow prescribed leadership patterns identified in much of the literature for developed nations' models of leadership.
- Theme 5 - The principals are trusted by their communities and sponsors.
- Theme 6 - The principals are subject to generic national testing regimes that do not cater for the specific circumstances experienced by their school communities.
- Theme 7 - The principals are aware of the significance of educational reforms and the national student movement but respond with a 'business as usual' approach.

Before commencing my next section on "Setting the Scene," I would like to draw your attention to the below table that links each principal with their codes and these to each theme above.

Principals' Coding Summary Linked to Themes

The below table intends to add further understanding to the process of analysis and the connection between coding/categorisation and how this contributed to the overall analysis and treatment of the data. In each column you will see the codes associated with each principal and then the different codes linked to each theme. Note that there is a great deal of overlap amongst codes in terms of their capacity to inform more than one theme.

Principals	Principal 1	Principal 2
Codes	Academic history, Academic research impact, career to date, Chilean culture, context awareness, direct influential action on students, dominant economic model, educational influence, identity, indirect influential action on students, influence of Chile education context, institutional self-reliance, leadership approach, leadership models, mindset, moral purpose, national tests, OECD, other professional experience, pastoral care, personal experiences, personal factors, personal life event, personal reflection, PISA, political views, professional growth, professional development, professional experience, reflective leadership, school background, school culture, school effectiveness, school quality, staff development and support, strategic impact, strategic thinking, student protests and activism, supportive structure, worldview. Curriculum innovation, Leader's personal qualities, pastoral care, reflective leadership, schools fees & gratuity, Sponsor,	Academic history, academic research impact, career to date, Chilean culture, context awareness, curriculum innovation, dominant economic model, educational influence, family background, identity, indirect influential action on students, influence of Chile education context, instructional leadership, leadership approach, leadership models, mindset, moral purpose, national test, OECD, other professional experience, pastoral care, pedagogy, personal experiences, personal factors, personal refection, PISA, political views, professional growth, professional development, professional experience, reflective leadership, school background, school culture, school effectiveness , school fees & gratuity, school quality, staff development and support, strategic impact, strategic thinking, students protests and activism, supportive structure, timetable, worldview, leaders personal quality, parental support, Principal's training, sponsor.
Theme 1 - The principals show evidence of a strong sense of direction that can involve a sense of a vision for the school	Academic research impact, context awareness, indirect influential action on students, professional growth, strategic impact, strategic thinking, leadership approach and models	Instructional leadership, leadership approach, strategic thinking, strategic impact, personal factors, school effectiveness, school quality, indirect influential action on students,
Theme 2 - The principals strive to work with all individuals across the school community, mindful of that community's particular context	Reflective leadership, leaders' personal qualities, pastoral care, sponsor, staff development and support, leadership approach	leaders' personal qualities, pastoral care, sponsor, staff development and support, leadership approach, school context, school quality,
Theme 3 - The principals have a strong sense of moral purpose that influences their actions, despite a wider social climate that was often resistant to change	School fees and gratuity, Sponsor, School effectiveness and quality, curriculum innovation, Chile education context, reflective leadership, strategic impact, Indirect influential action on students, national tests	Moral purpose, school context, school culture, Chile education context, dominant economic model, national tests, school effectiveness, strategic impact, indirect influential action on students, school fees and gratuity
Theme 4 - The principals do not follow prescribed leadership patterns identified in much of the literature for developed nations' models of leadership	Leadership models, personal experiences, academic history, dominant economic model, OECD, leader's personal qualities	Instructional leadership, leader's personal qualities, Strategic thinking, strategic impact, mindset
Theme 5 - The principals are trusted by their communities and sponsors	Supportive culture, School culture, Staff development and support, School effectiveness, School quality, pastoral care	Sponsor, parental support, staff development and support, school culture, school context, supportive structure, pastoral care, school quality
Theme 6 - The principals are subject to generic national testing regimes that do not cater for the specific circumstances experienced by their school communities	School culture, School context, Chile education context, National Tests, PISA, OECD, School quality, Curriculum innovation	School culture, School context, Chile education context, National Tests, PISA, OECD, School quality, Curriculum innovation
Theme 7 - The principals are aware of the significance of educational reforms and the national student movement but respond with a 'business as usual' approach.	Leadership approach, strategic thinking, strategic impact, Chile education context, dominant economic model, School quality, School effectiveness, school background	Leadership approach, strategic thinking, strategic impact, Chile education context, dominant economic model, School quality, School effectiveness, school background, School fees and gratuity
Principals	Principal 3	Principal 4
Codes	Academic history, Academic research impact, Chilean Culture, context awareness, Curriculum innovation, Direct influential action on students, Dominant economic model, Educational influence, Indirect influential action on students, influence of Chile Educational context, Institutional self-reliance, Instructional leadership, Leadership approach, Leadership models, Mindset, Moral Purpose, National test, OECD, Pastoral Care, Personal reflection, PISA, Political views, Professional development,	Academic history, career to date, Chilean culture, context awareness, curriculum innovation, direct influential action on students, dominant economic model, Educational influence, family background, indirect influential action on students, Influence of Chile education context, institutional self-reliance, instructional leadership, leadership approach, leadership model, mindset, moral purpose, national tests, OECD, other professional experience, pastoral care, pedagogy, personal

	Professional experience, reflective leadership, school Context, School culture, School quality, staff development and support, strategic impact, strategic thinking, student protest & activism, supportive structure, Worldview, Leader's personal qualities, Personal experience, School Promotion, School quality, sponsors, staff retention, supportive structure	experiences, personal life events, personal reflections, political views, professional growth, professional development, professional experience, reflective leadership, school culture, school effectiveness, school quality, staff development and support, strategic impact, strategic thinking, student protests and activism, supportive structure, worldview, cultural capital, uncertainty, supportive structure,
Theme 1 - The principals show evidence of a strong sense of direction that can involve a sense of a vision for the school	Leadership approach, leadership models, strategic thinking, Instructional Leadership, Strategic impact, educational influence, Moral Purpose, indirect influential action on students	Indirect influential action on students, Leadership approach, Instructional Leadership, pedagogy, school quality, strategic impact and thinking.
Theme 2 - The principals strive to work with all individuals across the school community, mindful of that community's particular context	School context, school culture, staff development and support, supportive structure, staff retention.	Curriculum Innovation, indirect influential action on students, supportive structure, staff development and support
Theme 3 - The principals have a strong sense of moral purpose that influences their actions, despite a wider social climate that was often resistant to change	Moral purpose, PISA, OECD, Political model, Chilean educational context,	Moral purpose, curriculum innovation school quality, pastoral care, pedagogy, Indirect Influential of Chile Education Context
Theme 4 - The principals do not follow prescribed leadership patterns identified in much of the literature for developed nations' models of leadership	Leadership approach, worldview, Leader's principal qualities, OECD, Instructional Leadership	Academic history, career to date, Chilean culture, Leadership model, Leadership approach, Instructional Leadership,
Theme 5 - The principals are trusted by their communities and sponsors	School quality, staff retention, staff development and support, school culture, context awareness,	School quality, supportive structure, staff development and support, professional development, strategic impact, Sponsor
Theme 6 - The principals are subject to generic national testing regimes that do not cater for the specific circumstances experienced by their school communities	Curriculum innovation, Chile educational context, National Test, OECD, Pastoral Care, PISA, School Culture and School Context,	OECD, National tests, School Context, School quality, Curriculum Innovation, supportive structure,
Theme 7 - The principals are aware of the significance of educational reforms and the national student movement but respond with a 'business as usual' approach.	Student protest & activism, School culture, school context, Strategic thinking, strategic planning, Mindset, Moral Purpose, political view, reflective leadership, Chilean Culture, context awareness, Dominant economic model, Influence of Chile Educational context	Student protest & activism, School culture, school context, political view, reflective leadership, Chilean Culture, context awareness, Dominant economic model, Influence of Chile Educational context

Table 6.1 Coding summary linked to themes and individual principals.

Setting the Scene

School leadership in Chile is linked to the current state of Latin American education whereby, until recently, there has been little interest in creating policies that aggregate status and value to school principals as a force for change and progress in schools (Aravena Castillo and Hallinger, 2017). Research on leadership in the region is limited (Weinstein and Hernández, 2016) and recent compared to the plethora of studies undertaken in developed nations:

> A small set of Latin American countries, led by Chile, accounts for a majority of the school leadership publications in this century, meaning the published record of leadership for most countries is very thin; and (…) in the few places where there are policy efforts to emphasize leadership, their points of reference appear to be Anglo-American leadership concepts and researchers.

(Flessa et al., 2018, p.193)

A positive is that Chile is showing a thoroughness and commitment via research publications (Aravena Castillo and Hallinger, 2017, Flessa and Weinstein, 2018, Marfan and Pascual, 2018) to study the role of principals and how it serves student life. The study of Flessa and Weinstein (2018) found little research on school leadership overall, although this has increased in the last decade. However:

> The biggest risk is that these initiatives do not consider the particularities of the region and try to copy a-critically, without further analysis, models of action that come from other socio- educational and cultural contexts.

(Flessa and Weinstein, 2018, p. 179)

These Chilean authors continue by adding that the region has a range of problems associated with a colonial past, wealth concentration and strong levels of poverty. As discussed earlier, the four principals interviewed for this thesis appear to be able to negotiate external system reforms, break cycles of social inequality and, in the case of the schools of P3 and P4, challenge quantitative research findings that would seem to offer little hope to their schools (OECD, 2011b, UNICEF, 2018).

To achieve this, my research indicates seven significant themes worth y of further exploration

Theme 1 – The principals show evidence of a sense of direction that can involve a sense of a vision for the school.

The findings both from principals and participants seem to reinforce the premise that they lead their institutions with purpose; they know what they want to achieve for the betterment of student provision and achievement. Their vision directed the schools towards aims that sought to open up opportunities for students to do better or to have an improved life outlook.

For P1, the job was about supporting staff in their efforts to educate students. When he thought of his job, he always considered how he could support staff to "get there", for example, when the International Baccalaureate Programme was being introduced and his staff were reticent because they did not know the programme. But "I think (…) in management jobs, one has to (…) think of this career as a huge conversation, you should be attuned to that and you should be listening and tuning in into what is going on" (P1, December 2015).

P2 centred her work on the quality of teacher delivery and her commitment to be a different type of leader. She witnessed how this did not work if she was in her office and not engaging with teachers. For her, what happens in the classroom is of real impact for students and this was her justification for being as involved as possible. P2 mentioned that she knew all her teachers very well,

she knew their possibilities and their impact on the school, and this allowed her to make strategic decisions and give direction to the school. For her, progress was to see children who, in Year 1 struggled to learn, able to read and write and more by Year 13 (her school is through school from KG to Y13) because of all the actions she had implemented, the students were able to leave the school ready for their next steps in higher education.

P3 had a strong belief that to serve his students, they needed to create a different type of school. This was shared by his staff and they felt strongly that this was a course of action the school needed to provide as they were quite probably the last chance for these young people. He had very specific targets to achieve with a special focus on nutrition, lesson delivery, curriculum change and access to resources. He asserted that he affected students education via guiding the teaching practices, purchasing specific materials such as technology, supporting teacher delivery and checking that the national curriculum was fully covered.

P4's vision was as a result of noticing that students did not graduate from secondary schools in technical colleges and how some thought that the curriculum would be easier than in the state sector. He perceived this to be a distorted view of reality and was committed to change it. The promotion of his vision is centred around teachers and company owners so that "not only teachers believe in you, but also these companies that open a space to this school".

These principals learnt quickly what was needed to be done and they trusted this direction fully. The above echoes the discussions in the Literature Review that assert that successful principals establish vision and direction in their institutions (Day and Harris, 1999, Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005, Leithwood and Azah, 2017). They articulate convincing messages to key stakeholders to enact strategies that have a clear impact on making aspirations a reality. These principals, on their own terms and in their own way, are able to convince their colleagues to take action and to create a sense of priority that enables them to implement changes within a short timescale and this was recognised by those who took part in the interviews. They are people centred and manage tensions to foster collaboration mainly by modelling their beliefs with actions and decisions that then bear fruit. This was seen in their reflections and that of their school members. As explained by Day and Harris (1999), they act boldly to raise educational standards with the overall support of their staff. P1's continuous search for possibilities within the middle years despite already being a high performing school; P2's commitment to ensure no time is wasted when it comes to teaching; P3's duty to social equity and opportunities and P4's actions in changing the curriculum to improve student opportunities, are all events that participants recognised as part of the work and organisational purpose. They all adhere to all decisions made to support these principals in their endeavours. Yukl (2012) writes about "change-oriented" behaviours. These, in the hands of leaders, aim at increasing "innovation, collective learning, and adaptation to external changes" (p. 72). This is present in the principals, but it is dependable

on the school context (P1 school's setting is different to P4) and needs and how much influence is required to involve others.

Overall, the principals interviewed focus their actions on articulating a message that shows their commitment to a vision. P1 has a clear focus on improving learning in the middle years; P2 wants a curriculum less focused on grades and standard subjects to make for a more interesting provision; P3's strong focus on social justice and equity provides families with renewed opportunities to rescue their children's education after two years of drop out; P4 is committed to a Dual Plan as a vocational path for students who would otherwise leave school with few meaningful qualifications.

Theme 2 – The principals strive to work with all individuals across the school community, mindful of that community's particular context

A key message from the literature review is the influence of indirect actions that principals take to promote their vision and direction amongst teachers and all staff at large (Sun and Leithwood, 2017).

These four principals invested much of their time gaining the support of all internal and external stakeholders. P1 had long gained his staff's commitment due to the years invested in the school and proven successful leadership in the field. The participants interviewed did not fault his leadership and how he exemplified the trust they placed in his strategic thinking. According to them, he invested time and resources, ensuring his teachers received bespoke training in pedagogy and he appointed teachers to positions of responsibilities such as coordination and head of departments, which showed knowledge of them and their potential. This connects with other research (Day and Harris, 1999, Gurr et al., 2006) that asserts that successful principals encourage leadership at all levels, making training provision an urgent matter and a core priority. This comes to enlighten Flessa et al.'s (2018, p.192) view that "Chile['s] (…) professional development is primarily private and mostly unregulated," indicating doubts about its quality. In this case, the school is private, but the quality and its monitoring reside directly in the hands of the principal as he is the deliverer and guarantor of the process and its aims of securing the quality and purpose expected. P1 explained during the interview about the type of training teachers receive. They had the opportunity to travel across South America as well as within the conglomerate of schools he led. This emphasis and financial investment on training is unusual within the other sectors. He showed a great sense of pride about his teachers and the ability of his middle years leader and their ability to deliver and learn from each other. He had confidence in his teachers' ability and their commitment to engage with his educational philosophy and deliver accordingly.

