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EDUCATIONAL CONTINUITY DURING THE PANDEMIC: CHALLENGES TO PEDAGOGICAL MANAGEMENT IN SEGREGATED CHILEAN SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 outbreak has created an uncertain scenario for educational systems, leading many countries to deploy unprecedented remote learning programmes. Chilean schools have not been the exception and have thus developed and put in place several actions to uphold effective pedagogical management (PM) and continuity of learning; however, as we emphasise in this paper, the Chilean educational system is highly segregated. PM encompasses actions and decisions aimed at safeguarding quality education by focusing on four domains: technological, curricular, methodological and assessment. This descriptive and exploratory quantitative study seeks to explore the challenges facing PM, as perceived by actors working in Chile's three different administrative and financial school governance systems in the framework of remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our findings highlight the disparities among actors belonging to the three types of administrative and financial governance systems regarding the perceived challenges facing PM. Thus, publicly funded schools face greater challenges in practically all four PM domains as compared to private schools. The main differences among schools revolve around the technological and assessment domains. While the technological domain is more of a concern for public schools, the assessment domain presents more challenges for private schools. Beyond the schools' administrative and financial governance system, an important finding was the scant importance attached to the curriculum as a challenging issue as well as an excessive focus on the methodological domain, indicative of a prevailing logic of efficiency as applied to the learning process.

Keywords: COVID-19; remote learning; educational continuity; pedagogical management; Chilean schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Internationally, 2020 has been a year marked by the outbreak of COVID-19 and its dramatic effects, not only at the health level but in all other realms of daily life. Lockdowns and

physical distancing have been some of the main actions implemented by countries to prevent the spread of the virus (Flaxman *et al.*, 2020).

The crisis has had a strong impact on educational systems as children were not allowed to physically attend school in most countries, prompting an abrupt shift in pedagogical practices. Thus, face-to-face teaching and learning has been replaced by new methods in order to ensure continuity of learning (Orellana & Salinas, 2020). In Chile, schools have adopted remote learning using different formats, such as online platforms, social networks, telephone calls, families picking up materials at the school and, in more isolated locations, teacher visits to students' homes to provide resources, among others (González *et al.*, 2020).

In this context, one may ask: what are the elements guiding pedagogical decision-making at schools? How are they responding to their communities' educational needs? What challenges are they facing? So far, according to Salas *et al.* (2020), there is insufficient evidence as to whether these decisions belong strictly to schools or if they respond to structural conditions due to unequal educational opportunities; a consequence of the socioeconomic gaps of a highly segregated school system, such as the Chilean one. Preliminary data, revealed by Quiroz (2020), indicate that through the pandemic, private schools seem to have had better chances to develop more sophisticated remote learning modalities than publicly subsidised schools that serve vulnerable students.

The imperative of ensuring continuity of learning during this period of school closures and remote education should not be reduced to avoiding school failure, but rather, from a complex perspective, mainly to link continuity of learning to pedagogical aspects. In this new scenario, it is necessary to take note of the point made by Guzmán and Nussbaum (2009) to manage curricular, methodological and assessment decisions and actions that articulate the learning experience, using technology as a relevant support for the development of these processes. Subsequently, the purpose of this study is to identify the main challenges facing pedagogical management, as perceived by educational actors in Chilean schools during the pandemic. We explore the differences and similarities between schools within the different administrative and financial governance systems. These findings are indicative of challenges and opportunities to achieve a reflective and situated process of educational continuity within the national educational context.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Segregation in the Chilean school system

The Chilean school system has been recognised as a paradigmatic case of neoliberal influence on education. As Villalobos and Quaresma point out, this effect has resulted in four characteristics:

- i) the construction of a mixed system in terms of ownership, with a strong development of the private sector, ii) the consolidation of a financing system based on the demand subsidy, iii) the institutionalization of profit and copayment as mechanisms for organizing the system; and iv) the generation and development of significant incentives and penalties for schools, teachers, and students (2015: 69).

In this way, the Chilean school system has three types of administrative and financial governance systems: municipal, fully financed through state resources; subsidised schools, with a cost distributed between the state and families and, private schools, in which parents

bear the full cost of their children's education¹. For Corvalán and García-Huidobro (2016), this division reflects a commodified school system, since access to educational services is regulated by a monetary value, causing an evident school segregation.

Research links this trend to unequal learning opportunities, as private school students have higher levels of educational achievement than those enrolled in the public system. Another expression of inequity lies in the response of educational establishments to curricular prescriptions. Evidence indicates that schools that carry out curricular development processes are those with qualified teachers and greater financial resources (Ulloa & Gajardo, 2017).

