Reasons for School Dropout: A Case Study in Southern Chilean Schools

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ABSTRACT

School dropout is an issue that is present in the educational system of our country, Chile. It consists of dropping out of the educational system, due to different factors such as socioeconomic vulnerability, family circle problems, among others. With this research it is considered that the different establishments have different factors that lead the student to drop out of school. In addition, different tools used by the establishment itself for the prevention and solution of dropout cases.

The purpose of the research is to know the perceptions of managers and teachers regarding school dropout in educational establishments in the IX Region of Araucanía.

The methodology of this research is qualitative, which is carried out through semi-structured interviews. The participants were the management teams of different schools in Araucanía, such as Los Laureles, Padre las Casas, Puerto Saavedra and Curacautín.

The main results of this study show that the schools in the IX Region of the Araucanía have the resources to provide the necessary help to the students, and thus prevent them from dropping out of school. In addition, the management team is proactive regarding the difficulties expressed by the students, since they work with students and parents to provide them with motivation, information and benefits about finishing their studies.

Keywords: School Dropout, School, Education, Students

1. INTRODUCTION

In Chile there is a problem experienced by children and adolescents in educational establishments; school dropout, which is defined by the Ministry of Education (from now on, Mineduc) as the number of students who can attend a grade but do not finish it (López, 2005). Also, from the Mineduc it is estimated that 10,164 students dropped out of the school system in 2017, increasing the figure to 24,618 dropouts by 2020 (Mineduc, 2020). In the current year this figure increased to 39,498 dropouts (21,260 males and 18,238 females) (Mineduc, 2020) In the context of Araucanía 1322 people dropped out (780 males and 544 females). The educational level with the highest dropout rate is high school (7048) at the national level during the year 2021.

According to Moreno and Moreno (2005), the educational system is considered efficient when it achieves the proposed teaching objectives in an adequate time, without wasting human and financial

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resources, which can be affected by two main factors: repetition and dropout. That said, there are only three options for students: passing, repeating or dropping out, the latter two involving a waste of economic and human resources that directly affect the efficiency of the system. According to Moreno and Moreno (2005), school dropout is the last link in the chain of school failure, who relate repetition directly to the prolongation of the school career, which lowers the student's self-esteem, and he/she begins to lose hope in education. To better understand dropout, the authors propose analysing the beginning of the problem: repetition, which is the major cause of school dropout, since the student is about 20% more likely to drop out of the school system. This problem, according to Moreno and Moreno (2005), is aggravated in rural contexts, and may be a consequence of a system that does not adapt to different social or cultural contexts.

School desertion is a problem that is experienced worldwide and throughout Chile, in schools, both in elementary and secondary education. It has been seen in the course of time in different establishments, despite the delivery of tools and support.

In addition, nowadays to develop a class they have been affected by the pandemic covid-19, for this reason classes today are conducted online, both synchronous and asynchronous. This is affected, since not all students do not have sufficient means to obtain some technological device and to be able to communicate with the establishment or simply to connect to their respective classes.

According to the Ministry of Education (2020), referring to covid-19 states.

> In the context of the pressures exerted by the COVID-19 pandemic on the educational system with suspended face-to-face classes, with remote education in development (still far from being equivalent to face-to-face classes) and with an adverse economic scenario, dropout emerges as one of the main negative consequences in education that could result from this crisis. (pg.1)

The interest that led to research on school desertion in the IX Region of Araucanía is to understand the factors that influence students to drop out, also, to see the knowledge that the management teams have and how they address this problem within their schools. And, in addition, to know what the Ministry of Education provides to the schools that have the highest dropout rates.

Linked to what is mentioned above, the delivery made by the Ministry of Education (2020) is to promote those teachers connect the contents and skills they teach with real-world situations, so that students understand their relevance and applicability to everyday life. In addition, each school keeps a register with updated information on students to identify in time those at risk of dropping out of school and thus take preventive measures.

The Ministry of Education (2020) indicators they consider are.

> Attendance rate below 90%, low performance in mathematics and language, behavioural problems, grade repetition, low school motivation, pregnancy, victim of bullying, transition from elementary to high school, family abuse, poor parental control, early family responsibilities, low parental appreciation of education and substance abuse (p. 72).