P2 negotiated competently with her sponsor the need to enhance the curriculum offer to incorporate workshops, explaining to them: "The kids are

tired!" Even though the workshops were linked to curriculum needs, they enhanced student skills and learning experience for future higher educational needs. According to all participants, she offered advice, observations and gave direction on a daily basis in groups or individually to teachers, parents, students and support staff on matters related to the whole school. She was respected and feared; her work cycle was highly demanding and there were high expectations for teachers to perform. P2 had a strong conviction that teachers were key in the betterment of student progress. This links with the Mourshed et al. (2010), statement that "three things matter most: 1) getting the right people to become teachers, 2) developing them into effective instructors and, 3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child". P2 seems to represent the ideas and actions of these authors within her school. She is adamant about this view and experience and she delivers to this belief. Her ideas also denote a clarity of expectations that she shares assertively with staff. Teachers know that they would find an ally in her for their ideas, programmes and projects that are well-defined, relevant and assessment focused. This matches the Wei (2017) commonalities of high performing leadership frameworks with leaders leading instruction, improvement and innovation by fostering teacher participation in curriculum innovation. One participant communicated that P2 exerted a strong influence on the school and, as noted, this was a rhythm that not everybody could follow. This links to the Turnaround process and ISSPP (Duke, 2014, Gurr, 2015) regarding the expectations of principals when building a productive school and leading initiatives to improve student success. The school is perhaps now in a position to live with less of her influence, something which perhaps will lead to more participation from more timorous teachers and enhance their confidence and practice.

P3's success revolved around collaboration and teamwork. He understood that the challenge of supporting both high-risk students and their families necessitated a team of strong-minded experts and working holistically on strategies, unconventional solutions (e.g. paying family bills) and providing timely information to act promptly to ensure no child is left behind. This meant fostering staff voice and allowing them to influence school strategies via team observations and reflections. P3 demonstrated the capacity to encourage these colleagues to take risks in their provision, responsibilities and delivery. One key aspect that facilitated that was the respect for labour agreements and ensuring staff received professional treatment denied them in other institutions, such as performance-related pay. From his discussion and demeanour during the interviews process, it was possible to see that this was something he was proud of, not only because he introduced it to the school, but also because of its success. He is a novice principal, building up his own repertoire of experience of managing personnel. Thus far, his focus has been being personable and attentive to people's view and this relationship building enabled him to create a rapport with individuals that benefited him during difficult conversations. This links to Murillo and Roman (2013) whose study identified a key hallmark of good principals as the promotion of team building activity and staff appraisals. P3's

actions did not reflect the Sepúlveda (2015) investigation that Chilean principals do not partake in effective forms of staff feedback.

P4's Dual Track curriculum needed buy-in from staff from the outset. He was new to the school with a big task before him. By his own admission, he needed to speak to individuals and convince them that uncertainty was not a reason for inaction. He enhanced a whole-school community by having student needs at its heart and bringing in private industry with state-of-the-art infrastructure to enhance their experience and future opportunities. This could not have worked without the help of staff who had to readjust to a different timetable, new subject areas and demand for a stronger pastoral role. P4 made selling his vision one by one within the school a priority. He knew that staff would experience doubt, uncertainty and fatigue and was prepared. P4 was sensitive to his staff's ups and downs. He knew this was part of the change process for the school and his input and prompt action were needed more than ever to keep morale going. Indeed, having interviewed members of P4's school community, I heard no complaints about low morale with much more being said about the factual difficulties of implementing the new curriculum. This has a connection with the literature (ISSPP, 2018, Gurr, 2015, García Garnica and Moral Santaella, 2015) that refers to the capacity of good leaders to work closely with their school communities because they understand their role in creating a fairer society. P4's action was motivated by a strong sense of equity that was centred not only on students, but also on staff needs.

The commonality between all the principals is that they all know their school context and environment beyond the school gates very well. They know that, in order to achieve their objectives, the community needs to be fully on board. They have a strong sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their actions because they feel strongly that they are right. As explained by Merchant et al. (2012), successful principals encourage their staff to believe in themselves when it comes to teaching and learning. P1's commitment to a better programme for middle years; P2's commitment to deliver workshops that are enjoyed by students; P3's work to enhance teaching via a more constructive methodology and P4's complete overhaul of the Y12 and Y13 curriculum, demand a level of communication that entices and captures individual imagination so all can see valid opportunities to enhance student school experience, despite the challenges. This is capacity building; these principals have the ability to work for and with their staff to solve issues of quality and equity in education. This can mean redistribution of responsibilities, reallocation of tasks, constant communication or creating new positions to respond to new strategies and vision. The measure of P1's success is for students to enjoy learning; for P2 it is to enhance their curriculum offer; for P3 it is to ensure students come and finish their secondary school after being out for two years and for P4 it is to create an educational path that leads to better job and life prospects. They are successful in what they do via the involvement of others, being responsive, taking effective actions, respecting and showing awareness of their context and, above all,

believing that change is possible for their students. As stated by Day (2014, p. 19):

> Bullet pointed lists of strategies which may help to achieve success can never fully represent how leaders achieve and sustain success.

These principals do not have a list of actions to improve their organisations. They rely heavily on their capacity to engage with others, learning about and knowing their specific contexts via ensuring their presence and thinking is constantly shared. This constant analytical and observational modality allows them to come up with strategies that have a long-term impact for students. The actions of these four principals deliver a message of involvement and participation that gives them agency within their schools in an otherwise strict educational climate. Some of them fundamentally work in challenging circumstances to make students' lives meaningful and worthwhile. Connected to this are the findings of Sinnema et al. (2016) that successful principals reinforce the precept that leadership and student outcomes are strongly related via goal setting, strategies employed, curriculum, instruction, professional development, safety for children and their families. These principals are able to navigate and negotiate challenges because of the strength of their conviction in their vision and in the lived school values.

Theme 3 – The principals have a strong sense of moral purpose that influences their actions, despite a wider social climate that is often resistant to change

The evidence presented by the OECD (2011a) presents Chile as a country with a need for system reform. The OECD (2019) recognises uneven income distribution and posits the fundamental role of education in the process of changing patterns of inequality or creating greater opportunities for its population via appropriate reforms that guarantee fair access to education for all (OECD (2017). The current inequity in the Chilean education system has led to social conflict and upheaval as a means of achieving fairness in educational access (Bellei, 2013). Indeed, the OECD (2011, p. 9) message is that "students' expected learning outcomes should depend only on their own effort and capacity, and not on considerations over which they have no influence (gender, ethnic origin, family's socio-economic level)". The latest PISA results show that Chile has not yet met the average scores internationally for maths, reading and science (PISA, 2015) and show that there is much to do to meet international standards. Additionally, the country has seen numerous interventions according to different studies (Matear, 2007, Valenzuela et al., 2013, Elacqua, 2012, UNICEF, 2018) to address issues of equity but all have demonstrated that there is no quick fix given the levels of inequality present. Chile is still one of the most unequal countries in the world (UNICEF, 2018). Some studies (Arango, 2008b, Valenzuela et al., 2013, Bellei, 2013) have suggested that the secondary education privatisation reform contributed to creating a system that reinforced social stratification and fewer opportunities for those who do not have the

economic means, i.e., education has contributed to the lack of social mobility and progress for individuals. This created social conflict (Bellei, 2013), as large groups of society became frustrated by a system that was continually jeopardising their desire to succeed via pre-determined specific education sectors which serve their social group, creating a school system that segregates its members (Ahumada et al., 2016, Valenzuela et al., 2013). Although this level of complexity presents challenges for individual schools and their principals who find themselves constantly negotiating a system that curtails the aspirations of their students, there are principals and their teachers that do have answers in response to this:

> In complex societies, producing and sustaining a vital public-school system is a tall order (…) you cannot do this without a dedicated, highly competent teaching force (…) And you cannot get teachers working like this without leaders at all levels guiding and supporting the process. The principal's role is pivotal in this equation.
>
> (Fullan, 2003, p. 5)

The school principals interviewed are illustrations of Fullan's claim, none more so than P3 and P4. P3 is committed to get extra funding for schools like his to improve their care plans. P3 recognises the challenges he needs faces to make his school more effective for the students. This does not necessarily mean performing at a national level in tests, but to be regarded as having an impact on student outcomes and opportunities. This is because his main role involves working closely with students such as eating with them, being present at breaks or doing prayers, i.e., being a meaningful adult in their lives. There is strong sense of self-efficacy and commitment in P3's narrative. There is also a desire to act both at national level and within the school to ensure that schools like his continue to acquire credibility and support, as he feels that such schools are offering what their children need.

P4 created a new school curriculum that has the potential to make student time during their secondary years meaningful and productive. P4's work has not been at all easy when he started with this at a national level. Especially during the time, the Ministry of Education did not approve of his Dual Track programme. He did not hesitate to engage with people at high level to build up a case to continue with this new curriculum:

> I saw dual experiences; I saw them abroad (…) But I never saw a standard established here, so I had to go to the national board of education, because I did not let them trample over me.
>
> (P4, 11th December 2015)

His actions did yield results as the programme continued with their approval. P4 knew what was as stake, knew the field and its staff and fought for its implementation. He had also worked at a more personal level, acting on those

in need like the time he met an ex-student working in one of the companies he was partnering for his Dual Programme:

> He came and approached me and I said to "[oh] (…), are you here?" And he says "Yes, Sir. I'm doing my work experience" and I told him, "How can I help you?" And he said, "Tell them to leave me here, sir". And I remember that I went to talk to the manager, and I told him the whole story, (…) and he said "Now, he is a priority" and well ... I see him suddenly, he changed his life, he has children now.
>
> (P4, 11th December 2015)

The above is a powerful story, but it shows that principals like P4 move at all levels within the educational field without hesitation and trepidation, as their core business is at all times centred on students. They do not abandon their strong sense of moral purpose once the students leave school; they continue serving them, because their commitment is towards the happiness and fulfilment of students' lives. This is an empowering emotional stance for P4, and those like him, that strengthens their actions and positively influences the way they are perceived by others.

P1 and P2 act within the same sphere of action as P4 and P3, but with an emphasis on instruction and careful attention for performativity in national and international assessments. I say 'careful' as, in their interviews, they did not see national tests as an end in themselves, but very much as a task that needed to be undertaken. They concentrated their efforts on ensuring that classroom provision was of the highest quality and they ensured that the curriculum was responsive and delivered to school and parental expectations, i.e., they wished to go beyond minimum standards.

P1's concerns with student engagement led to changes in Year 10 and Year 11, not so much in its content, but in how the content could be imparted to transform's Chile's didactic pedagogical approaches into a more project-based approach. P1 was proud of having made a group of Chilean teachers rework the national curriculum. It was clear that he had great confidence in their work, but also a sense of satisfaction that they were able to re-design a curriculum which implied a bigger role for students in the process via project-based learning as well as challenging their own methodological conceptions. Much of this was the result of P1's own philosophy, inspired by his international experience. His sense of moral purpose grew from his commitment to combatting the parochialism he felt is deep seated in Chilean education in order to offer an educational experience to students that is different from the performativity one delivered by private institutions like his that do not contest the national curriculum but deliver it to the letter.

P2's stance relates to an unambiguous commitment to her actions, philosophy and knowledge of the school. She leads by modelling what is needed by her actions. P2's focus was not only on performance, but also on educating the

individual, indicating that her actions went beyond simple expectations of her job to a more vocational commitment, in her case inspired by her strong religious faith and values. P2 also understood the need for a different type of provision when the school moved from a continental-style timetable to a full day. Whilst many schools opted for more numeracy and literacy, P2 acted on student wellbeing, and encouraged teachers to come up with ideas to offer different workshops that enhanced students' skills.

The above illuminates how these four principals act within a complex and demanding context, working closely with their staff to make changes happen. They affect their students' opportunities and outcomes by creating instances where the lack of social mobility had the potential to be broken by focusing on the quality of pastoral and pedagogical provision and, where necessary, acting on the constraints presented by the system and its policymakers. The poorer - and so higher risk - the sector, the more complex, multi-layered and personalised the pastoral input became in relation to pedagogical demands and the stronger was the sense of moral purpose to affect students' lives beyond school settings. Ideally, this was to ensure that students acquired the emotional strength and self-regard to achieve, despite their circumstances. These principals consciously know this and opt for actions that strengthen a bond between teachers and support staff to work collaboratively for the common good. This implies a strong pastoral intervention that is more relevant, active and significant than the simple delivery of curricular goals.

Theme 4 – The principals do not follow prescribed leadership patterns identified in much of the literature for developed nations' models of leadership.

The literature on school leadership in Chile presents a country that has not yet found a strong, established and widespread programme to serve principals' professional development (Maureira et al., 2014). There is still a contrast amongst schools with strong approaches to leadership and those without (Pina et al., 2015). Other studies (Maureira et al., 2014, Marfan and Pascual, 2018, Horn and Marfán, 2010, Raczynski and Muñoz, 2005) highlight how principalship in Chile seems to have established patterns by working with three pillars - the emotional, that seeks teachers' involvement; the technical or pedagogical and the organisational that manages the daily running of schools. There are some attempts such as the Leadership Framework, but it is neither compulsory nor well-known and is not accompanied by appropriate training for its implementation (Campo, 2016, Cancino and Monrroy, 2017, Mineduc, 2015). The project does detail approaches such as a shared leadership and vision, i.e., patterns of distribution, however, the OECD (2017) in its list of recommendations is still requesting that the Chilean government initiates a widespread implementation of the framework.

The principals' responses in relation to leadership models varied from a knowledge of and interest in them to a more 'thinking on your feet' approach.

In two cases, the influence came from experiences learnt abroad and another one from researchers outside education in Chile. This seems to respond to the study of Vaillant and Zidán (2016) that principals in Chile have not adhered to formulaic practices to work within their institutions, however, the authors point out that there are still few studies related specifically to Chilean principals.