In terms of the strong tendency towards accountability, which uses state mechanisms that permanently assess schools and have the authority to close establishments based on their performance in standardised tests, national findings indicate that rather than contributing to enhance quality and equity, accountability has had a negative impact on the educational system, impoverishing pedagogical practices, generating hierarchical institutional climates focused on control and highlighting pedagogical actions focused on performance (Falabella, 2016).

2.2 Learning continuity and remote education

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of learning continuity has gained increased importance in the educational discourse. Recent research concludes that the current school priority is to guarantee the continuity of learning for students in this new remote scenario (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). In other words, to ensure the continuity of educational processes, regardless of the setting in which they are carried out.

However, in the present context learning continuity is at risk since the disruption of education might not only bring about lower levels of learning, but also the potential loss of previous knowledge gains, with a severe impact on students with limited socio-economic resources (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020), including student attrition rates (Carmona & Morales, 2020). Consequently, educational organisations have focused on promoting learning continuity and on employing to that end the most appropriate means. These are related to various factors that range strictly from curriculum aspects (such as the prioritisation of learning) to the availability of resources for remote learning (such as, for example, technological tools) (Carmona & Morales, 2020).

All in all, learning continuity refers to the multidimensional approach to remote education during school closures and involves a learning scenario in which the educational system implements conditions conducive to learning for every child. Thus, the concept transcends the logic of teaching the same courses, but in a different setting, by focusing on the pedagogical management domains described below.

2.3 Pedagogical management

The literature has studied pedagogical management as a concept referring to the practices of different school actors aimed at improving student learning processes (Lizandro-Crispín, 2019) by focusing on different domains to enhance the quality of learning. In the present study, four domains are addressed based on the proposal outlined by Guzmán and Nussbaum (2009): technological, curriculum, methodological and assessment, which are defined according to their function and the specific aspects comprising each domain.

¹ A fourth type of administrative and financial governance system called Public Education Local Service began functioning in 2018 but given its recent onset was not included in this study.

Technological domain

Refers to the core elements enabling technology to enhance the quality of learning processes and includes instrumental resources and professional skills (Guzmán & Nussbaum, 2009). In Chile, this element is associated with the so-called digital divide and includes access to hardware and networks as well as network management (and the skills and knowledge suited to the task), which are always contingent on pre-existing social inequalities (Cortés *et al.*, 2020). The domain includes the following five aspects.

Networks availability, since remote education requires digital infrastructure for teachers, managers and students (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). *Network stability*, that is, the availability of uninterrupted internet services (IADB, 2020). *Hardware availability* for online connectivity such as computers, tablets and mobile phones, among others (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). *Platform technical management*, in other words, the training and skills needed by educational actors to implement technology-based education. The fifth aspect is *student access and connectivity*, which seeks to ensure their access to pedagogical materials, their communication during classes and the time invested in learning (Cáceres-Correa, 2020).

Curriculum domain

This domain corresponds to the design and implementation of learning programmes and includes learning sequences and trajectories. Research in this field has identified the fragility of this scenario in vulnerable contexts and posits that the curriculum is a social construction, of a transformative nature that can promote inclusive learning processes (Ferrada, Turra & Villena, 2013). This domain comprises three specific aspects.

Curriculum prioritisation has become a focus during the pandemic, giving rise to the need to consider an emergency curriculum (UNESCO, 2020) which should not be conceived as reducing the curriculum's contents but that focuses on developing the necessary skills (Rojas-Salgado, 2017). *Curriculum sequencing* refers to the organisation and progression of learning objectives that must respond to the school's sociocultural context and to the students' level of development and knowledge (Gil-Madróna, 2017). And, finally, *curriculum coverage*, refers to the ability to develop planned learning with adequate depth (Volante *et al.*, 2015).

Methodological domain

Refers to the strategies and resources mobilised to achieve learning and which, in the COVID-19 scenario, involve the integration of technological tools (Guzmán & Nussbaum, 2009). The literature on pedagogical practices points to a critical review of the situation and highlights that a well-founded learning process has a high transformative potential, especially in vulnerable educational settings (Villata, Martinic & Guzmán, 2011). This domain includes the following three specific aspects.

Transition from a face-to-face learning modality to a remote learning setting, focused on the transformation of traditional classes to an online format (Cabrera, Pérez, & Santana, 2020). *Knowledge of methodological strategies* adapted to remote learning, centred on the most relevant learning alternatives for a remote setting (Salas *et al.*, 2020). And the *relevance of available resources* and materials to enhance remote learning.

