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Research Article

School coexistence: Perceptions of education professionals belonging to the Ñuble region

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to describe the perceptions of school coexistence in primary and secondary school teachers from establishments in the Ñuble region. The methodology applied was quantitative, descriptive in nature and transectional in nature. The sample was made up of 51 participants to whom an open-response questionnaire was applied in online format under the Google forms platform. Among the results, it was found that school coexistence is understood as a permanent interaction between the various educational agents associated with values such as respect, empathy, active listening, solidarity, responsibility, understanding of emotions and tolerance. There is a tendency to use a socio-emotional approach over others. While, the documented dimensions are related to curricular pedagogy, organizational-administrative, participatory and conflict management. It is essential to implement tools and strategies to promote interpersonal relationships between the various actors of the institution and thus mitigate or correct problems of this nature.

Keywords: peaceful coexistence; education population; basic education; formal education; comprehension; Ñuble region

1. Introduction

In the 1990s, the topic of school coexistence emerged as a promising perspective to address a problem related to shared life in schools. The processes of exclusion and school rejection contributed decisively to position coexistence as a central issue in the educational process[1,2]. Likewise, the Delors[3] report states that, "The process of learning to live together is at the heart of learning and can be seen as the crucial foundation of education" therefore, learning to live in community is a relevant pillar at the educational level, as it implies the discovery, understanding of the other and the various forms of interdependence, which facilitate the establishment of common projects and objectives, from a plural, peaceful and respectful perspective.

The discussion on how school educational processes can contribute to the development of respect for other people, their cultures, and spiritual values, as well as to the construction of capacities to implement common social projects has spread in Spanish-speaking countries[4]. Thus, in Chile, although the meanings of school coexistence are diverse and even contradictory, from the National Policy of School Coexistence of the Ministry of Education (2019–2021)[5] it is understood as a daily, dynamic and complex process, which involves

a set of interactions and relationships that occur between all actors of the educational community, covering individuals, groups, teams, courses and internal organizations that are part of the institution, including the relationship of the school community with the surrounding organizations.

Based on the above, the purpose of this article is to describe the perceptions on school coexistence of education professionals in the Ñuble region, taking into consideration the central elements of this concept, so that these professionals express their perception on how they understand school coexistence in the scope of their professional work. Also, to refer to the main study approaches used in their respective educational establishments to address school coexistence, such as: coexistence as a study of school climate, violence and/or its prevention; coexistence as socio-emotional education; coexistence as education for citizenship and democracy; coexistence as education for peace; coexistence as education for human rights; coexistence as moral development and values formation[4].

On the other hand, it is sought that they visualize in their educational context the dimensions for the operationalization of the concept of school coexistence, such as: the pedagogical-curricular field; the organizational-administrative sphere and the socio-community sphere of participation and conflict management[4]. And finally, that they identify how their educational institutions address the areas covered by the School Coexistence Policy (2019–2021)[5], such as: school coexistence team; learning-curriculum; families; cultural diversity and inclusion.

1.1. Theoretical framework

1.1.1. Model approach and dimensions of school coexistence

Since the late 1990s, the importance of school coexistence has been recognized as a pillar of educational processes[6]. This concept has been discussed on several occasions and by various authors. Its conceptual scope is broad, which has developed a range of definitions and conceptualizations[7,8]. However, at the educational level, in our country, one of the agreed definitions corresponds to the proposal of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), which conceptualizes it as "harmonious coexistence of the members of the educational community, which implies a positive interrelation among them and allows the proper fulfillment of educational objectives in a climate that favors the comprehensive development of students"[9].

From this definition, Chile's educational policy has echoed the international consensus expressed by UNESCO on the relevance of "learning to live together" as an objective of the school system[10]. Ideas that were also deepened by Toledo[11] who pointed out that the laws of each country should deepen around school coexistence policies to contribute to prevent experiences of violence in society.