The current Chilean legislation is specific in addressing principals' role in schools:

> Article 7 Bis
> In the pedagogical field, they will have at least the following attributions: formulate, follow up and evaluate the goals and objectives of the establishment, the plans and programs of study and the strategies for their implementation; organize and guide the instances of technical-pedagogical work and professional development of the teachers of the establishment, and adopt the necessary measures so that parents or guardians receive regular information on the operation of the establishment and the progress of their children.
>
> (BCN, 2017)

Thus, the government is recognising the fundamental role that principals play in their schools (Santiago et al., 2017), but beyond the above, there is no other significant and extensive action that strengthens these expectations and endorsements. However, it has to be noted that although much of it is inspired by international understandings of the principal's role (Wei, 2017), adopting policies from other systems does not mean that Chile will have the same results (Auld and Morris, 2014, Weinstein et al., 2014), even with suitable funding to enable such strategies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). Chile presents a socio-economic and political scenario that is substantially different from other more developed countries (Riley et al., 2017), one with wide deficiencies in opportunities, equity and social mobility.

Given the above landscape, all the principals share the view that there is no single leadership approach that defines them, nor are they led by specific approaches to their practice. Although they know of and are attracted to some specific ideas, nothing denotes any full engagement, depth of understanding of content or any unswerving support for a given leadership stance. They also informed me that they received no central government support, information or input when it came to leading their institutions, nor any kind of framework to modulate specific actions in their role. This comes to support Leiva et al. (2017) and Falabella (2020) research that there is a detachment between government expectations and what principals know and do.

P1's message was candid and simple when talking about leadership models:

> Not sure that I know too much about leadership models to be perfectly honest. I have never got into studying management and leadership, so I kind of play it by ear.

(P1, 7th December 2015)

His stance showed confidence in his team's actions and decisions. He worked by fostering and building capacity amongst the school's management team, which in turn fostered teachers' ability to innovate. He was respected, supported and held in high esteem for his capacity to be friendly, welcoming and serene, no matter the circumstances.

When referring to policymakers' action to develop the role of principals in Chile, he recognised how unclear the field is: "What I don't know is exactly what the plans are in terms of how they are going to go about it. But it is fairly obviously they are trying to get people to" think. This may serve to present how the principals' role needs much attention and work within Chile. P1 is an influential force in education in the country, and yet, he has not been consulted.

P2's leadership style is predominantly her own doing. She does not adhere to or indeed know of any leadership models. She relies on her experience and convictions to lead her institution. When talking about leadership, she explained it is about applying the same degree of responsibility that you have at home. She admitted being a risk taker and being prepared to say sorry when she was wrong. This shows P2's determination to negotiate with others on matters related to provision to improve delivery for students. Her negotiations had in mind costs as the major obstacle, but it seemed that she was able to clearly achieve this for her students. She also acknowledged that the job demanded taking risks with failure being part of that, and yet she did not withdraw from actions if she deemed them necessary.

P3 was the only one that referred to models of leadership, but only in theory. He felt inspired by them, specially one called "*Gestión Sutil*" (Majluf, 2011) defined as the capacity of leader to value the input of individuals and make them the centre of attention. P3 sees his role as trying to foster those aspects in his teaching team to enable them to work within conditions that are emotionally demanding and complex. He is supportive as explained previously. He also explained his confidence in this current leadership approach compared to others:

> If I had a different type of leadership, I would not be bothered about anything else and the teachers will be queuing by 5 o'clock to leave for home, here the teachers always stay longer because they enjoy what they do.

(P3, 9th December 2015)

He did not have a name for what he does, but he recognised the literature in which he sees his actions reflected. He is dedicated to working with his teachers in teams and believes in them as the primary force to impact student lives.

P4 was the only principal who referred to distributed leadership. He was fascinated by research and study. “Well I have always been studying, I have like three Magisters … I try to (…) entertain myself (…), I would love to do a PhD.” He showed great curiosity in this thesis. When referring to leadership styles he informed me that he was interested in distributed leadership as a form of delegation with trust. To allow other to participate within the school direction “without looking at them.” He further reflected on the issue of distribution by providing an example from his own team:

> This young man who was just here, is my Learning Director, he is young, recently trained. He is excellent, he arrived here a little before me and with many idiosyncrasies that in a traditional system would have been misunderstood. (…) In a traditional system he would be lost, [now here] as you give him possibilities to be in charge, he is like an arrow, move things forward.
>
> (P4, 11th December 2015)

The above analysis is insightful because it shows that he is not pushed to act on or to excel in this type of leadership, but rather, he sees it as a valid concept to explore. He found examples in his practice to corroborate the values of the approach and agree on its significance. Somehow, it came to ratify his actions, but he does not question his own current conception; there is no compulsion from his part to change his leadership approach.

He also talked about his personal experience with other school principals in the field of leadership. He highlighted that there is a huge commitment to change education in the country, but there is no clarity how. This observation is vital as it correlates with the research on how inconsistent the field is in relation to the principal’s role in schools (UNESCO, 2014, Weinstein et al., 2014). School principals see themselves as an influential force in education with a role to play when impacting student outcomes and opportunities at national policy level, but it seems that the system has not provided a meaningful space for them to do so.

Despite the considerations above, the four principals interviewed demonstrate a commitment to leading their institutions with strength and a sense of duty. They use their values, experience and expertise as tools for change. They trust their convictions and intuitions because they feel that their actions support student learning and opportunities. Much of their action and thinking could be matched to conceptions of leadership in line with more developed systems of education. Notwithstanding the emerging domain of educational leadership in Chile, these school leaders show the capacity to work within their institutions to add value to their student population, to work with their communities and to figure out what was needed in the long term for them to be successful with all the zeal of principals in more developed systems. So, although Flessa et al. (2018, p.193) “conclude that there is little systematic investigation into the work of principals in most countries in the region” (Flessa et al., 2018, p.193) and countries such as Chile have no “systematic information about school level

leadership whatsoever, [and] so much remains in shadow" (Flessa and Weinstein, 2018, p. 179), yet this state of affairs has not deterred these successful principals from delivering a role that may match or even surpass principals' action in more developed countries. These principals in Chile act instinctively, guided by the core values and moral purpose they endorse, in their care for their students and seek, above all, to build a provision that enhances lives regardless of socio-economic status.

In this regard, the diagram below seeks to compare these principals' actions with those found in more developed educational systems as detailed in the ISSPP studies:

ISSPP (International Successful School Principalship Project)	**Successful Principals in Chile**
1. Culture of high expectations – high yet reasonable with a focus on internal needs. 2. Multi-perspective approaches – no adherence to specific leadership models, but concerned with staff, their professional development and instruction. 3. Leadership distribution or leadership of many. Meaningful participation from different stakeholders: teachers, parents and students. 4. Core leadership practices: setting direction, developing people, leading change, improving teaching and learning. 5. Values-led Leadership – challenge the status quo, fight for their students and empowering view of what is possible in their school communities. 6. Capacity development for teaching and non-teaching staff to be better at what they do. 7. Trust and respect from the community to their actions based on their core values, transparency and integrity. 8. Continuous learning in that they seek new opportunities to develop as professionals. 9. Personal Resources an acumen of traits that enables them to do what is best for students. 10. Context Sensitive, principals moderate and reconcile their school settings to continue an agenda of change and improvement. 11. Sustaining success strategies that enable them to continue organizational growth and improvement. (Gurr, 2015)	1. They gain trust from their school community members. 2. They have a vision - "dirección" - establishing a purpose for their institutions. 3. They set a school direction, i.e. a clear action to achieve. 4. They balance autonomy with compliance. 5. They possess strong charisma, especially during adversity. 6. They engage with all stakeholders 7. They regard themselves as teachers first and foremost 8. They put learning at the heart of improving standards. 9. They build teams and foster leadership potential. 10. They have robust knowledge of their schools and its context. 11. They build a strong relationship with sponsors and owners. 12. They are hands-on, leading by example. 13. They pay attention to curriculum design and opportunities. 14. They know they can never over-communicate.

Table 6.2 Summary that seeks to compare these four Chilean principals' action with that ISSPP.

There seems to be clear parallels between the Chilean principals and the ISSPP findings when it comes to community links, commitment to social justice and the successful management of turbulence within their education systems.

Community Links

The Chilean principals strive to build relationships across the school as a tool to enable change. This can be linked to their charisma, not the norm in Chile, and something valued by staff and parents who seem attracted to this stated desire to support the students. Added to this, they know their community context well and the part that community plays in realising their vision. This necessitates a commitment to constantly communicate with the community, knowing, implicitly or explicitly, that they can never over-communicate. To this end, they build teams and reinforce constantly the teachers' influence in the process, ensuring participation and confidence in and ownership of new projects. These leaders are, above all, teachers, a fact valued by the community who know the principal is somebody who understands them.

Commitment to Social Justice via Effective Participation

The Chilean principals displayed a strong sense of moral purpose in their work, something supported by the community, one that sought to rectify the social injustices reinforced by the country's education system. This purpose, and the subsequent, often bold, actions it engenders for example around learning expectations, methodology, pastoral care, curriculum design and addressing underperformance, builds trust across the community. Their staff know that it is they, who are instrumental in improving learning, the core business of the school, to achieve the larger social goals.

Successful Management of Turbulence

The Chilean principals do not abandon their obligations towards national programmes, but they do subvert them to ensure the school addresses student needs and opportunities for future success. They balance autonomy with compliance, ensuring what needs to be done happens, but not to the detriment of what adds genuine value to students' lives.

Drawing on their managerial and pedagogical knowledge and personal acumen, their work is grounded in what they feel is needed in their contexts, regardless of external challenges. They show resourcefulness, resilience and a conviction that it can be done, and take time to spread that message, building capacity to make their vision a reality.

Differences with ISSPP

These principals appear responsive and proactive, but their actions are restricted to their own schools and contexts compared to more developed educational systems where there is a concerted national effort to utilise principals' skills for sharing expertise and experience beyond their own environment. The Chilean principals seem to work in isolation and their success is recognised parochially, not consistently nor acknowledged nationally. There

is little or no public investment in sharing their expertise to create systems of development for other principals.

These four Chilean principals inhabit an educational system in constant, and systemic social and economic change compared to many other principals in the ISSPP studies. They have come to accept and live within this prevailing climate, but with a significant level of disapproval, scepticism and mistrust towards local policy makers.

There is no focus on leadership styles by the Chilean principals. They know implicitly that reaching out and working with others is key to their success. This is linked to the hitherto lack of formal concerted national efforts to provide financed quality school leadership training. This is in stark contrast to those principals within the ISSPP studies who receive professional targeted leadership training.

Theme 5 – The principals are trusted by their communities and sponsors.

The participants interviewed highlight that their principals were trusted and respected by their communities and perceived as working closely in collaboration with their school sponsors or owners. They achieved this via their strong presence and influence within their schools; they had all been classroom teachers first and foremost; they had a robust knowledge of their schools; they exercised high levels of communication and involvement and they were, above all, approachable individuals.

P1 is highly respected because of his trajectory in education, knowledge and friendly mannerism towards every member of the school. He provides confidence to stakeholders about school progress and the new methodology for instruction that had been developed. He talked about his role as “as a huge conversation (…) [to be] attuned to and you [, as principal,] should be listening and tuning in into what is going on.”

In relation to his school owner, his message was of collaboration and participation. He informed me that owner’s background was in education, which is not normally the case. He took part in board meeting and had a positive view about their actions: “it is an easy board to work with compared to the ones that I’ve seen in other schools (…). There is no attempt from this board to micromanage what is going on inside the schools.”

P2 delivered a message to her school that she was able to work at pace and that she could take on the challenges of the different areas within the school, be it the canteen, reception, joining in activities or teaching. She takes pride in the fact that she is part of everything within the school.

P2 and P1 are helped by their sponsors. In each case, their sponsors are figures that enable their leaders to lead. They listen and support them with their visions

and trust their judgements because, like the principals, they have students' interests at heart. P3, similarly, works under the premise that he needs to be visible and lead by example. He strives to bring teams of individuals together. Their message is that, in effect, they are constantly in discussion with the principal, addressing student needs and progress. These meetings always lead to action in support of student necessities.

The recognition to support others is also extended to his teachers. An important point raised by him was his relationship with the religious governing body. The pressures they discussed related to funding, staffing and resources. Staff acknowledged that sometimes they had requested materials and it had been denied them. Some teachers indicated that they felt that P3 was under pressure to deliver from the administration above him yet there was no indication of strained relations, but rather of expectations that were of more of a top-down nature than in the other schools. However, P3 managed these expectations well and remained focused on his responsibility to teachers and their students.

P4 is an inspiring character who loves his staff and is passionate about their ability to help him embrace a more vocational school. His school seems to be fully behind his project, despite the difficulties and the changes that the project entails. The interviewed participants understood the same message clearly with many of obstacles being addressed communally, but there were no complaints in this respect. It was recognised that he came with a great deal of experience in implementing the dual system and these previous accomplishments gave a sense of security that the project could and would work. When referring to his relationship with his sponsor (religious), it was clear that P4 (11 December 2015) was given a mandate:

> I arrived with a clear desire, and not only mine, but shared by the sponsor, that the school should become more technical professional, because in Chile the conditions to be a vocational college, are often diluted between a traditional and a vocational one.

P4 is optimistic about the possibilities and the process. Many of his frustrations are targeted towards the wider establishment and its inaction to foment vocational education.

In addition, and a common contributing factor to trust building, all the principals had been practitioners themselves, classroom teachers, working at school level as Learning or Pedagogical Directors. As P3 testified, he was able to face his peers with the conviction that he was a good classroom teacher just like them, echoing P2's reflection that she would never ask anybody to do anything she could not do herself. P1 was committed to improving the provision in the middle years because of his experience of and expertise in international conceptions of non-didactic instruction and P4 had designed a curriculum and subject areas to respond to a conception of higher education paths that supported students in challenging contexts.

This theme chimes with the research of Robinson (2007) about the principals' capacity to change schools that attracts teachers, families and students. Much of the work of the above principals is in building a positive and credible discourse about their objectives by focusing on the potential of their projects. Conversely, they are transparent about the challenges, but much of their message is centred around the ultimate goal: student achievement.

The approaches of each one of the principals are distinctively different when engaging and working with their communities in that they have their own personalities, manner, message content and context to be sensitive to. They are honest about who they are and how they approach engaging with colleagues, parents and students. In this sense, Hallinger and Heck's (2010) study about no single approach to leading can be represented by these leaders; but they do all share a strong sense that the job needs teachers to succeed. They are all energetic and passionate principals (Mourshed et al., 2010); great educators in fact, and it was through this input that they connect deeply with their school members and work alongside them. Perhaps, it could be said that this serves to ratify the indirect but meaningful action of principals on student outcomes and opportunities in terms of their indirect connection (Leithwood et al., 2019, Leithwood et al., 2004), by motivating their staff to concentrate on the bigger picture ahead rather than potential obstacles or failures. Leithwood et al. (2004) see principals with two essential objectives for leadership: setting organisational (school) targets and influencing the community to follow them for a common good. It is the latter that the principals interviewed seemed to endorse fully by building strong relationships with their communities (Day and Harris, 1999) including sponsors and owners, because they knew - and promoted - the common goals and valued high expectations across their school. This is what Leithwood (2005, p. 621) describes as "building a collaborative school culture, creating structures to encourage participation in decision-making, and building productive relationships with parents and the wider community." It is what Gurr et al. (2006) define as the communal core values and beliefs that shape instruction, students and the social capital outcomes of the schools. Put plainly, exceptional heads (Hernandez-Castilla et al., 2017) impose themselves for the greater good of students.