Assessment domain

Comprises the feedback and monitoring processes used by teachers to assess student learning and outcomes, including an assessment of content knowledge and the generation

of instances to improve outcomes (Guzmán & Nussbaum, 2009). In vulnerable contexts, it is imperative to focus holistically on the learning process by avoiding the use of external standards such as performance tests (Martínez, 2012). The assessment domain comprises four specific aspects.

Formative assessment refers to the formal or informal feedback procedures enabling students to bridge the gap between current and desired outcomes (Rosales, 2015). *Summative assessment*, which measures a student's learning against standardised criteria and which in most cases involves grading (Rosales, 2015). *Monitoring students' work* understood as the actions carried out to accompany the learning processes, which is especially urgent in times of COVID-19, especially in schools with more socio-economically disadvantaged students (Ramírez, 2020). Finally, *feedback*, the timely information provided on students' progress with the purpose of enhancing learning outcomes (Roberts-Sánchez, Rodríguez-Gómez & Silva, 2019).

Pedagogical management is highly conditioned by the specific sociocultural context, especially in a country with high levels of inequality such as Chile. Therefore, strengthening pedagogical management reduces school segregation, preventing a reproduction of social inequity based on unequal learning achievements (Villalta, Martinic & Guzmán, 2011).

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study uses a quantitative methodology, with an exploratory, descriptive and comparative approach (Cohen & Gómez, 2019). From a broad perspective, this approach enables us to address the emerging phenomenon of remote education during the pandemic within the Chilean school context and, at the same time, to explore the particularities of schools within the three different administrative and financial governance systems.

An online questionnaire was designed and administered in order to investigate the domains and specific aspects of pedagogical management that educational actors within the different administrative and financial governance systems perceive as a challenge in the framework of remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were asked to answer multiple-choice, categorical and nominal questions.

We used a convenience sampling method with a total sample of 342 cases of which 106 correspond to participants working in municipal schools (31%), 182 to participants working in subsidised schools (53%) and 54 to participants in private schools (16%). Despite the type of sampling, the percentage of schools within each administrative and financial governance system reflects the same distribution pattern existing at the national level².

Once the questionnaire data was processed, the variables were operationalised as binary. Then, we built a challenges indicator for each domain of pedagogical management by adding their specific aspects. This indicator enabled us to compare the number of specific challenges in each domain broken down by municipal schools, subsidised schools and private schools. See Table 1 for detailed information on the indicators' specific aspects.

² In Chile, municipal schools represent 33,5% of the total number of schools, subsidised schools account for 53,7% and private schools, 9,0%. The remaining 1,8% corresponds to the new administrative and financial governance system called Public Education Local Service (MINEDUC, 2019).

Table 1. Indicators of challenges to pedagogical management

Indicator	Specific aspects of the indicator	Scale ¹
Technological	Network availability	0 to 5
	Network stability	
	Hardware availability	
	Platform technical management	
	Student access and connectivity	
Curriculum	Curriculum prioritisation	0 to 3
	Curriculum sequencing	
	Curriculum coverage	
Methodological	Transition from a face-to-face (classroom) modality to a remote (non-face-to-face) modality	0 to 3
	Knowledge of methodological strategies for remote work	
	Relevance of available resources and materials	
Assessment	Formative assessment	0 to 4
	Summative assessment	
	Follow up of students' work	
	Feedback	

Using SPSS 25 software, a two-phase statistical, descriptive and bivariate analysis was carried out. The objective of the first phase was to establish a comparison between participants working in municipal schools, subsidised schools and private schools regarding the domains they consider most challenging (through calculation of the mean and the mode). The second phase focuses on comparing the different aspects comprising each domain that are viewed as challenging by the three different types of schools.

Finally, in order to ensure scientific rigour, we adopted the criteria proposed by Martínez (2004). Thus, this study considers the following i) truth value, ensured by anonymity and the use of a self-administered questionnaire, ii) consistency, given the phenomenon's stability during the instrument's implementation and iii) neutrality, given the questions' absence of bias in addition to previous pilot testing and validation by expert judges.

4. RESULTS

Our findings illustrate participants' answers to the multiple-choice question: "Which of the following specific aspects of pedagogical management have you found challenging during the process of remote education?", regarding each domain of pedagogical management.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the indicators for each domain of pedagogical management broken down by the schools' administrative and financial governance system

Indicator	Administrative governance system	Mean	Mode	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Technological domain	Municipal	3,245	4,00	1,285	0,00	5,00
	Subsidised	2,934	3,00	1,264	0,00	5,00
	Private	1,777	1,00	1,312	0,00	5,00

Where 0 is "no aspect" and the highest number on the scale in each domain corresponds to "every aspect".