In this line, public policy issues related to school coexistence have been developed around two approaches that are not only different, but seemingly incompatible. On the one hand, the emphasis is placed on control and sanction, while, on the other hand, the development of conditions that allow democratic school coexistence while respecting the rights of the educational community is also sought[4].

However, school coexistence tends to be addressed not only from these two approaches, but also from various perspectives such as: school coexistence as socioemotional education, coexistence as school climate, violence, and prevention, as education for citizenship and democracy and around moral development and values formation, education for peace and, education for human rights, among others[4].

In conjunction with the dimensions or perspectives from which school coexistence is situated, it is also possible to glimpse four major dimensions: curricular pedagogical dimension, organizational dimension, administrative dimension, and community dimension[12,13]. These dimensions are at the same time understood as guiding standards and performance indicators for school management to accommodate educational reform,

moving towards a school that is capable of reflecting on its own work to transform them into processes of continuous improvement, focused on learning and the integral formation of its students.

1.1.2. Conflict in the school context

According to the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy[14], to coexist means to live in the company of others and to coexist in harmony, which confers breadth and complexity to this construct, which has therefore been studied at the micro and macro levels. The micro level considers the family, school and business environment and the macro level the interactions at the societal level. As can be expected, both levels are closely related to the point of conditioning each other[15]. In the school environment, coexistence expressed through words, gestures, or actions, evidences the bonds generated within a diverse group. A group, which from a school coexistence paradigm does not deny or repress the conflict but seeks alternatives to address it peacefully and democratically[16].

Conflict in the school context reflects family, community, social and institutional dynamics, which shape the beliefs that justify the use of violence when relating to others[17,18]. This is because violence, characterized by physical imposition and domination or as a psychological practice that seeks to marginalize and belittle others in public or private situations[19], stems from an inadequate way of coping with conflict.

In this sense, there are various studies that address school coexistence from the educational institution. The studies by Yao and Enrigh[20] stand out, indicating that a positive interaction between teachers and students could increase the possibility of using a positive conflict coping strategy, as well as a negative interaction would decrease the possibility of using a positive coping strategy. In this study the positive strategy refers to forgiveness as a positive way of coping with conflict versus counterattack which would be the negative way.

The educational institution needs alternative methods and strategies to address and resolve conflicts[21], mainly due to the increase in expressions of violence in schools[22]. In this regard, García-Raga et al.[23], García-Raga et al.[24] and Moore[25] have proposed mediation as an effective strategy that helps mitigate violence derived from a negative approach to conflicts[23,26].

1.1.3. School coexistence policies in Chile

In Chile, in recent years, permanent changes have been made regarding educational policies for school coexistence. The first of these changes took place during the nineties, where reforms were carried out through fundamental transversal objectives. These ideas were the indications about the importance of school coexistence, the classroom climate in the educational projects of schools and high schools in the country. Years later, at the beginning of the 2000s, the first national policy on school coexistence was published through the Ministry of Education of the time. This national policy sought to generate an orientation and articulation of the values of coexistence to achieve the development of the transversal objectives present in the curriculum[27]. Years later, the preferential school subsidy law, SEP law, was enacted, which requires the search for school improvement by managing school coexistence. Subsequently, in 2011, Law 20,536 on school violence was enacted, which seeks that every establishment that is receiving state funds create a program that promulgates and develops good coexistence and the avoidance of attacks, physical violence, and harassment[28].

In a more contemporary era, there are various laws that are associated with school coexistence. Of note are Law 20,370, contained in Law 20,536 on school violence and Law 20,609 on discrimination, which seeks to protect the right of people not to suffer any type of discrimination[13,28,29]. In all these cases, the laws are oriented towards the management of school coexistence in different areas of Chilean education. From there, various studies have been developed that have sought to analyze the perceptions regarding these laws and areas of school coexistence in the country, including the perspectives of various educational agents, students,

administrative teachers, family, etc.[2,30–32].