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Therefore, the objective of this research is to know the perceptions of school principals and teachers regarding school dropout in educational establishments in the IX Region of Araucanía.

The methodology of this research is of a qualitative approach, which will be carried out through semi-structured interviews. And the data will be collected and analysed through the Atlas.ti 8.4 software, from which semantic networks are extracted from the codifications based on the collected data.

2. METHODOLOGY

In the present research, the qualitative approach was used as the structural axis for the study objective. According to Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2014), this methodology allows examining the way in which individuals perceive and experience the phenomena that surround them, delving into their points of view, interpretations, and meanings.
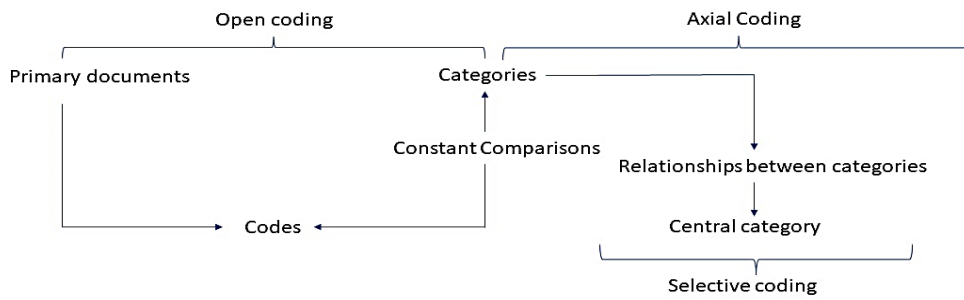
The paradigm used is Constructivist. It is consisted of marking its appearance in the search to contrast the natural or exact disciplines with those of social type, being the sciences questioned, made possible to store knowledge and apply experimental research methods (Ramos, 2017).

Ramos (2017), names statements that give support to qualitative research and that are main contributions to the paradigm. The first says that reality is socially constructed from different ways of perceiving it. Therefore, knowledge is socially constructed by the participants in the research process. Research is not alien to the values of the researcher and, finally, the results cannot be generalized in a way that is alien to the context and time. The level of study is Descriptive Scope.

The methodological design of this research corresponds to grounded theory, due to its qualitative approach and the techniques used, in this case interviews. Grounded theory uses a series of procedures that, through induction and theoretical saturation, generating an explanatory theory of a given phenomenon studied(Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this sense, the concepts and relationships between the data are produced and examined continuously until the completion of the study (Anguita and Sotomayor, 2011).

This procedure becomes a method of constant comparison (Trinidad et al., 2006) when researchers are careful to compare the codes again and again with the codes and classifications obtained, with the aim of discovery similarities and differences within the object of study, for the generation of concepts and perceive possible identifiable behaviour patterns based on the regularity of social behaviors (Trinidad et al, 2006), comparing within the groups and categories, as well as comparing between groups of various categories.

The coded material is not relegated to oblivion after classification but is continuously integrated into the subsequent comparison process. In other words, this strategy combines the inductive generation of categories with a simultaneous comparison of all observed social incidents (Torre et al., 2016).

Carlos Arriagada Hernández , Carolina Flores Jiménez, Cristhoffer Manzano Manzano, Frano Giakoni-Ramírez, Daniel Duclos-Bastias, David G. Miranda

Figure 1.*Constant comparison*

In this way, it is possible to reach a significant degree of theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1976; Trinidad et. Al., 2006), a procedure of constant observation and comparison where the critical point is established from the verification of the absence of new information relevant emergent during the comparison and analysis process.

2.1 Participants

The sample corresponds to a subgroup of the population, in this case it will be called participants due to the nature of the study.

The population selected for this research corresponds to high school and/or elementary school principals and teachers from schools in the IX Region. The schools were from the communes of Puerto Saavedra, Padre las Casas, Los Laureles and Curacautín.