Indicator	Administrative governance system	Mean	Mode	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Curriculum domain	Municipal	1,537	1,00	0,852	0,00	3,00
	Subsidised	1,586	1,00	0,825	0,00	3,00
	Private	1,185	1,00	0,802	0,00	3,00
Methodological domain	Municipal	1,952	2,00	0,797	0,00	3,00
	Subsidised	1,983	2,00	0,789	0,00	3,00
	Private	1,777	2,00	0,768	0,00	3,00
Assessment domain	Municipal	2,320	2,00	1,019	0,00	4,00
	Subsidised	2,252	2,00	0,958	0,00	4,00
	Private	2,166	3,00	1,077	0,00	4,00

Table 2 illustrates the indicators' descriptive statistics for the domains representing a challenge for pedagogical management, segregated by schools' administrative and financial governance system (municipal, subsidised and private). The mode indicates that the technological domain represents the most challenging aspect for the continuity of learning during the pandemic for participants working in municipal schools ($M_o = 4,00$) and in subsidised schools ($M_o = 3,00$). On the other hand, for participants working in private schools, the technological domain is one of the least challenging ($M_o = 1,00$). Preliminarily, this might indicate that at present this aspect is more challenging for those educational communities that lack the financial resources to purchase internet connection hardware and services.

As opposed to the differences observed between municipal, subsidised and private schools described in the previous paragraph, the curricular domain is the least challenging for all types of establishments ($M_o = 1,00$). Likewise, there are no substantial differences between municipal, subsidised and private schools in the methodological domain. This might be explained by the fact that these domains have different levels of visibility. While curricular decision-making is a task carried out invisibly for students and their families, methodological options are continuously verified and experienced by students (Gvirtz & Palamidessi, 2005). For this reason, and faced with a scenario of abrupt change, greater concerns could be projected for those public aspects than for those that remain "behind the scenes".

As for the assessment domain, it is more challenging for participants working in private establishments ($M_o = 3,00$) than for those who work in municipal and subsidised schools ($M_o = 2,00$). Initially this phenomenon might be explained through a credential-type relationship between private sector schools and families, the latter focusing on monitoring their children's educational path based on their school grades and paying less attention to other issues such as, for example, participating in educational decisions or building a community (Saracosti *et al.*, 2019).

Finally, an analysis of the mean indicates that private schools face fewer challenges than municipal and subsidised schools, since they display the lowest numbers in every domain, as shown in Table 2. This overall view suggests that challenges facing pedagogical management at Chilean schools during the COVID-19 pandemic are not only related to the educational dimension, but also to factors of socio-economic segregation that reinforce inequalities during times of crisis (Orellana & Salinas, 2020).

Technological domain

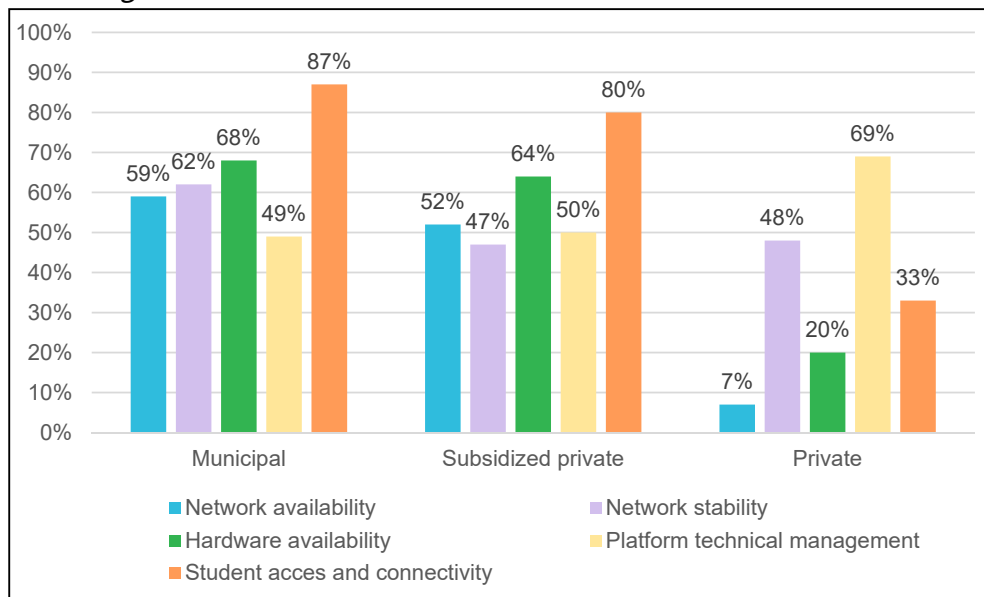


Figure 1. Percentage of participants who identify aspects of the technological domain as a challenge, segregated by schools' administrative and financial governance systems. Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 1 illustrates those aspects within the technological domain that are considered by participants to be challenging, broken down into administrative and financial governance systems (municipal schools, subsidised schools, private schools). We can observe a similar response pattern among educational actors belonging to municipal and subsidised private establishments, who perceive more challenges in this domain compared to their peers in private establishments.