Until today, Ñuble is considered one of the poorest regions with the highest unemployment rates[33]. Its emergence as a region is brief, which has generated a knowledge gap regarding data or evidence on school coexistence, with the SIMCE questionnaires being one of the few studies that confirms the above. Along these lines, the study by Cea et al.[34] where a participatory intervention was implemented through various workshops. This is also highlighted by the study by Cisternas[35] who worked based on the management processes in school coexistence in the commune of San Carlos, Ñuble Region. However, in both cases, school coexistence is approached from management, not considering the perceptions of the various actors who participate in the process (students, pedagogues, speech therapists, directors, kinesiologists, educators, etc.). It is for this reason that the objective of the present study is to describe the perceptions of school coexistence of various professionals in the Ñuble region.

2. Materials and methods

Diseño:

The study is descriptive, qualitative, and transversal by analyzing data on variables collected in a particular period on a sample of teachers from various public schools in the communes of San Carlos, San Nicolas, Chillán, Bulnes and Quillón, in the Ñuble region.

Participants:

The study participants correspond to teachers from various public schools in the communes of San Carlos, San Nicolas, Chillán, Bulnes and Quillón, in the Ñuble Region. Of the 51 participants, 41 are women (80%); while 10 are men (20%). The average age is 35 years, with an average length of teaching service of 25 years, fluctuating between one to more than 30 years. The participants are associated with various professions linked to the school environment such as basic general education, early childhood educators, psychology, differential education, educational assistant, pedagogy, etc.

Instruments:

The instrument used was an open questionnaire, in online format under the Google Forms platform, which contains 5 questions that the participants answer online. The questions in the questionnaire were developed from a theoretical and empirical analysis of the topic in question in accordance with the specific objectives of the study. The questions were subsequently validated through expert judgment.

The questions applied in the questionnaire were the following:
(1) How do you understand school coexistence in your professional work?
(2) What approach to studying school coexistence is used in your establishment?
(3) What dimensions do you see in the school coexistence program?
(4) In accordance with the national school coexistence policy 2018–2021, how does my educational establishment address these areas? a) school coexistence team; b) learning-curriculum; c) families; d) cultural diversity; and f) inclusion.
(5) When have we been faced with a conflict in the school system?

Analysis of data:

Participants were contacted personally, invited to participate and informed that this activity is completely voluntary, sending them the link to the survey through the WhatsApp application. Those who agreed to respond logged in and answered the questions.

A thematic content analysis was carried out, coding the participants' responses, and developing axes of

analysis. Analytical diagrams were constructed for the synthesis of the coded information. All this through Atlas software. Ti, version 8.4.4, which allows giving circular meaning to qualitative analysis, by granting the possibility of incorporating the data sequentially, without the need to collect all the material at the same time[36,37].

Ethical standards:

We had the approval of the Bioethics Committee of the Universidad del Bío-Bío, whose requirements implied complying with the criteria of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntariness, without granting economic retribution to the participants. This was specified in the informed consent that was accepted by the professionals[6,38].

3. Results

3.1. Perception of school coexistence in their professional activities

The perception held by education professionals in the Ñuble region in relation to school coexistence is understood as a permanent interaction among the various educational agents, which should coexist in a peaceful environment conducive to healthy, positive, and democratic living. The values that are evidenced in the meanings attributed to school coexistence correspond to respect, empathy, active listening, solidarity, responsibility, understanding of emotions and tolerance.

All the above is framed within the framework of human rights, institutional seal, diversity, mission, and vision, thus generating an integral development of students and their contribution to deep learning.

Some discursive fragments are:

"School coexistence is where we must respect each other mutually, learning to live and accepting different opinions, having the ability to understand and comprehend others, putting ourselves in the other's place." (P8).

"School coexistence is the way in which all the actors of the educational community relate to each other, based on mutual respect, acceptance and respect." (P24).

"Instance where all the actors participate in the pedagogical work." (P45).