Table 1. Sociodemographic information

Establishments	San AndrésSchool		Monseñor Guido de Ramberga School	Padre Marcelino HuichamilSchool			Piedra AltaSchool
City	Curacautín		Padre Las Casas	Los Laureles			Puerto Saavedra
Participant	Director	UTP	UTP	Director	UTP	Professor	Director
Sex	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Experience	9 years	9 years	9 years	3 years	2 ½ years	2 ½ years	16 years (Between professor and director)
courses	Basic Level	Basic Level	Basic Level	Basic Level		8thgrade	Basic Level
Subject	--	--		--	--	History	Mathematics

Note: UTP = Head of the technical pedagogical section
(Source: Own elaboration)

2.2 Data Collection Instruments

According to (Mata, 2020) in general terms, the interview in qualitative research is a technique for the collection of information and data, which is carried out from a conversation whose orientations respond to specific purposes of the study. According to (Abarca, Alpízar, Sibaja and Rojas, 2013) it is possible to understand the interview technique as: the procedure of information collection based on an interaction between two or more people, through conversation as the main tool.

In this semi-structured interview research presents a greater degree of flexibility than structured interviews because it starts from planned questions, which can be adjusted to the interviewees. Its advantage is the possibility of adjusting to the subjects with enormous possibilities to motivate the interlocutor, clarify terms, identify ambiguities, and reduce formalisms (Díaz, Torruco, Martínez and Varela, 2013).

The data collection instrument will be through semi-structured and focused interviews based on an interview guideline that was reviewed by a teacher of the Physical Education Pedagogy career of Universidad Autónoma, to collect information with students to avoid school dropout. In relation to the creation of the instrument, it is divided into 3 categories (Table 2):

Table 2.Research Categories

Categories

A	Knowledge of School Dropout
B	Reasons and Factors for Dropping Out of School
C	Importance attributed to School Dropouts

(Source: Own elaboration)

3. FINDINGS

In relation to the knowledge of school dropout (Figure 1) that the management teams of the educational establishments interviewed have, we can interpret that the discourses are centred on codes such as: exclusion from the system, unfinished education, importance of dropout and interruption of a process. Those that are established through the design of a hierarchical network establish important consequences for the future that are produced through the lack of accompaniment or follow-up to students who are under these circumstances. The management teams, through their discourse, point out that there are added consequences such as: low salaries, fewer opportunities, uncertain labor future and vulnerability.

"Well, dropping out of school is the exit of a minor from the school system who does not continue in another type of establishment and is excluded from the school system that exists at the national level" (Interview 4, P4).

"Well, for me, according to me, it is when students or a group of people, right, eeh, leave, do not continue the path to a final goal, that is, for me, a school dropout, in which, for reasons, I don't know, of support, for reasons of overcoming, they stay there" (Interview 7, P7).

"dropout is clearly an important factor, for example, in the case of high school when they already have other roles according to the families or the context where they live in the reality of basic schools, we tend to follow up and monitor and accompany the students' processes, not that it does not exist, but if there is less dropout, and clearly when there is a reality of vulnerability, whether economic or family, it becomes a risk" (Interview 4, P4).

Román (2013) states that students from vulnerable and excluded sectors are less likely to remain in educational establishments. The most vulnerable sectors, specifically rural areas, are sectors that can explain their dropout rates based on inequality in the level of access to education.