When disaggregating data by the domain's different aspects, we observe that *network availability* represents a challenge for most participants in municipal establishments (59%) and subsidised establishments (52%). By contrast, in private schools only 7% of participants consider this aspect to be challenging. This same pattern is repeated with the item *hardware availability* where once again municipal and subsidised schools display higher percentages than private schools, 68%, 64% and 20% respectively. These results reinforce the notion that the instrumental elements required for remote learning are strongly dependent on students and families' socio-economic status (Orellana & Salinas, 2020).

With regard to *network stability*, no substantial differences can be observed between municipal, subsidised schools and private schools, probably due to the fact that in Chile, schools do not necessarily have the function of ensuring that their students and teachers have a stable and quality wireless connection (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020).

The aspect *technical management of platforms* is the main challenge facing private schools (69%). A situation that differs in the case of municipal and subsidised schools in which less than half of the participants consider this aspect to be challenging. The major challenge

facing municipal and subsidised schools is *student access and connectivity* (87% and 80% respectively), in contrast to participants from private schools in which only one-third consider this aspect to be a challenge.

All the above indicates that while educational actors at schools that have dealt with instrumental problems can now focus on formative issues linked to technology, participants who work at schools with less socio-economic advantages are trying to deal with new issues such as access to networks and the necessary devices for connectivity. As indicated by the literature, this suggests that the digital gap is multidimensional and not only expressed in disadvantages at the instrumental level, but also at the formative level (Cortés *et al.*, 2020).

Curriculum domain

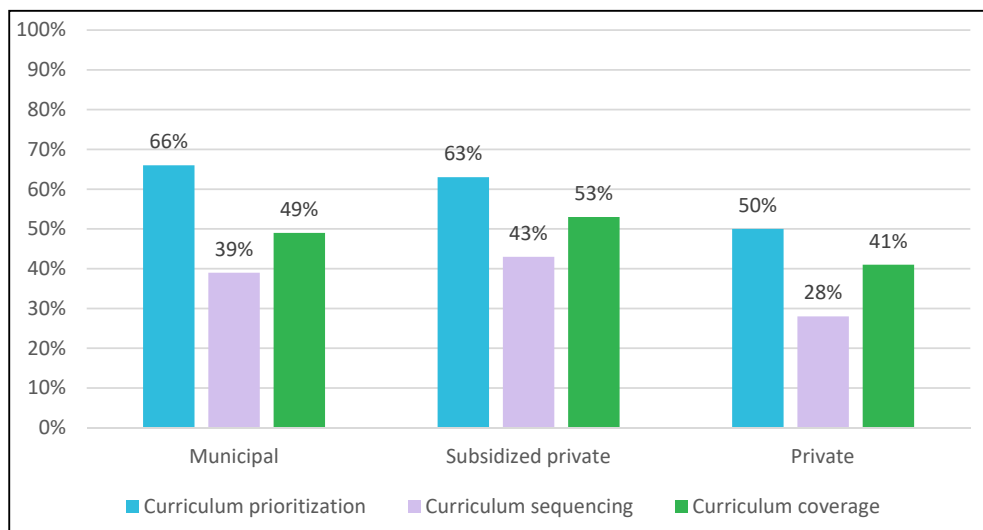


Figure 2. Percentage of participants who identify aspects of the curriculum domain as a challenge, segregated by schools' administrative and financial governance systems. Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2 provides information on the specific aspects of the curriculum domain that are viewed as a challenge by participants working in municipal schools, subsidised schools and private schools. As shown in Figure 2, these three types of establishments show a similar response pattern. That is, there is a similar prioritisation of aspects, but with different levels of intensity.

Thus, as compared to private schools, municipal and subsidised schools identify bigger challenges in the domain's three aspects. Of these, *curriculum prioritisation* is considered the biggest challenge for participants in municipal schools (66%). For participants in subsidised schools the percentage is 63% and in private schools, 50%. That *curriculum prioritisation* represents a major concern for the three types of schools is probably related to the fact that it has permanently been emphasised by national and international organisations as the cornerstone for educational continuity in the context of remote learning (MINEDUC, 2020).