According to the vignettes presented, **Figure 1** has been elaborated to provide a general understanding of the perception of school coexistence.
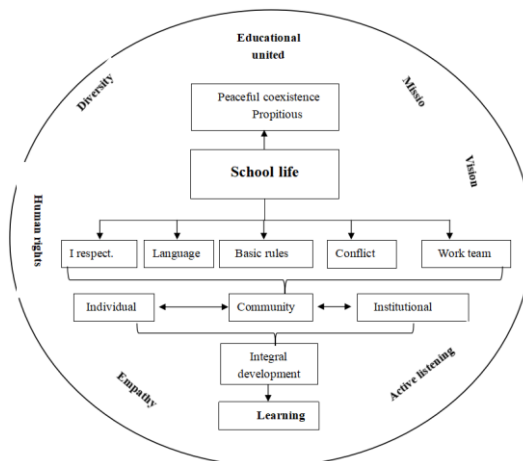

Figure 1. Perceptions of school coexistence of education professionals in the Ñuble region.

3.2. Study approach is used in your establishment to address school coexistence

Of the 51 participants, in the first place, it is observed that the approach most used in the educational establishments of the Ñuble region corresponds to coexistence as socioemotional education (29 participants). Such education should be understood as a formative process focused on the development of skills that seek to recognize and manage one's own and others' emotions; trying to generate an educational innovation that responds to social needs not met by formal education[38].

Secondly, coexistence is used as school climate, violence, and prevention. That is, a classroom climate that favors personal development is one in which students perceive support from their peers and from teachers, feeling respected in their discrepancies and inaccuracies, as well as identified with the course and their school[39].

In third and fourth place, the approaches to coexistence as education for citizenship and democracy (4 participants) and as moral development and formation in values (4 participants), are the approaches that are evident in the responses of the 51 participants. The first of these approaches is of relevance, since it builds the sense of belonging to society, being not only part of the family environment but also of the school environment as they are core axes of citizenship training, by allowing human coexistence, respect for the members of this and the dignity of people[40].

And finally, in the fifth and sixth instance, there are the approaches to coexistence as education for peace (1 participant) and as education for human rights (1 participant). On the one hand, peace education responds to new educational forms and new practices to address social contexts where there are or have been various expressions of conflict and violence[41]. While the second, alludes to on as education seeks by object of study the full development of the human personality and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, it will favor understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all ethnic and religious groups[42].

Some vignettes are:

"Coexistence is used as socioemotional education. In our establishment we try to focus on the development of social skills and interpersonal relationships, it is about having an objective vision to be able to give the other the recognition it deserves, and this is replicated both with students, parents, and teachers, which helps us to better face the different types of conflicts." (P6).

"Coexistence as moral development and formation in values, the establishment seeks to promote values within the community to maintain a healthy coexistence, because we are a catholic school." (P20).

"Coexistence as education for peace, psychosocial duple intervention focusing on the conflict looking for origin, participants solutions, based on the formative." (P17).

"School climate is focused on minimizing the latent risks within the school climate." (P37).

"We as an establishment deal with human rights education which creates related activities for prevention and for each student to be clear about their rights as human beings." (P4).

3.3. Dimensions that you visualize in the school coexistence program

Pedagogical-curricular dimension:

School coexistence in this dimension is visualized as the work and management of social skills for conflict resolution, class planning with aspects of school coexistence.

"The most visualized is the pedagogical and curricular area since teachers are always asked to remind them of the rules of coexistence in their classes or to carry out an activity in orientation. Also, in conflict

management and participation, the educational unit is always involved..." (P4).

In addition, coordination with the school integration program team, roles and functions of the psychosocial teams are observed.

All these actions are planned in accordance with the cross-cutting objectives of the school coexistence plan.

Organizational-administrative dimension:

This dimension is the one that is least observed by education professionals; they assume that it refers to the financing of human resources, i.e., the payment of salaries associated with SEP and PIE law professionals.

"Human and financial resources dimensions, it has to do with colleagues working in the PIE and SEP." (P29).

Participatory dimension and conflict management:

Education professionals in the Ñuble region show this dimension associated with the set of activities that promote school coexistence (talks to teachers and students, school for parents, parent-teacher meetings, among others), complying with the annual school coexistence plan.