Theme 6 – The principals are subject to generic national testing regimes that do not cater for the specific circumstances experienced by their school communities.

All principals participate in national tests and submit themselves to the national regime's expectations and actions. However, they identify that these processes do not deliver enough to their schools to enhance the learning and nature of students they want to develop.

P1 sees some elements of the local assessment system as positive, providing, as they claim to, a measure of the current state of education in Chilean schools. He did have some difficulty in Year Four, when the SIMCE (SATs or GCSE equivalent in later years) are delivered, as the students were taught in English not in Spanish, so some preparation was needed to adjust students to the vocabulary. His schools also deliver International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) exams in May (northern hemisphere session) and the national PSU (A-level equivalent) in November. The idea was to ensure the students can concentrate on both with, ideally, equal dedication.

P1's view is a contrast with P3's and P4's use of national tests. For P3, SIMCE does not provide for the type of cohort, the programme and the curriculum they deliver to high-risk students. They come to his school having been outside the system for two years, then they receive significantly reduced curriculum content in order to finish their secondary education. Yet they are measured in exactly the same way as other state, semi-private and private schools. It is not surprising, then, that they always underperform, despite examination practice and preparation, although there have been recent positive trends in Maths. Anecdotally, P3 told the story about the recently implemented government school inspection service who, on visiting the school, admitted that did not know that schools like P3's existed. P3 said: "We are invisible in the eyes of the Ministry."

P4 indicated that national exams do not create value for or information about his school. The content and approach of SIMCE is geared towards an academic education rather than a vocational one. The same can be said of PSU (A-level equivalent), his students do not have the aspirations to attend university, something that at this stage they could not finance anyway. Only 15% of his students could opt to attend to higher education via a special admission system called PACE (*Programa de Acompañamiento Accesso Efectivo a la Educación Superior*). This programme allows students from vulnerable and high-risk backgrounds to access higher education institutions by receiving funding and adequate preparation to succeed at that level (Mineduc, 2019c). This is something P4 valued, feeling that more access to higher education paths were necessary to respond to students with the backgrounds he works with.

P2 is a supporter of neither SIMCE nor PSU and judges them to have no merit if the students are not prepared to confront the needs of university education. This is what she wants for her school; students prepared with the competencies to deal with challenging work and thinking. Preparation is vital, but not simply for the tests:

> When the publishers offer you the books, they tell you "This comes with special SIMCE support material" [that] does not interest us; (…) If we do well, well, and if it goes wrong, so be it.
>
> (P2, December 2015)

She added to the discussion with a frank assessment about SIMCE deficiency in effectively measuring student learning or reflecting the state of a school performance without acknowledging differences and resources available.

P2 uses data as the start of a conversation and as a guiding tool rather than as representative of her school's current state. The fact that they appear top within the school league tables is not something that she looks for: "it is not the intentionality neither of the school nor of the congregation.... We appeared because we appeared." She informed me that they gave a different international test called *Prueba de la Calidad de los Aprendizajes* (PCA), which is predictive of exams, but not at the centre of their work.

The principals all agree strongly that the current offer of national exams is too generic and unresponsive to all of their students due to their different circumstances and background. They could not work with them as key performance indicators to provide important messages for their institutions. They all resorted to other forms of assessment that provided a fairer representation of their institutions or added value to their curricula such as IBDP, PACE and PCA. In addition, the message seemed to be that just because the system did not deliver, it did not stop them from continuing to set targets (Gurr, 2015) and growing their organisations on the basis of their sensitivity to their individual contexts (Day et al., 2016). In this sense they are a very responsive group of individuals, undeterred by the anomalies of a national performative exam system. A study by UNESCO (2014) suggested that principals were not influential stakeholders; however, the reality of these principals is different. They are highly persuasive individuals with the power to change curricula, direction and school missions in their institutions and at national level, if they felt such a change was needed. They do indeed live amidst traditional educational settings geared towards "fact-based memorisation and recall rather than deep understanding, ability to synthesise with other knowledge and applications in real-world situations outside the classroom" (Pont et al., 2008, p. 26). However, these principals know that education is more than this. They believe in competencies, values and connections. They recognise that education is more than tests and they are committed to that via new programmes, workshops, methodologies and curricula that subvert the system from within, something they fight for with the support of school members. This is in opposition to the study of Weinstein and Hernández (2016) about the lack of school autonomy; these principals demonstrate great capacity for decision making in the management of their resources, staff training and setting goals. There is no pressure for high-scores in the high-stakes national test culture (Barber and Mourshed, 2007b) and they refuse to submit to the temptation to perform to the test, instead building up strong provision for students via their teaching staff and preferring to work with them to improve teaching and learning (Meyers and Smylie, 2017).

Theme 7 – The principals are aware of the significance of educational reforms and the student movement but responded with a 'business as usual' approach.

At the time of the interviews, Chile was undergoing a significant number of educational reforms prompted by the student movement's protests and activism and further ratified by the influence of the recommendations of OECD. Much of the reform centred around equity, access and quality of educational provision. The intention of the reforms was to terminate the co-payment fees within sector two and transition the three-tier system into two: state and private. These changes were seeking to break the cycle where a particular educational sector served a particular social group.

The representations of ideas from principals denoted a response that supported preservation or reform depending on where they work, but they were understanding of the objectives of the student demonstrations.

P1's view described how the current wave of reforms had not been conceived of as a planned process, but rather a response to the national wave of protests or polls. In his view this was not the best way to go about changing education. However, he acknowledged that the wave of student protests placed education on top of the list of policymakers' priorities, something that was not present before.

P2 was very supportive of students' action and how they had brought educational change onto the government's agenda - "in this instance it was the student that brought the issue up". She felt strongly that much of the impact of the student protest was caused by the use of social media to organise the process. This caught everybody by surprise, however, she cautioned, "While you do not improve the quality of the teachers, this will not succeed".

As for the reforms that will affect her school, she had a clear understanding that, given their high co-payment, they will not become a state school until 2030. This is not something that she was concerned about at this stage, however, she felt that some form of selection would continue.

P3 valued the efforts of the student movement and felt that it was important that schools' student councils were strengthened to become a democratic voice that represented student voices and their needs. He was critical of the inaction and lack of participation from teachers, especially in S1 and S2. According to him, when the student movement started to make its mark, "suddenly everyone started to care about education. (…) [the students] took the blindfold off Chileans' eyes." The reforms did not have a major effect on his school, but although he supported the process, he still believes in the right of parents to school choice.

P4 shared P3's view about the capacity of the student movement to put education at the top of the national agenda. "I believe that here there are levels of injustice more or less strong. And that they have not been discussed or addressed." P4 described the system as "abusive," and how it originated with the political establishment and the private system that sought to profit from education.

In relation to the reforms, P4 supported it due to the state of the system: "we live here in [a state of] political decay." There are individuals profiting from education whereas, in contrast, he believes it to be a social service.

In relation to the OECD influence, the message from principals was one of frustration towards Chile's constantly poor results, slow rates of improvement and the unfairness of comparing the country with more advanced, richer and better performing systems. For P3 and P4, there was a sense of isolation as neither international mechanisms nor research provided answers for the children they served. Overall, its impact did not permeate enough to be significantly felt. One interesting view came from P1:

> Chile actually has made some interesting gains which people keep saying that nothing is happening in terms of Chilean Education that there were no gains and everything was stagnated and yet at PISA level, they have shown that consistently they edged up.
>
> (P1, December 2015)

The principals above had strong reflections on and assessments of the current state of the system, yet all of their schools remained untouched by the turbulent processes that had unfolded, with no lesson time lost, even considering that P3 and P4's school represented the student population leading the marches. Although they had strong observations, none of the participants interviewed forecasted potential problems linked to students or teacher actions. There was a feeling that it would not happen to them. The only concern came from P2 who acted promptly via opening forums to support student voice and prevent potential loss of lessons.

Nonetheless, the current study shows an interesting situation, namely that these four principals' messages, reflections and actions do not describe any particular struggle to respond to government expectations, nor do they seem overwhelmed by the task ahead. This chimes with certain studies (Day and Harris, 1999, Davis and Leon, 2014, Sun and Leithwood, 2017, ISSPP, 2018) about successful principals' effectiveness to minimise the effects of external demands, especially those imposed by policymakers. They are aware of what is relevant to them and what is needed to continue their work, however, they also articulate ideas that reveal qualms with and cynicism towards the political establishment, one, because of the magnitude and speed of the tasks at hand; two, because of the lack of information delivered to them; three, because of the dearth of insight in their specific school context; four, because of how these

policies do not add value to their students' progress and five, because there is a sense of disenfranchisement. These succinct scenarios can be linked to Flessa et al. (2018) in the sense that policy makers need to work harder at reducing the conflicts and tensions created by their own reforms. The Aravena and Lobos (2018) study further supports the view that educational reforms in Chile expect principals to be the deliverers of national changes. The result, according to this study, may mean uncertainty, fear and isolation for principals, alongside the expectations placed on them to effectively implement these changes. And, yet, by contrast, none of the principals interviewed appeared to show signs of isolation or fear, appearing instead accustomed to such a scenario and acclimatised to living in uncertain times. They acknowledged that they had received no training and little guidance about the reforms, nor had they been invited to contribute to the current wave of changes affecting them, especially in sector two. This scenario illustrates the study of Flessa et al. (2018) findings about the poor preparation and training that principals receive in general. The research emphasised the need to act swiftly and assiduously in preparing principals for vast educational reforms. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the principals in this thesis possess enough understanding to act and recognise potential issues that could affect their institutions regardless. All of their communities continued with their day-to-day work and remained committed to the direction of the school. The OECD influence is of no concern to their school experience and irrelevant to their school's progress and achievements.

By and large, the four principals do not allow the scale of the demands to thwart their capacity to continue with their school project. It seems that these leaders have an instinct to act on initiatives that they see as having an impact, even if this challenged national policy and authority. There is a sense amongst them that their moral purpose is stronger and more valid than the changes taking place around them and, given the climate of change in Chile's educational system, they opt for continuing their day-to-day job, tackling in-school tasks focused on improving student learning. Ultimately, it has been the combination of their abilities and capacities, values, qualities, strategies and skills, combined with their resilience, decision making, emotional understandings and relationships that is making a potential difference to an important number of young adults.

To further relate the above to the international field in the studies about school leadership, I would like to use Table 6.3 below that intends to evidence the existence of patterns of these principals' actions that match the work of Leithwood et al. (2019) as representative of current strong claims on school leadership. Please note that the information in italics/bold are representative quotes from participants:

Seven strong claims	P1	P2	P3	P4
School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning.	Acts to affect teachers' practice and curriculum via participation, training and research.	Strong presence and direction to influence curriculum & practice.	Team building, delegation and participation in decision making. Strong involvement to foster provision and learning.	Commitment to change via involvement of teachers and community. Strong ability to negotiate and capture support.
Illustrative Quotes	***Absolutely, particularly the PYP Programme …because that shift to a seriously constructivist approach is very difficult for the teachers not just because of the way they were trained at university, but because we are all prisoners of the models we received as students. So, our knee jerk way of doing things is typically the way teachers do things. (P1, December 2015)***	***I have a strong character, I think you have realized that I am a very consistent person, I am not going to ask anyone to do what I cannot do myself. So, if I'm not here, putting chairs, picking up papers, "hosing" the court because tomorrow we have an event, I'm not going to ask anyone. (P2, December 2015)***	***I believe that the entire management team has to be in the classroom, we are not unknown to what is happening in there … One of the things that motivates me a lot to be able to improve and positively influence is coaching teachers. (P3, December 2015)***	***I mean, I came here and said, "This is the first thing that needs to be changed" and obviously the first week was to give many explanations and the second week is to tell them "Let's try it, this is your project too. I want you to join me in this matter" and "I do not have a bad intention; I am not here to disrupt anything… Let's see the results" and this is how we started. (P4, December 2015)***
Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices. a. building a vision, setting direction and build a sense of shared purpose. b. Understanding and developing people. c. Redesigning the organisation. d. Managing the teaching and learning programme. e. Engaging with their communities.	Strong support for his vision focused on student learning, wellbeing and innovation. There is trust, confidence and respect for P1's actions. The school shows a constant need to reinvent itself.	Sets school direction via strong influence on actions and needs by affecting and observing teacher delivery and allocating specialist provision. There is trust and confidence in her actions. Regarded as an extremely hard worker.	A clear vision to provide for at-risk students. The whole organisation is geared towards a strong sense of moral purpose. Is regarded as a listener who manages expectations via agreed decisions within specialist meetings.	Builds a sense of shared purpose via negotiation and conviction of ideas. Knows how to manage people's ideas, doubts and expectations. Evidence to redesign the whole organisation centred on students' current education and future work prospects.
Illustrative Quotes	***P1 is a person who transmits a tranquillity and an experience that leaves everyone calm that the children are in good hands. I think that is the most important thing, that is, that the head be the spirit of the school and [P1] (…) in this case is the reflection of the school. (Pa3, December 2015)***	***I believe that the management not only cares about its administrative part, but that in the end it is with everything. So, if there is a problem, I don't know, let's say an issue with the PTA, she has to check the situation and she calls the president, they talk about what's going on. Then it is about uniting everyone's efforts and trying to ensure that we are all equal in everything. She plays a fundamental role. (Pb1, December 2015)***	***When there is an active listening from the principal, who has been the head of the school, I think that people feel doubly listened to because decisions can be made in the short term. And here we are talking about parents, students, teachers. So, when the parents come here and have some kind of issue, some kind of help, the management is clearly faster. (P1, December 2015)***	***One of the things that the teachers said was that this vocational programme was not going to work, because "our students arrive too late in the morning" and I said "but let's try it, because who is not motivating students [to come early and on time] is us" "but let's see if there is an external motivation". (P4, December 2015)***
The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work.	P1 knows the context and the culture of his school. This has allowed him to identify areas of underperformance and act to improve current approaches. He is aware of the limitations and potential pitfalls as he is sensitive to the school contexts. This has not stopped him from radical changes to the curriculum.	P2 knows and recognises what takes place in her school. She exerts a strong influence, not for radical changes, but in tweaking areas to update the organisation and make improvements.	P3's centredness on student provision to ensure special care enables him to manage overall expectations. He knows the context and relies on this knowledge to affect practice. The changes are geared towards practice and action rather than at curricular level.	P4 learns about the context to identify actions. He is not limited by the context. He works with it to generate a change agenda.
Illustrative Quotes	***Chile is still pretty parochial place and most people are, you know, looking at what's happening internally, but don't really tune into to the larger world. So, you know, there is a global perspective that is missing which I think it is important. (P1, December 2015)***	***I have known (…) [P2] since I came to this school, she has been here longer and I have noticed in a way, I do not know whether to say growth, but of course, she was an inspector (student manager), then coordinator, so she fulfilled her role from what she had to do. But as a principal, I have seen her very close to the people and to everyone and, like everything, at the time, not so close in the sense that she has to also do, comply with the regulations or the contract that the parents signed, depending on the situation of the child; but I have noticed that the***	***For teachers, to get together and to meet to reflect on pedagogy [is significant]; one important thing is to expose teachers to a critical pedagogy, because it is important to consider that every so often, the teachers can become decontextualized from reality, [they forget our core business: students], and we fall into this punishing way which is expelling a child. If we enrol a child here (...), we are not going to remove him from this space. (P3, December 2015)***	***We arrived in March, and as the Ministry of Education told us to "do it" I arrived and sent the students, we started the dual system, the agreements with the companies and a lot of things that we had already prepared. (...) [In] May I received a letter from the Ministry of Education saying that the dual system was not going to be approved, so I said "but why? If we worked for so long on this issue (...) they gave me the justification that our dual system did not agree with the standards of the dual system that the ministry***