On the other hand, Santos (2009) argues that in Chile the risk of dropout occurs mainly in the second cycle of education, where the risk of dropping out of education increases as students' progress through the educational system, with the transition from elementary to secondary education being an important point.
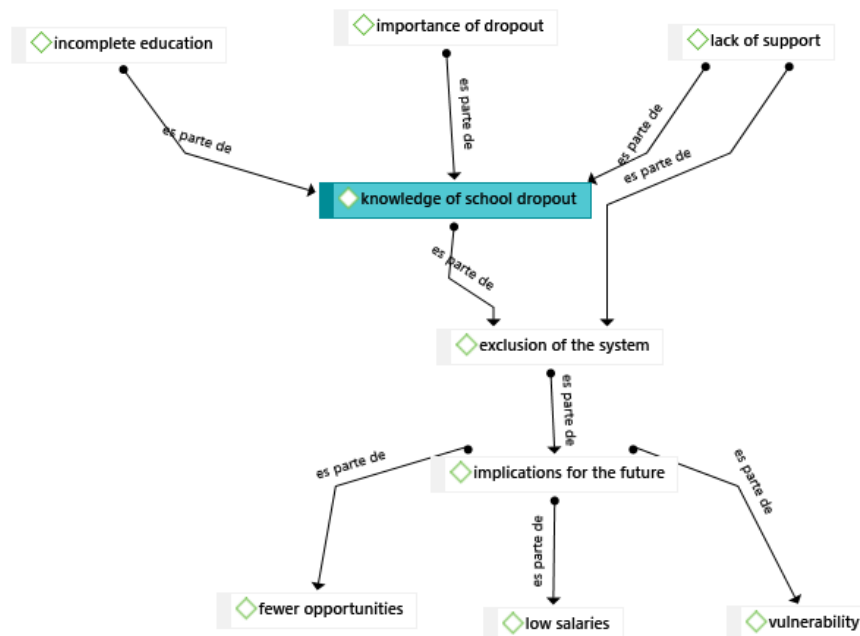
Figure 2.*Knowledge of School Dropout*

In relation to the reasons and factors of school dropout (Figure 3) that the management teams of the educational establishments interviewed have, we can interpret that the discourses are centred on codes such as: vulnerability, conflictive families, dysfunctional families, single-parent families, lack of parental concern, COVID-19, child labor, rurality, little importance in education and socioeconomic level. Within the semantic network of organic design, the vulnerability code is given by the intra-family violence that a student may suffer, which may be a reason for dropping out of school. In addition, the establishments present protocols for the prevention of school dropout, which leads to anticipate these cases with very early actions within the protocols, such as workshops with students and parents, talks, etc.

I am going to talk about what I have seen and know from other schools because our school is quite small and we have very clear and precise activities that prevent students from dropping out of

school, so I am going to talk about what I know, I think that mainly because they have higher incomes, they have access to the labour market. (interview1, P1)

"We have to look at one side the socioeconomic level often weighs, but not so much in that education is a weight in the economic sense since today the vast majority of schools are free or at least there is free access to school education, but it is a relevant factor especially because... it is mixed with a lot of other factors that have to do with domestic violence. Internal problems or lack of parental concern for education eeem.... sometimes learning problems, i.e., a series of factors are mixed that in the end will make a given student end up dropping out of the system". (interview 6, P6)

In a study conducted by the National Socioeconomic Characterization Survey, the reasons for not attending school were divided into 2 large groups: 0 to 6 years old and 7 to 30 years old. For the 1st group, the answers were divided into 3 main axes: personal reasons, associated with parents' distrust, recurrent illnesses of the children or feeling of not being necessary; economic reasons, associated with economic difficulties or related to the score of the social protection card; and finally, access to educational establishments, where problems such as lack of enrolment, lack of nearby establishments or difficulty of mobilization are established (Casen, 2016).

Figure 3.*Reasons and Factors for Dropping Out of School*

The main idea of manufacturing new projects to help students who are at risk of dropping out of school is to include instances of emotional support, for trained professionals to ensure that students remain and reach 12 years of compulsory schooling (Junaeb, 2017).

There are factors in students such as low academic performance caused by learning problems that derive both in the family circle and motivation within the classroom, therefore, this is aggravated

when taking into consideration the rural reality, where students have a higher dropout rate compared to students in urban areas (Agencia de la Calidad de la Educación, 2016).

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Discussion

This section presents the scientific discussion that emerges from the results of the study. The main results are analysed category by category and their relationship in light of national and international literature in the area, with the interpretation of semantic networks. In the first place, the category is knowledge of school dropout, the managers demonstrate knowledge in relation to the concept of school dropout, from their different contexts and personal appreciations. According to Pachay-López and Rodriguez (2021) one of the problems worldwide that has had an impact on school dropout was the pandemic, Covid-19, transforming education into a complex factor to continue by closing educational institutions, and generated instability in the study process, applying immediate strategies such as home education and virtual education. In addition, Hernández, Álvarez, Aranda and Martínez (2017) define the word desertion as dropping out or abandoning, therefore, adding the term school to this word, we will be talking about students dropping out of school, which is a personal decision caused by various factors.