"The dimension of participation, since activities are carried out to promote the different areas of school coexistence." (P7).

"Participation, being a rural school, everything is very participatory, and the school community is involved in the process of developing plans or protocols, so later the application of the regulations is easier, and all the actors are aware of them." (P5).

3.4. National policy on school coexistence

School coexistence team:

According to the participants, in the educational establishments of the Ñuble region, the school coexistence teams are made up of a social worker, psychologist, guidance counselor and coexistence officer. It is important to point out that not all the establishments have all these professionals, and they even work in this program on an hourly basis.

The objective of these teams is to manage and solve conflict situations that arise in schools, promoting continuous communication through conflict resolution and mediation.

Apprenticeship-curricular:

All subjects participate in this area, especially guidance, to contribute to a healthy coexistence that allows the emotional stability of students, teachers, directors, education assistants and the educational community in general (see **Figure 2**).
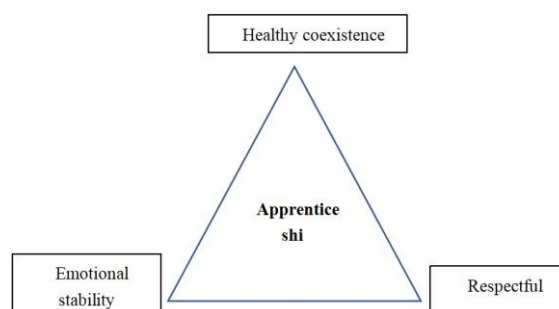

Figure 2. Learning-curriculum of the national school coexistence policy.

Families:

This area of school coexistence takes the form of:

● Direct and transparent communication.
● School for parents or guardians.
● Workshops with psychosocial teams.
● Massive activities of the educational unit (bingos, celebrations, among others).
● Workshops and training for families.
● Follow-up of cases.

Cultural diversity:

It is materialized in the cross-cutting planning of activities associated with daily living, associated with the cultural diversity of the families.

"Plan transversal activities that in daily practice articulate with the cultural diversity of each family." (P3).

In this same sense, it is associated with the inclusion plan, through the reduction of barriers to learning.

"Promoting and participating in the community in various celebrations: parent's day, student's day, school coexistence day, no cyber bullying day, with surveys directed to the community to see their needs." (P4).

On the other hand, and no less important, this factor is one of the weakest that each establishment works on according to the national policy of school coexistence, as reflected in the following discursive extract:

"Cultural diversity is an aspect that as an establishment we are a little weak, since there is a lack of instances where the community can be enriched by taking advantage of the same diversity that exists today." (P5).

"Cultural diversity: I believe that this is the least developed area, I consider that it is necessary to include more actions in the coexistence plan to address it in a more profound way". (P7).

Inclusion:

Inclusion is addressed through appropriate, positive language without labels. Promotion of community participation in various celebrations (parent's day, student's day, school coexistence day, no cyberbullying day), awareness is fundamental, school integration program, respect, and mutual appreciation.

4. Discussion

School coexistence in professional work is loaded with values associated with respect, empathy, active listening, solidarity, responsibility, understanding of emotions and tolerance. All of this is framed within a social-emotional education approach. However, there are also cases in which school coexistence is governed under a school climate approach, education for citizenship and democracy and as moral development and values formation, and even as education for peace and education for human rights. According to Onetto[43], terms school coexistence is used in so many ways and languages that it leads to confusion. Presumably, this idea was built from a narrative logic where a wide variety of researchers tried to contribute to the topic, triggering its extensive use in research lines as dissimilar as psychology, education, pedagogy, etc. This idea is also validated by Fierro-Evans and Carbajal-Padilla[4]. Who seek to clarify and contribute to the development of a common language in the Latin American region regarding the concept of school coexistence.

Another aspect to consider is that, in the concept of school coexistence, several conditioning factors interact for a clear conceptual definition. According there is a personal identity relationship of migrants as their coexistence relationships in the school environment complexify or enrich the adaptation strategies or processes

that are necessary to ensure the full well-being of students. However, it is necessary to consider that there is no such thing as "migrant" school coexistence, but that these concepts are understood for the entire educational community even in culturally diverse school contexts[44].