However, it is still unknown how educational communities in Chile are interpreting this imperative. Thus, in a school system characterised by standardisation and accountability in

which non-compliance has strong consequences for schools, as occurs in Chile (Falabella, 2016), instead of focusing on the selection of contextualised learning contents (Rojas-Salgado, 2017), curriculum prioritisation might be promoting a narrowing of the curriculum, in at least two ways. First, by prioritising conceptual and procedural contents over attitudinal skills, since the former allow students to perform more efficiently in performance instruments. Second, prioritising subjects that carry more weight for standardised tests, such as language and mathematics (Assael, Albornoz & Caro, 2018).

In turn, the distance between *curriculum prioritisation* and *curriculum sequencing* is especially relevant since the latter is considered the least challenging within the three types of schools, with an average difference of 23 percentage points in relation to the described percentages. This would seem to indicate a lack of thorough understanding of the implications of curriculum prioritisation, or, that *curriculum prioritisation* is effectively being interpreted as an instrumental factor. However, *curriculum sequencing* is a key aspect when adjusting the curriculum as it is necessary to consider the gradation and progression of procedural and attitudinal contents, as well as the logical sequence of the subjects being taught.

Finally, it is worth noting that in the three types of schools, *curriculum coverage* is considered more challenging than *curriculum sequencing*. This is probably due to the constant pressure to meet performance levels in standardised tests, which leads teachers to overemphasise curriculum coverage as a means for improving academic test scores (Assael *et al.*, 2018).

Methodological domain

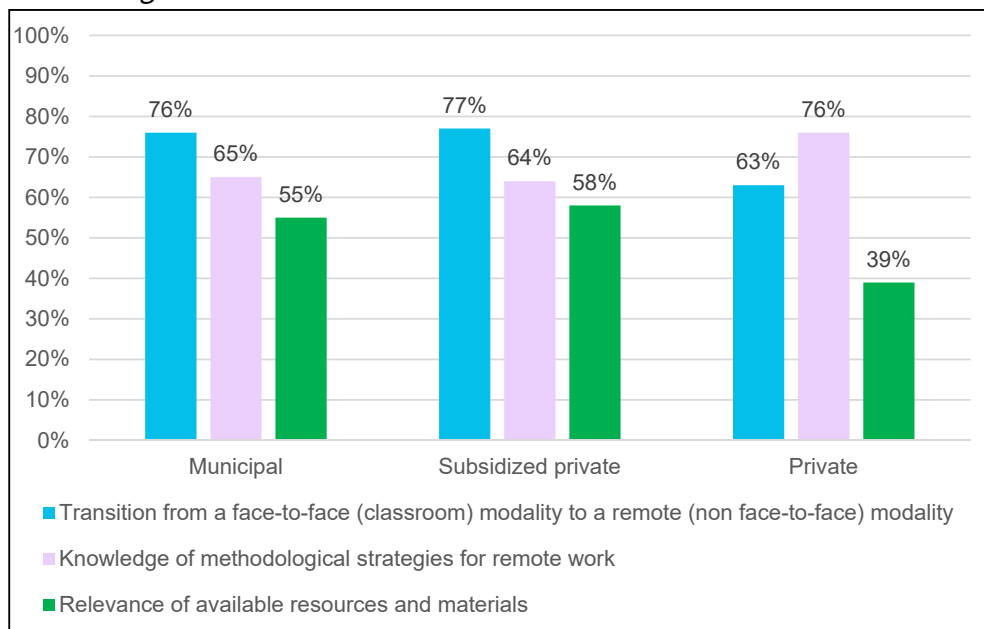


Figure 3. Percentage of participants who identify aspects of the methodological domain as a challenge, segregated by schools' administrative and financial governance systems. Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 3 illustrates the aspects of the methodological domain that are viewed as a challenge by participants working in municipal schools, subsidised schools and private schools. As shown, for the three types of schools there are two aspects that participants consider to be the most challenging. However, with a different ranking.

The *transition from a face-to-face (classroom) modality to a remote (non-face-to-face) modality* is the most challenging aspect for municipal schools (76%) as well as for subsidised schools (77%). The greatest challenge facing private schools is the aspect *knowledge of methodological strategies for remote work* (76%). This probably reveals that participants working in schools with greater socio-economic advantages have more access to tools and hardware enabling them to devise remote learning experiences of a superior quality. Given the absence of baseline conditions to grapple with remote educational processes, participants working in municipal and subsidised schools might have to address issues that are more urgent and relevant to the new scenario, such as dealing with the instrumental aspects of the technological domain.