		management tries to make it a more familiar environment. And there is a family atmosphere. (Pb2, December 2015)		***had and I said "Hey, I worked for a year for the ministry and the truth is, I never saw the standards." (...) I had to go to the national education council, because I did not allow them to ignore me. (...) They had to revise it and they had the delicacy to accept it and so, we were able to beat the state and the ministry. (P4, December 2015)***
School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.	Evidence of staff motivation and commitment and trust towards his actions. He was able to influence the whole organisation and deliver changes where they were needed due to his trustworthiness and friendly manner.	P2's strong action on fostering quality instruction via modelling practice and advice. Staff is encouraged to innovate within a traditional curriculum if the offer has rigour, organisation and purpose.	The staff in P3's school had strong intrinsic motivation and a sense of moral purpose. Working conditions could be hard, but P3's efforts in bringing people together and agreeing on actions, provided a strong sense of participation.	P4 had to work hard at building support for a complete overhaul of the old curriculum. There were reasonable fears about potential job losses. He worked single-handedly to build relationships and bring on board key players to champion his changes.
Illustrative Quotes	***I perceive it. In other words, it has to do with an internal conviction, it is not that he is transmitting it all the time, no ... because [P1] (...) is not like that, but it has to do with the fact that when he transmits it, he knows what he is talking about and is convinced of what he is saying. So, it makes sense, at least it resonates with me when he talks about things. That transmission of ideas has to do more with an internal conviction, rather than with the way of transmitting it. (Pa2, December 2015)***	***The results will always be the same and good, so that marks a little the line of the school, and it gives me a peace of mind as well, (...) as with [P2] (...) we work at a rhythm at that level, I think she has the peace of mind that the results are going to be good, because I tell the parents in the meetings "Here in this school a subject course does not go without having seen until the last comma or full stop in the programme" and that is what [P2] (...) sees. (Pb2, December 2015)***	***In fact, at the beginning, I was so anxious that I asked my colleagues "But tell me how I can teach these children, how to motivate them" and I was very scared, but the truth is that to build a bond was essential, what I learned all my life, being affectionate with people, with children, I managed to transfer these skills with children who are a little more complicated. Now I am super well, I feel capable and comfortable, I belong 100% to this school. So, super good. (Pc2, December 2015)***	***That's what I liked the most with the change of principal. With the former principal I was ok and worked in the library as a teacher, but I was missing to have my tutor group; it was something I wanted very much. And here, with the new principal, that possibility occurred, in fact, in addition to tutoring, he had another subject called "corporate analysis", which has to do with the new vocational programme, so [he gave that to me], it was a challenge and growth in my job and professionally. (Pd1, December 2015)***
School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed.	Participants felt empowered in their practice and listened to.	Participants felt supported and their ideas and possibilities listened to. Need for approval to enact.	Strong sense of need for distribution. This was a necessity born from complex student needs. Active participation necessary at school level was facilitated by P3.	P4 looked for a shared understanding and was committed to change via delegation and distribution of roles and responsibilities.
Illustrative Quotes	***You know who (...) [P1] is and everyone knows the respect you have to have with him. Although one talks to him, I talk to him and he is the most loving thing there is. He is super loving, nice, he never gets angry, so that also makes one feels close to him. (Pa4, December 2015)***	***If for example, I want to put a Grade for making an instructive text and create, say, a little bird and something that would look very manual and perhaps very far from the language, if I arrived with my assessment rubric and to follow instructions, to recognise such a part, that it is going to be evaluated "this or that", was understood and accepted as long as it was well justified, so she will accept it. So, there was still a margin of freedom in moving from what a lesson could be. (Pb1, December 2015)***	***I think so, I think that we educate ourselves here daily as well and it has to do with the principal [P3] because he is the one who allows us to say how we feel and think and to be critical because otherwise it will be just him talking and we would have to do what he says. I feel that there is a management team here, too, that allows all of us to express our criticism and accept criticism when necessary. (Pc4, December 2015)***	***This young man who was just here, is my Learning Director, he is young, recently trained. He is excellent, he arrived here a little before me and with many idiosyncrasies that in a traditional system would have been misunderstood (...) In a traditional system he would be lost, [now here] as you give him possibilities to be in charge, he is like an arrow, moving things forward. There are very good people here. (P4, December 2015)***
Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others.	Evidence of active participations from teachers, support staff and parents. Strong influence at sponsor level.	Evidence shows that patterns of participation are still limited but growing. Leadership capable of influencing sponsors.	Evidence of strong participation within the school structure. Little influence at sponsor level.	Strong action taken to create distributed forms of leadership. Parents, middle leaders, teachers and students working together to grow the school.
Illustrative Quotes	***Just yesterday while I was watching a huge bunch of teachers in this classroom, all sorts of mapping out different learning objectives on the [Chilean] national curriculum on different subject areas building them into project [based learning]. (P1, December 2015)***	***I learned to be a principal because I was in the company of the sisters [nuns] a lot and they let me intervene, however I am clear that I am not a religious nun and that an educational project that has a congregational charism must be looked after, therefore, I have always talked with the sisters that there is always the presence of the sisters***	***When a child arrives here, there are (...) interviews: initial interview by the principal, interview with the social worker that has to do with the social problems of his family and the child, the interview with the psychologist who is the one that delves the most into the child's personality and a psycho-pedagogical diagnosis. If I want to work in this***	***I think that (...) [P4] has done it, in the short time he has taken over the school, he has been organising a little. We have been participating here for one year, so in the course of this year, I have been fully involved. A few months ago in April (...), we took part of what is the PTA, and we have approached (...) [P4] because I believe that he***

		here. If not in the office, there must be someone, a person who is present, who is in charge of the pastoral care. (P2, December 2015)	***school, I have to have, at least, time to read those cards and know that a child who is acting badly has some problem and I have to know what it is and how I am going to treat it. (Pc4, December 2015)***	***has done something important; he has given staff, (...) students, he has put faith in them. (Pd3, December 2015)***
A small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness.	Trusted, reliable, imperturbable, supportive, respected and friendly.	Influential, respected, doer, persistent, hardworking resilient, reliable accessible and supportive	Team player, listener, student-centred, strong sense of moral purpose, supportive.	Charismatic, resilient, persistent, optimistic, passionate and supportive.
Illustrative Quotes	***The people who work with him feel the confidence to be able to approach him, to be able to say look, I have all these concerns, I feel that here is this, I feel that this is happening, and to be able to tell him. There are people who do not dare, I imagine there are people who are not able to get close and know [P1] (...) and say to him look at this, I am angry with this, I do not like this, I do not know. Mainly that gives trust, just so that people can give him the vision he has. (Pa4, December 2015)***	***Being very present, I do not want it to sound like one is afraid that it will happen but it happens that one has the certainty that one may be passing attendance to a class in the morning and that it is not uncommon for the principal to pass. (Pb1, December 2015)***	***It is because the mission of this school is to work with the student, if the child needs something, the school goes in support of that student, and we talk about material things; we are talking about how many times the parents have no way to pay for electricity or water bills. So that, immediately, if this need arises, the child may be sent to work, so this school provides economic support so that the child can come to school. (P3, December 2015)***	***[P1] has very innovative ideas and is very adept and open to have interviews, to look around here, to look for a better way over there and for example the last time they called me, they held a business meeting with various parts of different companies in Santiago, where I noticed the interest of the company in participating with our school and giving opportunities to the students. I see a [principal] (...) quite committed, not only with the school itself, but also with the SIMCE, for students to get a good score, but also with the students personally. That is what he is giving to the school itself. (Pd2, December, 2017)***

Table 6.3 Comparison between Leithwood et al. (2019) Seven Strong Claims and the Four Chilean Principals of this study.

P4 seems to match strongly the seven claims above. His ability to come to a new school to build up a new programme and reallocate posts of responsibilities and create new subjects resonates with a programme that is delivering a message of turnaround strategies rooted in students' future needs. P1 also works closely within the expectations of the seven claims; he works in a school with huge resources, builds up positive relations with all stakeholders; this is aided by his strong focus on student wellbeing. P3's stance is an interesting one, as his teachers and support staff were committed to the moral purpose of the school, with a vocational approach and shared belief that their role was greater than salaries and working conditions. P3 built on this context and enabled their stance to grow by a constant and reciprocal feedback on student needs. P2 was a successful teacher with a high-performing school. She had an approach that some would regard as authoritative; the participants' message was that she was a strong presence who listened to their needs and was reliable, accessible and supportive, but she needed a convincing message from teachers to enact changes or implement needs. Her approval was needed.

Overview of this chapter

This chapter presents the link between the learning obtained from principals and participants and connecting that with the literature review. It serves to remind us that Chile - part of the wider Latin American region - is still in development with its education projects compared to countries in more developed systems, where investment, concepts of school leadership and research seem to be more advanced in quantity and quality. However, Chile is progressing and acknowledging the need for changes in its understanding of principals' role in schools. Policy makers and experts are looking at more developed systems and comparing how their institutions fair with them. The four principals interviewed lived with and experienced these challenges and yet their schools were regarded as successful on their own terms despite difficult circumstances linked to funding, agency and action. They were comparable with the best principals of more developed educational landscapes, despite knowing little of what the literature identifies about school leaders like them and actions taken to support students' achievement and opportunities.

The major themes identified included the principals' sense of direction, community orientation, lack of adherence to particular leadership patterns, trust building to initiate change, dissatisfaction with unfair assessment practices that influenced their students' access to further education and ability to filter events within the wider social domain to ensure their schools continued with delivery and provision.

The chapter end with a comparison between the updated study of Leithwood et al. (2019) 'Seven Strong Claims' and the four Chilean principals of this study. This table shows the comparable strength of these school leaders with this seminal article on school leadership.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis provides an overview of the research. The method utilised represents a qualitive understanding in relation to the successful school principal's role with regard to student outcomes and opportunities. The study was based around four key questions.

Answering the Research Questions

The four research questions were:

e) How do these four principals enact educational leadership within the Chilean context?
f) How do the principals' views of their role and influence compare with wider current conceptions of school leadership?
g) What are the perceived consequences of each principal's actions for student learning opportunities and outcomes?
h) How do principals engage with Chilean government policies to serve student learning and outcomes?

How do these four principals enact educational leadership within the Chilean context?

These principals represent a special type of Chilean leader, one that matches international standards (ISSPP, 2018, Day, 2018, Day et al., 2016a, Leithwood and Day, 2008, Day and Harris, 1999). Despite the local educational landscape, they lead with a clear sense of direction, conviction, shared decision making and moral commitment (Merchant et al., 2012) to improve student opportunities and outcomes, regardless of national policies and expectations if necessary. They have a strong sense of agency when addressing their communities' needs, focussing much of their work on staff as the building blocks of their vision, communicating effectively the need for improvement through changed school systems and practices. They promote participation and leadership at various levels; they engage with students and parents to build trust and they generate transparency and awareness to sustain the impact of the changes.

There are examples of 'heroic' leadership practices in challenging the system, such as P4 taking his argument to the Ministry of Education (all the more heroic given Chile's dictatorship history. Indeed, the Ministry of Education's motto still proclaims "*Por la rasón o la fuerza*" – "By reason or by force"). It is a legitimate claim to say that these principals do not show any hesitation when it comes to improving student learning and enhancing what the schools are able to offer. This leads to their commitment to a culture of high expectations, one tempered with special consideration, reflection and sensitivity (Day et al., 2016a) to their contexts. They respond to these challenging contexts but remain aspirational

when it comes to raising the level of instructions and opportunities; there is no excuse for underperformance in either staff or students. This level of awareness permits them to assess external data critically, recognising what their organisations are doing effectively to affect students' lives. This also necessitates high levels of resilience. The climate in education in Chile is constantly changing and evolving and principals are under increased pressure to deliver. However, the principals interviewed demonstrated a level of detachment and awareness that allowed them to manage external stressors effectively.

In relation to each principal and their role in school, they all come from a perspective of support in that they see that their main role has no direct impact on students but is more to do with re-working the approaches and actions of those that work for them who do have a direct impact on student learning. They believe that, for individuals to perform at their very best, they need the principal's unquestioning backing and emotional commitment along with the relevant training to build capacity. Such understanding allows them to build both collective and individual (Day, 2014) power to improve student learning and care.

They also manage their resources wisely. All of them confront the need to use what is allocated, no matter how modest it is, to improve learning. They involve themselves beyond the call of duty to ensure their school's smooth running and continuity; no time was wasted. This denotes a strong sense of priority modelled by them and recognised and respected by others in their schools.

Finally, these principals live with the prevailing national conditions. They knew that the current waves of reforms and student action at the time of the interviews, had the potential to affect the lives of their students and families, however, they did not allow themselves to be deterred in their vision to make a meaningful provision for the students they serve every day.