In general, school coexistence is visualized in several dimensions; either from the pedagogical-curricular, the organizational-administrative or from the participatory and conflict management. In the first dimension, school coexistence is seen as the development of social skills for conflict resolution, through the planning of classroom activities where aspects related to school coexistence are used. From this perspective, it is necessary to remember that school coexistence is a relevant object not only for national policy but also for educational practice. This is revealed after the implementation of a series of initiatives in education, such as: expert recommendations, research, and training programs[45].

In our country, there have been several institutions that have tried to address these problems related to school coexistence[17]. However, such improvements have not only been carried out by educational institutions but also in the political sphere, where MINEDUC, wishing for the year 2022, has proposed the national policy on school coexistence (PNCE). However, and despite the efforts made by educational institutions in the search for improvements in school coexistence, Aravena et al.[46] indicates that there is a widespread lack of student participation in school coexistence, despite being considered one of the most important strata within the educational environment, since any change made in the student curriculum converges on them.

In another line to highlight, the participatory dimension and conflict management related to the set of activities that promote school coexistence in schools emerges. This is in line with Aravena et al.[46], who point out many actions proposed by management teams and school leaders. Events (21.1%), elaboration of plans, manuals, and protocols (21.1%) stand out. The events are presented as instances of celebration and/or promotion of aspects of school coexistence, such as family day, Chilean nationality day or the day of good treatment. Although it is necessary to include the student body in school coexistence, actions should be taken towards initial teacher training as the articulating axis of educational policies of school coexistence and professional teaching practice, trying to unveil the challenges and opportunities that this student stage will face in their professional practice[47]. However, Gaete et al.[48] indicate that teachers themselves have questioned the capacity of the initial coexistence teacher training of the educational process.

Jointly, educational policies should be developed that will govern school coexistence guidelines in the country. According to Ortiz-Mallegas et al.[2] punitive practices are understood within a gradualism, where the sanction begins when the formative action does not obtain the expected effect. This happens in Chilean education when it presses for better school results, since its regulated use would allow schools to exclude students who do not achieve good results from the classroom. In this sense, during the last years, in Latin America and Chile, these prescriptions have been taking shape as legal bodies -laws, decrees and regulations- whose wording has been recognized as contradictory and ambivalent for their full understanding in the school environment, since promotional-formative approaches coexist with exclusive and pedagogically restricted punitive approaches[49].

5. Conclusion

The perception of education professionals in the Ñuble region in relation to school coexistence is understood as a permanent interaction among the various educational agents, which should coexist in a peaceful environment conducive to a healthy, positive and democratic life, associated with values such as: respect, empathy, active listening, solidarity, responsibility, understanding of emotions and tolerance, and that they carry them out from this same conception in their professional work.

Education professionals use coexistence as school climate, violence, and prevention, i.e., a classroom climate that favors personal development is one in which students perceive support from their classmates and teachers, feeling respected in their discrepancies and inaccuracies.

The approaches to coexistence as education for citizenship and democracy and as moral development and values formation are the most widely used. The approaches to coexistence as education for peace and as education for human rights are the least used in the educational establishments of the Ñuble region in Chile.

Given the above, it is necessary to involve the various educational agents in school coexistence. Thus, it is also important that future research considers "mentors" and "tutors" in the framework of the professional teacher education system, who can be key informants to diversify the views that contribute to school coexistence. At the same time, it is necessary to deepen the interactions and links between the different educational strata, to favor curricular innovation around school coexistence.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, YAA, NLSM and MCT; methodology, COC, NLSM and YAA; software, YAA, MCT and EVR; formal analysis, YAA, MCT, NLSM and ECR; data curation, YAA; writing—original draft preparation, YAA, MCT, NLSM, COC and ECR; writing—review and editing, YAA and EVR. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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