Private schools' focus on the aspect *knowledge of strategies for remote learning* might be due to the fact that, having overcome instrumental and technical challenges, educational actors now need to focus on exploring methodological strategies aimed at remote learning since the strategies employed in a classroom setting (face-to-face) have become irrelevant. This phenomenon is not observed with the same intensity in municipal and subsidised schools, since they are probably using the same methodological options they were previously employing and directing their efforts to dealing with other problems (Villalta & Assael, 2018).

Concerning the third aspect of this domain, namely, the *relevance of available resources and materials*, it is considered to be the domain's least challenging aspect by participants in all three types of schools and even less relevant in private establishments (39%). In all likelihood, this is related to the disparity of resources between municipal schools, subsidised schools and private schools. Thus, it is safe to assume that the most advantaged schools have the appropriate resources and materials suited to their reality (CNN Chile, 2020), while municipal and subsidised schools are trying to contextualise standardised pedagogical resources that have been granted to them by educational authorities or they are adapting resources that were already in use.

Finally, we must not overlook the fact that percentages in municipal and subsidised schools are practically the same; this reinforces the notion of a reproduction of inequalities in the realm of public education that was already present before the pandemic (Quiroz, 2020).

Assessment domain

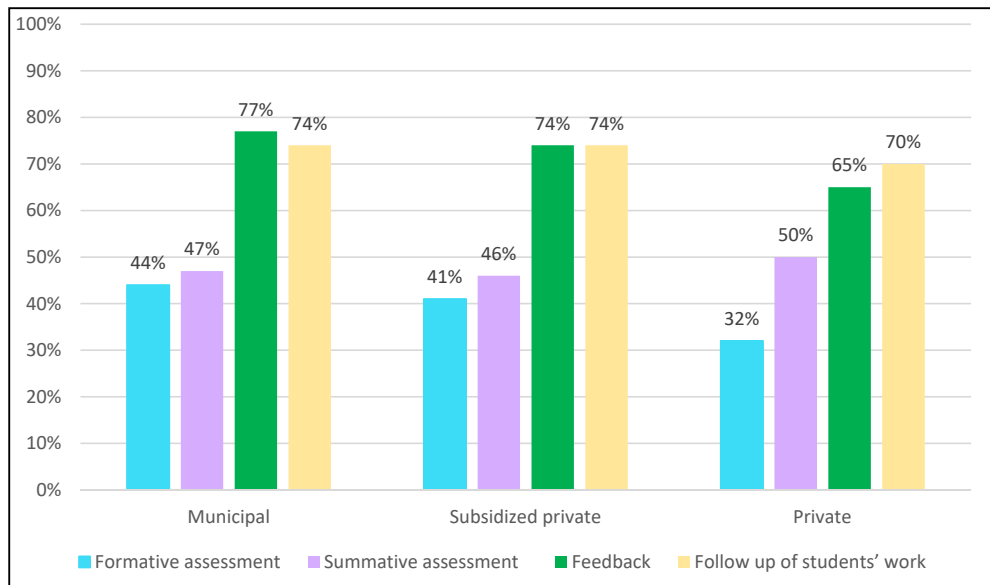


Figure 4. Percentage of participants who identify aspects of the assessment domain as a challenge, segregated by schools' administrative and financial governance systems. Source: Own elaboration.

Finally, Figure 4 illustrates the challenging aspects pertaining to the assessment domain within the three different types of schools. As shown, even though there are close similarities between the three types of schools, the similarities between municipal schools and subsidised schools are greater.

In both municipal and subsidised schools, *formative assessment* and *summative assessment* as well as *feedback* and *follow up of students' work* show slight differences ranging between zero and three percentage points. It would thus seem that an assessment culture is a distinctive characteristic of these two segments, a situation that was also present before the onset of the pandemic, as assessment has been one of the focal points of educational quality assurance policies since 2011 (Falabella, 2016). In this framework, it is legitimate to ask what the purpose of school assessments is amid a pandemic. In other words, to what extent is assessment now promoting better learning processes, connected to the current juncture and the respective school contexts, instead of simply responding to external pressures for results.

Conversely, in private schools, proportions are lower in every aspect, except for *summative assessment* (50%). Since private schools are the clearest example of the Chilean educational system's market orientation – education is now a profitable business – it is not surprising that to the extent that *summative assessment* is the most visible and concrete product of learning gains, it has become increasingly important. During this period, these families (clients) are demanding learning continuity since they continue paying for educational services; when these services are not provided in the same conditions as prior to the pandemic the demand is for lower fees (CNN Chile, 2020).