How do the principals' views of their role and influence compare with wider current conceptions of school leadership?

The principals view their role as inspiring others in their school communities to influence positive change. Much of their discussion indicated that their actions and thinking are related to distributed models of leaderships (Leithwood et al., 2004) by seeking the meaningful participations of others in their strategies and decisions. They also act within the realm of heroic leadership (Gurr, 2015) by challenging the prevailing national circumstances and expectations to ensure that their educational project could run. However, they are all first and foremost teachers in their own right, and they have also been Learning Directors. They care about the curriculum, the quality of instruction, their educational projects and staff appraisals. This represents a more instructional leadership approach that reinforces the study by Murillo and Roman (2013) that the more dedicated principals are on instructional matters, the better

performing their schools tend to be. These principals know, ultimately, that whatever happens, the teacher-student connection needs to be fundamentally re-enforced, fostered and placed at top of the school strategic agendas.

Above all, they do not adhere strongly to any leadership concept as a guiding principle for running their schools. Rather, they deploy abilities to manage the learning, the organisation, the curriculum and external demands to lead the school with direction and vision (Day, 2005). The Wei (2017) study of commonalities and differences between major leadership frameworks serves to exemplify how closely they align with the expectations of developed systems such as setting direction or goals, collaboration, working with communities and leading teaching and learning. This can also be said of the ISSPP core practices. They focus on key strategic needs, i.e., concern for staff and instruction; they are context sensitive and sustain the growth of the organisation in the long term (Gurr, 2015). Certainly, this is the case for P1's and P2's experience and trajectory in their schools. P4 had considerable experience of the dual system, but he was in a new school, building relations for a new educational project and P3 was committed to enhancing a different type pedagogy for his students which clearly needed the collaboration of practitioners to operate effectively. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that for P3 and P4, their work resembles 'turnaround' practices (Duke, 2014, Meyers and Hambrick Hitt, 2017, Meyers and Hitt, 2018) but without the formal training normally associated with it. They promoted effective instruction, led initiatives for student success and wanted to provide a relevant curriculum, yet they had not received the formal training or shared experience with other principals to indicate that their actions were the result of any systemic influence. I would argue, then, that they have a strong sense of moral purpose; they are inspired by their passion for education and how it can affect others, if it is carried out to the highest possible standards. Although they may be motivated by their own intrinsic values linked to religious faith and the need for change and justice for a fair society, all operate effectively as leaders with two core traits: self-belief and intuition.

What are the perceived consequences of each principal's actions for student learning opportunities and outcomes?

These leaders have a strong sense of what their organisations need to be effective in delivering their agendas. Much of their actions is linked to reorganising the schools and re-establishing a sense of shared purpose amongst staff and those taking charge of the new areas. This clear direction and shared sense of purpose is a relevant consequence of these principals' actions in their schools. This is the key stimulus for the whole organisation to re-consider their current position and, possibly, move in a different direction.

The consequence of the above is that staff see their involvement with school decision making increase. This is especially the case for staff who take middle leadership positions or lead new subject areas as a result of a new curriculum, as in P4's school. This new role for staff is welcome and contributes to a positive

sense of fulfilment in their jobs despite the challenges that change brings. In all of the schools, a great deal of work has taken place to upskill, train and prepare practitioners to deal with the different projects, methodologies, lesson planning and curriculum modification that are deemed necessary to support the school's goals, all of which contributes to building capacity in these institutions.

There is the potential for the development of creativity, innovation and risk taking. As was the case for P4 with a total curriculum overhaul, the practitioners needed to constantly rethink their offer and come up with unique solutions to continue with this task. The programme was innovative to them and to those around them, such as the Ministry. This demanded a great deal of risk taking considering the context and the type of cohort they served. P2's school also worked within the system and relied on her teachers' creativity and skills to deliver workshops that were rigorous in their assessment and content but still enjoyed by students. P1's national curriculum design, demanded from teachers to redesign their scope and sequences for Y8 and Y9 to deliver the national programme with a completely different methodology that they called "National Curriculum Plus." P3's school equally worked with staff that were highly skilled and from varied disciplines that he needed to bring together to ensure that the pastoral care was as personalised as possible. This brought areas from the school together to respond to the new demands from the school's new direction.

The effects of the above are fundamental for students. The changes implemented seek to improve learning via better and different standards of instruction for students that in some cases is based on the 'stage not age' principle. The principals promote a curriculum that is geared to the type of learning that students need based on their age and interests. In some schools, they provided a second chance to students to finish their secondary education or presented them with a renewed sense of achievement and a better future.

The actions of these principals are guided by their student-centred beliefs and their views on student entitlement to a meaningful and rewarding time at school. This leads also to managing external exigencies such as national and international assessments, treating them as a not inconsequential but a nonetheless tangential set of recurring events.

Largely, their presence, their leadership and their strategic thinking served to create new school structures with more participation, involvement and growth that allow all stakeholders to work coherently and efficiently, and with a clear focus on student success.

How do principals engage with Chilean government policies to serve student learning and outcomes?

The principals interviewed were not emotionally affected, nor were their institutions disrupted by the then current wave of student protests and ensuing

reforms. They managed all external pressures with a “business as usual” attitude that helped to minimise (Day and Harris, 1999, Davis and Leon, 2014, Sun and Leithwood, 2017, ISSPP, 2018) the potential tensions between the school, the community and the realm of the social.

They also had strong views about the role of policymakers and how the reforms at that time were not conceived adequately and with enough involvement of those expected to implement them. They had many qualms and much cynicism towards the political establishment, especially for the pace of change that served to create national conflict (Flessa et al., 2018) and a climate of uncertainty within the educational field. There was a sense that policy makers were in a rush to respond to pressure and polls rather than take their time to successfully add value to the education of Chilean students.

However, more generally, the principals are supportive of change and reform, but carried out with more information being shared, with their involvement and within a realistic timescale. They regarded events such as student protests as an awakening for education and praised the students’ role in making education a top priority for the country. Although many of the demands of the student movement matched the exact needs of the schools under discussion here, none of them were affected unduly by any of the events. Also, OECD’s ongoing influence is of no concern to their school experience and is considered immaterial in relation to their school’s progress and achievements to date.

Mostly, it seems that these principals’ actions are geared towards continuing the job at hand as far more relevant and impactful. All of their schools continued with their day-to-day work during the protests and remained committed to the direction of the school.

The next section intends to provide an overview of new understandings extrapolated from the experiences of these principals and participants.

Seven keys - an heuristic drawn from my research:

1. *Leadership style and approaches*. Rather than adopting or adapting any generic leadership style, these principals focus on doing what they feel needs to be done to meet the demands of their contexts on a daily basis For them, what counts is a consistent focus on continuous improvement within a changing national and local context to best serve their community.
2. *Community oriented.* The success of their leadership is built on strong principles that prioritise the entitlement to quality education, regardless of background or prior school experience. They are intrinsically motivated by a vocation to serve their communities.
3. *Strong sense of agency.* They do not hesitate to use their position to interpret, mediate and, if necessary, reject external demands and respond with caution and balance so as not lose sight of their school vision. This was important at a time of ongoing conflict and change.
4. *Approach to instruction*. They pushed a holistic instructional offer, not dictated by prevailing pedagogies or external assessment demands, and sought to affect pedagogy and engage external support systems to secure the best outcomes for students.
5. *Phenomenology and education leadership research*. A phenomenological approach appears to have enabled all participants to reflect on their lived experiences openly and freely. As such, phenomenology could be said to have an important part to play in helping us better understand leaders and leadership in educational settings.
6. *Comparative international studies strategies*. Despite drawing on more advanced educational settings, comparisons with studies such as the ISSPP help us reflect usefully on leadership practices in less developed systems.
7. *They define their own success criteria.* They do not measure their success via league tables or high-stake tests. They know what their institutions need and measure their success by achieving that.
8. *Good leadership is good leadership.* In this way we can observe that, regardless of social or geographical context, professional development - or lack thereof - and governmental influence - or resistance thereto - good leaders share many practices when driven by their values.

Significance of This Study

This section presents the potential significance of this research (Marfan and Pascual, 2018, Meyers and Hambrick Hitt, 2017, Day et al., 2011, Gurr, 2015) within the contextual and theoretical field as to how four Chilean principals contribute to student outcomes and opportunities in the country.

Contextual Significance

The study identifies that the current volume of research available is limited. There is a need for more investigations that provide more information about the realm of the personal when it comes to successful leadership in Chile. More emphasis on qualitative studies is needed to provoke meaningful discussion that balances the growth of numeric data with the reality of delivering quality school leadership.

This study provides further support and evidence that school leadership can have a meaningful impact on students' lives. This is done indirectly, but with direction that guides actions, strategies, stakeholders and implications to effectively serve students.

This study also contributes to the international studies about successful school leadership in that there seems to be commonalities between what the research shows and what good principals do in their schools in areas where they have little national influence, limited resources, little or no training and are working within turbulent educational systems, especially when compared to more developed systems.

Theoretical Significance

This study seeks to provide another perspective to the already rich field of successful school leadership studies. This perspective, though, comes from a nascent nation that is exploring the significance of principals' role in the improvement of school performance, but with a specific focus on the enhancement of the educational experience for students.

There is still no substantial work in the field that reveals local successful principals in Chile and how their actions impact on student learning and opportunities. This thesis wants to provide a direct voice for them, so they can reveal themselves to others and compare the findings of the research with the reality of delivering change, leadership and education in underdeveloped educational systems such as Chile.

This research intends to identify the characteristic of these principals in Chile and that of the international research and how they compare in the process of providing effectively for their students. Several authors have asserted the significance of principals on student outcomes, so it is fitting to offer a further perspective from a different culture and country.

The overall value of this study rests as a contribution to the field of successful leadership from the perspective and experience of four principals in Chile and their work to improve the quality of education of their student population with the view to affect their future lives. This study seeks to serve as a source of

information for other investigations to continue the work of learning about effective principalship action as a whole.

Implications of the Research

This section presents the possible implications for the following sectors: principals in Chile, policy makers in Chile, school leadership research such as the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP, 2018) or the School Turnaround initiatives (Meyers and Hitt, 2018)

For principals in Chile, the study could serve to reveal that Chile does have successful school leaders working in its education system and that they are performing well. Therefore, they have the potential to be exploited and their actions investigated. Their role as home-grown talent with the potential to help to improve the wider education system for students in sometimes very challenging circumstances cannot be ignored. Ideally, new studies like this one, may serve to motivate policymakers to find their own strategies, ones more responsive to the local context, and help produce leadership guidance more in line with local thinking, yet still informed by and alert to international experience.

For international researchers, there is the implication that this thesis could add to the studies related to the connection between principals and student outcomes. It is via this research that we can further see how outstanding school leaders can significantly affect the lives of young people by guiding their institutions well, no matter their resources - or the absence of - in order to deliver an education that adds value to young lives.

Finally, I would like to think that the scope of this research will serve the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP) and/or the School Turnaround initiative to further enhance or reconsider their stance on the importance of successful leadership and its connection with student outcomes and opportunities. This time from a different perspective, one that is represented by specific individuals and their own voices within systems in need of funding, reform and subject to constant change.

Overview of the Thesis

The research presented and examined in this thesis sought to illuminate our understanding of what four successful school principals do in Chile to impact on their student outcomes and opportunities. Additionally, the research explored the experiences and perceptions of these individuals about leading their schools against a backdrop of extended educational reform and social upheaval within Chile's still underdeveloped educational system. The study also explored the context of the country and its educational structure to ensure that the study could be more widely understood. The purpose of this was to encapsulate the reality or ontology at hand and provide a reference to work with during analysis stage.

The literature review focused on pertinent international studies related to successful principals' actions and their impact on student outcomes and opportunities. Key literature explored were the ISSPP and School Turnaround studies, both focussing on exploring the role of principals when spearheading change and improvement in schools. This section also explored the emerging studies coming from Chile and its region and compared them with the international studies in more developed school systems. The main source of learning was a body of claims regarding that actions and outlooks of successful leaders when effectively leading their institutions. In this section, the specific nature of school leadership was also explored and its connection to phenomenology for study purposes. As we learnt, via this methodology we are able to recognise the relevance of individual experiences in regard to how they go about delivering education for students. Finally, also highlighted were the limitations of viewing principals as the sole provider of progress and achievements for students. Much else happens in schools to account for that.

As a researcher, I adopted a qualitative methodology and a phenomenological research design that allowed me to work with these principals' own views of their reality and gather from their perspectives what it was like to lead their particular school in their particular settings. In addition, I sought to compare their worldview with that of key members of their school. They were representative participants within each school, offering another source of information that added depth to this inquiry. In all cases, my data collection tool was semi-structured interviews, a process that afforded me sufficient structure and flexibility to gather specific data to fulfil the requirement of the research questions, as well as providing space within which principals and other participants could contribute further reflections about their experiences on the subject. I interviewed four principals, and, for each school, four key school participants: a teacher, a middle leader, a member of the school's support staff and a parent.

The analysis of the data was done via Atlas ti 8^{TM} which facilitated the coding and categorisation and, ultimately, helped themes emerge from the data. The findings seem to show that these principals had a strong sense of direction;

they fully engaged with their schools and their members, in turn, respected them; they had a strong sense of moral purpose; they did not adhere to any formal leadership model; they were not intimidated by national testing regimes or systems and, despite the tense climate of reform, they ensured continuity of learning in their classrooms.

The unique experience of these individuals showed that they resolutely cared about their students and their future and this, above all, was what drove them. In this way, they contributed to student outcomes and opportunities as every action taken by them, so often instinctively, was done to affect student lives positively. When comparing these Chilean school leaders with wider studies of successful school leadership, their behaviours and approaches match the evidence, standards and contributions to this field of study. This thesis can indicate a significant role for further studies, as it serves to reinforce the claim that successful school leaders do have the capacity to change institutions and positively affect the lives of their students. Chile has such successful leaders; it just needs to find them and use them.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: principal Interview Questions (Spanish version – section sample)

9. As a principal, how do you contribute to creating opportunities for students? **(B, C & D)**
   ¿Como director, cómo contribuyes a crear oportunidades para los alumnos?
   - Beyond exam results
   - This or more opportunities

Internal influence

10. What effect do SIMCE/PSU have on life in your school? **(B, E & F)**
    ¿Cuál es el efecto SIMCE/PSU en la vida del colegio?
11. Apart from SIMCE/PSU, are there any other measurements of success? **(B, E & F)**
    ¿Hay otras mediciones de éxito para tu colegio aparte de SIMCE/PSU?
12. If we did not have SIMCE/PSU, how would you know your school is doing a good job? **(A, B, E & F)**
    Si no tuviéramos SIMCE/PSU, ¿cómo sabrías que tu colegio está haciendo un buen trabajo?