On the other hand, the second category is the reasons and factors for dropping out of school, which convey the same conclusions, that internal factors at the family level are the main reasons for dropping out of school. According to Peña, Soto and Calderón (2016) point out that the family influences dropout in various ways, highlighting among them the economic situation and the fact that young people must abandon their studies to join the labour market with the intention of helping the family group. Tocorona and García (2017) say that a determining factor in terms of school dropout of the learner is the economic side, in which parents have the commitment to provide for their children, although sometimes these are not supported, either because the parents really do not have enough salary or because even if they have the possibility of meeting the expenses they do not want to do so, thus showing diversity lacks that are determinant for young people to be forced to truncate their studies and leave the school institution.

And finally, in relation to the third category is the importance attributed to school dropout, and it is shown that each establishment is proactive regarding school dropout, since they integrate activities and protocols within the school to deliver help to students. Tocora and García (2018) say from the logic of thought, it is necessary to highlight the importance of educational work and its potentialities in the attention to school dropout. Every pedagogical process is developed from the harmonious interrelation of the instructive, the educational and the developmental. And Moreno (2005) says that the design and implementation of programs aimed at informing parents about the need to provide their children with a safe, stable and conflict-free family environment, considering that they will be seriously affected in their academic development, as well as in their personal relationships.

4.2 Conclusion

In relation to the general objective of the study "To know the perceptions of directors and teachers regarding school dropout in educational establishments of the IX Region of Araucanía", it is concluded that the different establishments that were interviewed have the knowledge and the means

to prevent school dropout in their schools. Whether through protocols, recreational workshops, talks with parents, monitoring of cases, also the provision of facilities such as transportation for students and parents and support materials for learning. In spite of the circumstances that are currently being experienced, by covid-19, the students were maintained and the concern on the part of the management teams increased, they generated alliances with the parents, either by going to the parents' meetings or simply scheduling hours with the head teacher of their child's class.

In relation to the specific objectives set out in this research, the following conclusions are drawn. From the first specific objective "To determine the main reasons for dropping out of school in educational establishments in the IX Region of Araucanía". The management teams expressed that the main reasons are socioeconomic vulnerability, family culture and rurality, since most of the schools that were interviewed are in rural areas, they present greater emphasis on keeping students in their learning process by providing them with the necessary resources for this. Also, importance is given to the families that are behind the students, to know their lives, to provide emotional support to students and parents with psychologists provided by the same establishment.

In relation to the following specific objective "To identify the factors that influence school dropout in educational establishments in the IX Region of Araucanía". The interviewees expressed that the influencing factors are mainly work at an early age, since it helps the economic support within the family, either due to lack of parents, the culture within their family and lack of parental concern about studies.

And finally, the third specific objective "To identify the importance given by teachers and management team in relation to school dropout in educational establishments of the IX Region of Araucanía". Faced with school dropout, the schools interviewed show concern and proactivity in the face of this dilemma, since they present various strategies such as: recreational workshops for students, monitoring the lives of dropout cases, providing psychological and psycho-pedagogical support, as well as giving talks to parents of psychologists to motivate their children in the educational field. As well as contributions from the establishment to the students by the Ministry of Education and the school itself.

In relation to the above, it can be concluded that all the schools that have been interviewed have resources to provide help to their students, and thus keep them in the educational system. This can be due to the motivation of the management team and teachers, as well as the resources presented by the schools in the face of school dropout.

5. SUGGESTIONS

Once our research was completed, we found different realities that are lived within the Araucanía Region, fortunately there is a concern within the management team towards students in dropout situation, therefore, a recommendation that could be mentioned is to cover more establishments in the region, since in this way more information and different perspectives could be obtained. In addition, interviewing a larger number of teachers who oversee a course and the parent centre team, for the collection of information in a more in-depth manner, since it is a means of closer communication with the student.

The interviews that would be conducted could include more questions to further investigate the topic.

Carlos Arriagada Hernández , Carolina Flores Jiménez, Cristhoffer Manzano Manzano, Frano Giakoni-Ramírez, Daniel Duclos-Bastias, David G. Miranda

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