Principals' perceptions

13. How do you think you are perceived in your role as school principal in your school? **(B & E)**
    ¿Cuál crees que es la percepción de tu papel como director en tu colegio?
    - Colleagues, students, all staff
    - Description of it
14. Currently, what are your priorities for your school? **(B & E)**
    ¿Cuáles son sus prioridades para tu colegio en la actualidad?
15. What are the satisfactions and challenges associated with your role as a school principal? **(B & E)**
    ¿Cuáles son las satisfacciones y desafíos associadas en tu papel como director?
    - Internal and external demands.

Leadership models

16. Are there any leadership models that inspire you when it comes to leading your school? **(A, E & F)**
    ¿Hay algun modelo de liderazgo que te inspira en el manejo del colegio?
    - Do you have any? What are they? How do they inspire you? Why?
17. What type of school leader do you think you are? **(A, E & F)**
    ¿Qué tipo de lider educacional piensas que eres?
    - Identity

External Influences

18. What do you see your role as principal in a broader Chilean context? **(A, E & F)**
    En un context educacional chileno amplio, ¿cómo ves tu papel de director de colegio?
19. What significance do you give to the student movement in Chile? **(A, E & F)**
    ¿Qué significancia asignas al movimiento estudiantil chileno de los ultimos años?
20. How would you describe the OECD (PISA) influence into Chile's education? **(A, E & F)**
    ¿Cómo describirías la influencia de la OECD (PISA) dentro de la educación chilena?
    - Valuable, challenging

Appendix B: principal Interview Questions (English version)

Possible Interview Questions:

(How do four Principals in Chile contribute to pupils' outcomes and opportunities in their schools? A case study.)

Aims to consider (the below needs to be rephrased as sub questions):

a) To understand how they view educational leadership within a Chilean context.
b) To find out how aware principals seem to be of their influence in their schools. (Vision, mission, restriction v autonomy)
c) To understand the potential for principals' influence on students' outcomes.
d) To determine the possible extent of any such influence on students' outcomes and opportunities.
e) To compare Principals' view of their role and influence with current conceptions of school leadership. (Cross cases analysis)
f) To analyse Principals' role in the changing Chilean educational climate.

Possible Questions:

Professional & personal narrative

1. Tell me about you and your background. **(A, B, C, D, E & F)**
   - First generation to attend university, social background, family education, where they undertook their studies, where they began teaching, promotion to headship.
2. Tell me how you came to be principal of this school. **(A, B, C, D, E & F)**
   - Your professional path and your current role as principal of "X" School, what brought you to this point?

The school

3. How did you seek to enhance the school when you started? **(B, C & D)**
   - Priorities, Inherited issues, positive & negative
4. In your opinion, how do you know your school is successful? **(B, C & D)**
   - Define success

Influence on Students

5. What are positive outcomes for students in your school? **(B, C & D)**
6. What does your school do to maximise these outcomes? **(B, C & D)**
   - Do you have to create extra opportunities?
7. As a principal, how do you contribute to students' outcomes? **(B, C & D)**
8. What opportunities does your school provide to students to achieve these outcomes? **(B, C & D)**
   - Beyond exam results
9. As a principal, how do you contribute to creating opportunities for students? **(B, C & D)**
   - Beyond exam results

Internal influence

10. What effect do SIMCE/PSU have on life in your school? **(B, E & F)**
11. Apart from SIMCE/PSU, are there any other measurements of success? **(B, E & F)**

12. If we did not have SIMCE/PSU, how would you know your school is doing a good job? **(A, B, E & F)**

Principals' perceptions

13. How do you think you are perceived in your role as school principal in your school? **(B & E)**
    - Colleagues, students, all staff
14. How do you describe your influence on colleagues, school, curriculum and pastoral? **(B & E)**
15. Currently, what are your priorities for your school? **(B & E)**
16. What are the satisfactions and challenges associated with your role as a school principal? **(B & E)**
    - Internal and external demands.

Leadership models

17. Are there any leadership models that inspire you when it comes to leading your school? **(A, E & F)**
    - Do you have any? What are they? How do they inspire you? Why?
18. What type of school leader do you think you are? **(A, E & F)**
    - Identity

External Influences

19. What do you see as your role as a school principal in Chile? **(A, E & F)**
20. What significance do you give to the student movement in Chile? **(A, E & F)**
21. How would you describe the OECD influence into Chile's education? **(A, E & F)**
    - Valuable, challenging

Appendix C: Consent form signed by the School Principals

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title: "How do Four Principals in Chile contribute to pupils' outcomes and opportunities: a case study"

Researcher's name: Mónica Francisca Gilbert-Sáez

Supervisor's name: Dr. Lindsey Smethem & Prof. Christopher Day

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview and a transcript copy will be sent to me electronically for my approval. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants, in any written reports of the research and other forms of dissemination.
- I understand that data will be stored digitally and a copy of the interview will be sent to me in full within 24 hours. I understand that only the researcher - Mónica Gilbert-Sáez, myself and her research colleagues, supervisors or examiners will have access to any of the data collected. I will have full access to the recordings and they will be stored in an appropriate file to which I will have full access.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed ..... research participant

Print name ..... **Date** .....

Contact details

Researcher: *Mónica Gilbert-Sáez*
Supervisors: *Dr. Lindsey Smethem - lindsey.smethem@nottingham.ac.uk & Prof. Christopher Day – christopher.day@nottingham.ac.uk*
School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix D: Interview transcript (Sample)

Por favor cuéntame acerca de trayectoria profesional, como comenzaste, si es la primera persona que fue a la Universidad y como llegaste a este colegio.

Yo vengo de un colegio publico particular subvencionado específicamente, pertenezco a la primera generación de universitarios de mi familia. Mi hermano y yo somos los primeros que entramos a la universidad a nivel familiar. Tengo una familia un poquito extensa, de unos padres que terminaron la educación básica, por lo tanto el tema de la educación era muy importante para ellos inculcarnos desde pequeños la necesidad de la educación. De hecho, fueron bastante visuales para ver que es lo que pasaba con la gente que no estudiaba por eso era como muy importante el proceso de la investigación y del estudio. Llego a la universidad a estudiar pedagogía súper claro que quería estudiar pedagogía. El puntaje me dio e hice la carrera como bastante en los tiempos, ya , luego de ellos yo trabajé tres años fuera de este lugar y llevo acá en [redacted]. En mi proceso, ha sido primero estudiar pedagogía, he hecho cosas en relación con el arte. Yo soy bailarín de danza contemporánea por lo tanto mi idea también es como aplicar los elementos que he ido aprendiendo de las formaciones alternas a lo que es la educación. Entendiendo desde mi especialidad que es español trabajo desde la comunicación, por lo tanto la comunicación va a estar ligado en diversos aspectos. Entre medio, soy egresado en [redacted]r que esta en curso y es un primer año, esto es como a grandes rasgos.

¿Podrías un poquito comparar o darme tu experiencia del punto de vista comparativo y contrastivo de los dos sectores?

Desde lo que yo estudié y de lo que es ahora, bueno. Lo que yo estudie dada las condiciones históricas del país era bastante distinto, yo estudié en un mismo colegio desde sexto básico hasta cuarto medio era un colegio particular subvencionado muy normado, muy vertical, sin posibilidad de discusión ni de los alumnos entre medio ni con los profesores y dada las buenas relaciones que tenía con mis profesores, también ellos me indicaban que no había ninguna posibilidad de discusión a partir de las normas que entregaba la dirección que estaba centralizado además en el director y dueño del colegio, por lo tanto era una situación vertical indiscutible y se condecía con la situación política del país. En oposición a esta experiencia profesional desde mis inicios que yo estuve un año en un colegio privado, dos anos en un colegio particular subvencionado y los últimos veinte años acá. Entonces, en cada una de esas situaciones, mi experiencia ha sido bastante distinta donde la posibilidad de relacionarse con las jerarquías con los estamentos directivos ha sido bastante cercana con bastante posibilidad de poder entender de poder discutir o de poder conversar y acordar algunas de las situaciones, por lo tanto mi experiencia como alumno es absolutamente distinta y me ha dado mucho gusto esta posibilidad de cómo conversar el mundo y de que los alumnos también puedan conversar de un modo como mas participativo.

¿Tu crees que esta practica pedagógica tú crees que todavía existe en los colegios?

Appendix E: Coding of interview transcript

Tienes un rol muy importante dentro de la comunidad educativa acá y obviamente cuando uno se inicia dentro de una posición de trabajo, uno siempre busca reconocer las cosas que uno le gustaría mejorar y las cosas que uno le gustaría realzar. ¿Cómo te encuentras tu dentro de esa posición?

Bueno es muy difícil siempre reconocer a veces lo malo que uno hace; todas las cosas son perfectibles. Yo creo el hecho de poder plantearse a principio de año objetivos claros, identificar las falencias, identificar las oportunidades y el trabajo en grupo porque nosotros trabajamos mucho en equipo. No es una figura presidencialista, digamos, que se toma que una persona toma todas las decisiones, sino que somos generalmente en forma por un comité y distintos comités van a enfocados a temas puntuales … eso va ayudando en la toma de decisiones. Además, lo ideal es que haya rotación en los cargos para que cada cosa se vaya… no, nos vayamos eternizando dentro de los cargos y uno no pueda resolver de repente situaciones en las que esta enfrascado. Siempre la sabia nueva o idea nueva van ayudando a mover el buque. Nosotros siempre identificamos y tratamos de ver donde están los problemas y hacemos los puentes y los canales de comunicación con el colegio para poder resolver los distintos problemas. No se si eso contesta mas o menos la pregunta o me perdí.

Entonces, cuando encuentras situaciones que necesitan un cambio o una negociación, ¿tu encuentras que hay una posibilidad de actuar? ¿que tienes la flexibilidad de que esos nuevos cambios se produzcan?

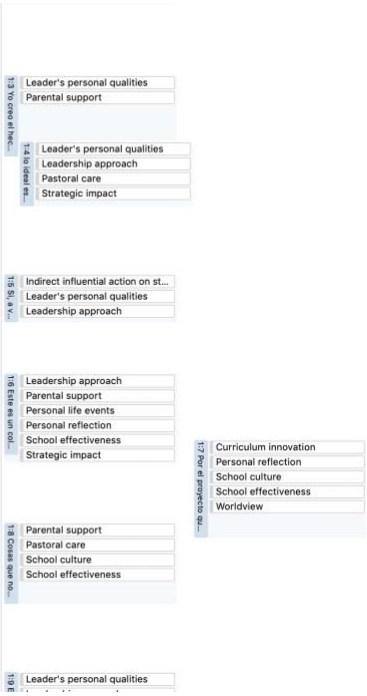
Si, a veces, por lo menos el espacio para plantearlos siempre están. No siempre para todos los problemas tu encuentras respuestas o las respuestas que tu quieres, eso depende un poco de la problemática que se este tratando en el minuto. Pero las puertas están abiertas por lo menos para escuchar y en muchos de esos casos se ha logrado que se actúe de acuerdo a lo que los papas que representamos necesiten.

¿Es este un buen colegio? ¿Y que lo hace ser un buen colegio?

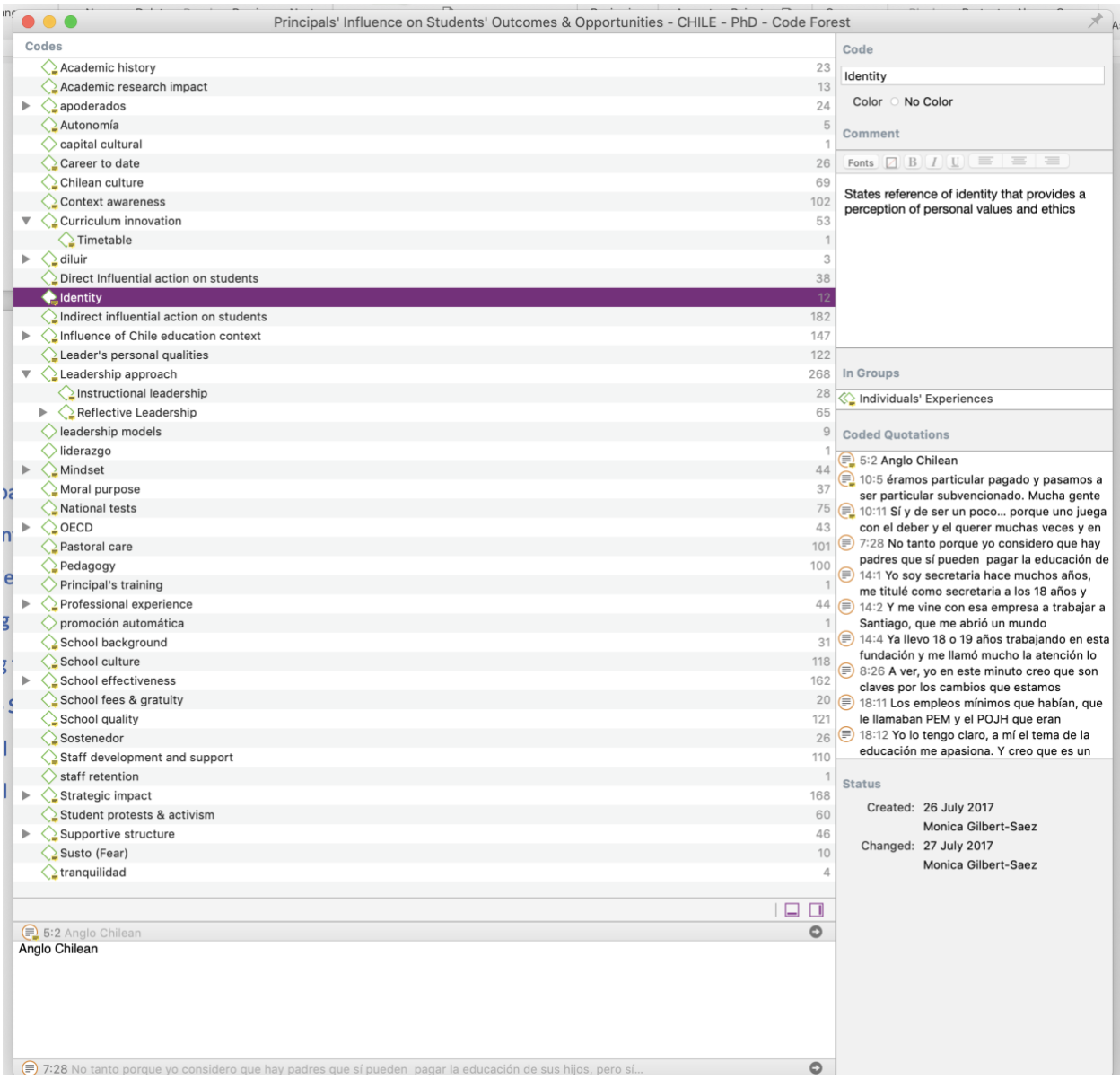
Este es un colegio extraordinario no solo un buen colegio. A nosotros desde que llegamos al colegio con mi señora y nos entrevistaron. La particularidad que en Chile es tu tienes que postular a muchos colegios porque no sabes al final en cual vas a quedar. Tu puedes seleccionar un grupo que te interesan dos tres o cuatro y tienen que pasar por procesos de selección que pasan los niños y los papas al final… y dentro de todo cuando hicimos la entrevista y cuando salimos después de esa entrevista bueno chuta el que mas nos gusto fue el Dunalastair. Por el proyecto que tenían educativo, por la propuesta que es bastante diferente, por ser un colegio bilingüe, por tener una propuesta en un ambiente IB y con los programas de primer año que tienen que es el PYP que son realmente espectaculares que les entrega unas herramientas a los niños increíbles. A lo mejor, no van a ser los primeros en su curso, los primeros puntajes nacionales, pero les entrega herramientas pa' la vida y para desenvolverse que son únicas y que son invaluables, yo lo veo en el desarrollo de ellos, en la capacidad que tienen de expresarse, de enfrentar a distintas personalidad a distintos grupos (…) sin miedo, siempre con un afán investigativo … buscando novedades, interesándose por las cosas. Cosas que no sé a mi ha encantado ser de niño. El tema del deporte también que lo involucra, los deportes en equipo, el trabajo en equipo es todo un proyecto que va muy ordenadito y la búsqueda siempre de mejores proyectos porque no necesariamente ese mismo proyecto que se empezó en un minuto es el mejor, puede que aparezca en el camino otra alternativa y se va por ese camino. No se quedan con … los brazos cruzados. O sea, siempre están mirando hacia delante y eso es un gran aporte del colegio.

Por lo que yo veo aquí hay oportunidades y hay resultados también. Se juegan estas dos variables. ¿Qué importancia le asignas al papel del director dentro de toda esta descripción?

El director tiene un rol fundamental. Es la persona que …es el comandante del buque. Tiene que dar las directrices claras, marcar el rumbo



Appendix F: Coding tree



Piloting

Key questions asked to the principals in relation to the questions and quality of interview process, they were taken from Paul Oliver (2014, p. 148):

1. Did you find the interview interesting?
2. Did it help you clarify your own ideas about the subject?
3. Did you feel at ease throughout the process?
4. Were you happy to have your responses tape recorded?
5. Were there any questions you would have preferred not to be asked?
6. Was the interview too long or too short to explore the subject?

To question one, both respondent regarded the interview...

The idea of what kind of leader do you think I am repeats itself throughout the interview. To minimise this problem.

The interview at this stage was deemed interesting, self-reflective, questions focus on the principals, a bit like a counselling session. It does intend to capture the human side of the role.
The questions took me away from the theory into the personal perception. Self-conscious about style – are you this or are you that? Maybe to mention some styles to support those in the interview.

It works well as an interview, but not as a questionnaire.

Leading as a circular model as opposed to the hierarchical model in Chinese schools. School size has a huge impact on leadership style.

Some of the questions are uncomfortable because there is a premise behind that most leaders accept, but one of the respondents say he did not think he did. Context will enable behaviours to develop this in itself is an act of change.

5. Bibliography

OLIVER, P. A. 2014. *Writing your thesis,* London, SAGE.

Appendix H: Ethical considerations approval form

School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form

The University of Nottingham

Name Monica-Gilbert-Saez
Main Supervisor Lindsey Smethem
Course of Study PhD
Title of Research Project: How do four principals in Chile contribute to pupils' outcomes
Is this a resubmission? No **Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office: 12/11/15**

Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

This research is now approved.

I consider this research to be above minimum risk ☐

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you and your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University Research Ethics Committee. http://www/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines *If you have any concerns during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice and refer again to the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee.*

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Outcome:
Approved [X] Revise and Resubmit ☐
Date: 01/12/15

Appendix I: Letter of introduction

Dear Principal

PROJECT ON PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS EFFECT ON STUDENTS' OUTCOMES AND OPPORTUNITIES

My name is Mónica Gilbert-Sáez and I am a PhD Researcher studying at the School of Education at the University of Nottingham, UK. For my PhD research I am conducting a small case study research project into school leadership and the potential effects school principals have on students' outcomes and opportunities within a Chilean context. The topic of leadership is currently highly researched with regard to its impact on schools and students. However, little is known about how specific cultures or education systems see and use school leadership to the same purpose. This is why I am intending to interview four school principals in Chile (I am a Chilean national with British citizenship).

Based on your school performance and recognised prestige within Chilean education, I would very much like you to participate as a case study in my research. If you are willing I would visit your school for approximately one and half days. I would like to interview you for around 40 minutes, then interview five school community members (selected by you); they can be two classroom teachers, one curriculum leader, one personal assistant and a "inspector/a", i.e. members of the school community under your lead. The idea is to ask similar questions and then I will need another 40 minutes or so to re-engage with you to cover any ideas that may have cropped up during my conversations with the other parties.

The interview process is semi-structured - I will have a set of questions prepared but will retain the opportunity to engage with other issues of interest that become apparent during the interview. **Confidentiality, anonymity and non-traceability** are an intrinsic part of this research and every possible step will be taken to protect all participants, yourself and your school. The interview will be audio-recorded and I will produce a transcript of the discussions with a copy given to you and the other individuals for final approval. During all stages of the process you will have the right to withdraw with no questions being asked.

I have the full support of my institution, the University of Nottingham, its School of Education and my PhD supervisors. My research is part-time (I am a vice principal in a school in Hong Kong currently) and therefore the results of my research will take two years to be completed. I intend to obtain my PhD as well as to publish my results in an education journal before 2018.

I will be in Chile the w/c December 07th till January 1st; so from December 8th I would be available to visit you and your institution. I very much hope that you will feel able to participate. If so, please let me know what time and dates suit you best.

If you wish to discuss any aspects of the study then please do not hesitate to contact me via my email.

May I thank you, in advance, for your time in reading this letter and hopefully your valuable cooperation.

Yours faithfully

Monica Gilbert-Saez
PhD Researcher, University of Nottingham, UK
Vice Principal - Island School (ESF), Hong Kong
Tel.: +852- 5597 8001
e.mail: msaezaros@gmail.com / monica.gilbertsaez@online.island.edu.hk

Appendix J: Atlas Ti 8™ Report Sample – simplified due to GDPR regulations

ATLAS.ti Report
Principals' Influence on Student outcomes & Opportunities - CHILE - PhD
Quotations
Filter:
All quotations which must match all of the following rules
Is coded with Code "leadership models"
Report created by Monica Gilbert-Saez on 10 Apr 2019

3:9 And what the literature seems to indicate in terms of the impact of the leadership in terms of its e…
In Document:
3 [redacted] - JM2.docx
Coding:
o Academic research impact
o Educational Influence
o Influence of Chile education context
o leadership models
Content:
And what the literature seems to indicate in terms of the impact of the leadership in terms of its effect on schools. Yeah! It is strange, but here they are making an effort, what I don't know it's exactly what the plans are in terms of how they are going to go about it. But it is fairly obviously they are trying to get people to …and basically I think this is the result of what the literature is showing. I mean in making this effort.

5:55 Not sure that I know too much about leadership models to be perfectly honest. I have never got into…
In Document:
5 Transcript - [redacted] - JM1.docx
Coding:
o Indirect influential action on students
o Leadership approach
o leadership models
o Strategic impact
o strategic thinking
Content:
Not sure that I know too much about leadership models to be perfectly honest. I have never got into studying management and leadership, so it's kind play it by ear, but I … I think of my position more as a coaching position, particularly now because now that we have the three sites, each site has its management team and so I think our job as a sort of overall top… top management is more one of coaching and helping and advising and this, and well and eventually preparing succession.

6:31 es tu habilidad para mirar todo de este nivel y saber qué es lo importante, y eso, desde el punto de…
In Document:

6 TR1a.docx
Coding:
○ leadership models
○ liderazgo
Content:
es tu habilidad para mirar todo de este nivel y saber qué es lo importante, y eso, desde el punto de vista de liderazgo ¿viene de una manera innata o crees que las has ganado con tu experiencia de ir a otros lugares o simplemente crees que siempre ha sido así?
EA= Yo creo que tiene que ver con la forma personal de ser, uno toma decisiones a nivel de familia, de la misma manera en que uno en la casa con las responsabilidades que ha tenido. Yo creo que tiene que ver un poco con el temperamento, hay gente que es como… más temerosa o más cuidadosa, yo en ese sentido prefiero arriesgarme; el pedir perdón no me va a quitar nada, el decir "me equivoqué, disculpe" tampoco, pero los problemas hay que enfrentarlos, las situaciones hay que verlas y lo otro es que tengo esa posibilidad, no sé si por la experiencia que llevo, de qué sería lo mejor para… y bueno, que las hermanas me escuchen también. De este cambio que hice hoy día de poner Física, Química y profesores especialistas tiene un costo, que a lo mejor otra persona no se habría arriesgado… va a ser ganancia para los niños sí o sí, no hay por dónde mirar de que a lo niños no les vaya a beneficiar, por lo tanto de ahí uno tiene que atreverse.
10:42 No, yo creo que es como innato el querer el colegio, el querer a la congregación, el querer el proye…
In Document:
10 Tr1.docx
Coding:
○ Leadership approach
○ leadership models
○ School culture
Content:
No, yo creo que es como innato el querer el colegio, el querer a la congregación, el querer el proyecto pero también ha sido porque hay una mutua entrega también de parte de la congregación, la confianza de que tú seas la primera directora no es menor. En Chile, ha habido muchos equipos directivos, pero se dieron las condiciones para que yo fuera directora, por un problema que tuvimos con una directora religiosa… pero también, el hecho de que ellas te den la confianza es que hay que aprovecharlo mucho. Yo creo que las congregaciones tiene mucha formación muy estructurada y que de repente ellas han mirado y decir "mira, ella podría ser". Ahora yo pertenezco a un movimiento Laico de la congregación, yo soy muy católica igual, he tenido una familia bastante modelo, a lo mejor si yo estuviera en otra condición familiar, a lo mejor no podría ser… pero yo creo que sí me es justo.
Comment:
Her leadership model is rooted on her capacity to believe in the educational project of the school.

12:73 Sí, mira hay hartos modelos, el modelo transaccional, el modelo transversal, el plan generacional. H…
In Document:
12 [redacted] 1 completo.docx
Coding:
o Indirect influential action on students
o Instructional leadership
o Leadership approach
o leadership models
o Pedagogy
o School culture
o Staff development and support
Content:
Sí, mira hay hartos modelos, el modelo transaccional, el modelo transversal, el plan generacional. Hay un modelo que a mí me llama mucho la atención y yo me veo reflejado que es la gestión sutil. La gestión sutil está centrada en que se pone al centro la persona, para que un profesor pueda dar el cien por ciento, tiene que estar comprometido con el trabajo, tiene que ser un profesor que tenga características distintas, puede ser más recipiente, que puede salir adelante aunque tenga muchas adversidades dentro de la sala. Hay muchos profesores que prepara sus planificaciones y justo ese día tuvo un conflicto al interior de la sala. Entonces lo que tiene que hacer es un círculo puntual distinto para poder desmenuzar el conflicto. Entonces la planificación la guarda y la modifica, entonces un profesor que constantemente se ve envuelto en esta dinámica.
17:75 í, o sea… bueno yo siempre he estado estudiando, tengo como tres Magister que trato de..., me entret…
In Document:
17 po1.docx
Coding:
o leadership models
Content:
í, o sea… bueno yo siempre he estado estudiando, tengo como tres Magister que trato de..., me entretengo y además me gusta intercambiar, los Magister por ejemplo, me encantaría hacer un doctorado ¿ah? Pero en estas cosas, tengo la posibilidad de meterme con muchas personas que….
17:76 ueno yo creo que, hay varios. Hoy en día tienen nombre los tipos de liderazgos. Una de las cosas que…
In Document:
17 po1.docx
Coding:
o leadership models
Content:
ueno yo creo que, hay varios. Hoy en día tienen nombre los tipos de liderazgos. Una de las cosas que a mí me llama la atención es el tipo de liderazgo distribuido. En donde de alguna manera podamos tener la capacidad de que el que está al lado tuyo está haciendo lo que tú necesitas

sin necesidad de estarlo mirando. Yo creo que en ese sistema, y ahí está también un tema de la confianza, de los equipos… este niño que estaba recién acá, es mi jefe técnico, es jovencito, recién formándose.
17:77 Él es potente, él llegó aquí un poquito antes que yo y con hartas agudezas que en un sistema tradici…
In Document:
17 po1.docx
Coding:
○ leadership models
Content:
Él es potente, él llegó aquí un poquito antes que yo y con hartas agudezas que en un sistema tradicional serían incomprendidas. Él estaría sin trabajo si existiera un sistema tradicional, si existiera un sistema diferente acá, porque en un sistema tradicional este niño se pierde, como tú le das las posibilidades a él y se encarga como flecha, de ir avanzando. Hay gente muy buena acá.
17:78 ¿Qué tan reconocido es, dentro de tu experiencia, este tipo de liderazgo? ¿Es algo que los otros dir…
In Document:
17 po1.docx
Coding:
○ leadership models
Content:
¿Qué tan reconocido es, dentro de tu experiencia, este tipo de liderazgo? ¿Es algo que los otros directores de colegio manejan o es algo que tú has visto y reconoces como una posibilidad dentro de tu gestión?

EO= Yo creo que es un tema que se está..., bueno, hay algunos que no se preocupan mucho. Yo no veo a todos mis colegas si van a haciendo un curso con estas características, algunos dicen “no, eso ya no… “pero en los que sí se preocupan, hay mucha intención de contribuir a un cambio significativo de la educación en este país y eso es lo que a mediano o largo plazo se va a lograr.