The two most challenging aspects for the three types of schools, *feedback* and *follow up of students' work*, (exceeding 65%,) might be related to the fact that by their very nature and circumstances, virtual contexts hinder the development of customised solutions and services to work with students and monitor their learning processes. Notwithstanding, teachers' capacity to provide student feedback has been questioned before. Studies on assessment policies in Chile underscore the weaknesses in this area, such as, for example, the lack of guidelines that would enable students to identify their mistakes and expected levels of achievement (Robert-Sánchez *et al.*, 2019). Thus, this study's results might only be pointing to a longstanding problem.

Finally, it is noteworthy that *formative assessment* is considered the least challenging aspect by the three types of schools, with a 30-percentage point gap between *feedback* and *formative assessment*. This situation is paradoxical inasmuch as the literature indicates that both these aspects should be simultaneously addressed since their objective is to reduce the gap between actual and desired assessment results, but above all, for the whole range of learning processes (Canabal & Margalef, 2017).

5. CONCLUSION

This study was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic and its purpose was to answer the question: What are the challenges to pedagogical management perceived by educational actors in Chilean schools within the different administrative and financial governance systems during the pandemic?

Our findings reveal the differences regarding perceived challenges in the different domains. Municipal and subsidised schools face greater challenges in practically every domain of pedagogical management compared to private schools. This situation has been exacerbated in the context of the health crisis, since the need to maintain continuity of learning – despite the capital restriction existing in these schools – has generated a wide range of challenges, which span from the possibility of access to the corresponding platforms to the availability of material and human means to follow up on the students' learning. This idea ratifies the existing inequities within the Chilean school system, which are not only based on limited economic resources, but also on the conditions of professional development achieved in the public sector, making pedagogical management more complex in the current scenario.

Additionally, two findings emerged that transcend the schools' different types of administrative and financial governance system and students' socio-economic level. First, the scant importance attached to the curriculum as a challenging issue. Second, the centrality of the methodological domain as a strong concern. The fact that schools' main focus of interest is the methodological domain indicates a prevailing logic of efficiency as applied to learning processes. This corroborates an excessive focus on pragmatic dimensions accounting for an instrumental approach to educational work at the expense of an in-depth analysis and understanding of learning processes. In other words, the focus on curriculum issues, centred on a thoughtful and critical approach concerning the purposes of learning, is replaced by a utilitarian approach associated with strategies and resources.

An interesting result emerging from this study corresponds with the marked concern from private schools' actors for aspects of pedagogical management related to their own knowledge and capacities, such as, for example, *knowledge of methodological strategies for remote work* and *platform technical management*. As opposed to public school actors,

who focus on aspects that are more related to issues facing their students, such as *student access and connectivity* and *feedback*. This finding might be strongly related to the school segregation experienced in Chile, since, given the existing inequality, the focus of the private sector would be placed on taking advantage of the remote education environment as a space for teacher strengthening, in the understanding that basic requirements of online pedagogical interaction are already satisfied, due to the advantageous conditions in which the students live. On the other hand, the attention of the public sector – which is placed on the relationship with students – emphasises the need of understanding that a priority of the precarious sectors in the period of a pandemic, more than achieving a high academic performance, lies in actions of communication and possible containment with the student body.

The previous reflection invites to the strengthening of a pedagogical management that promotes continuity of learning, permanently understood in an identity context and committed to the institution's aims and purposes. In this line, it would be substantial to intend efforts for the professional development of the various actors leading this process, but considering that it should concentrate not only on the improvement of instrumental tools, but should also move towards the promotion of social-emotional skills, especially for those in low-income socio-economic settings.

Moreover, in institutional terms, these efforts should aim towards the development of competencies that allow the school to manage autonomous and contextualised decision processes, which guide comprehensive pedagogical actions, always in favour of enriched learning. Within this framework, generating spaces for teacher reflection, set on a collegial vision, will allow educational communities to transcend the prevailing neoliberal logic and build a more equitable and fair school culture for all its members.

However, enhancing management skills in these scenarios can become a pointless effort if the instrumental barriers preventing students from fully participating in the learning experiences that have been designed for them are not overcome. As long as these obstacles are in place, it is difficult for educational actors to envision a horizon in which professional development is based on critical and situated reflection.

It is worth mentioning that this study's findings are the product of a self-administered online questionnaire focusing on specific aspects of the four domains of pedagogical management. Therefore, we recommend complementing this study with future investigations using methodologies allowing for a further in-depth understanding of school actors in Chilean schools and the challenges facing learning continuity during the pandemic. In addition to enriching the results of this inquiry with studies including other actors of the educational community, such as students and their families, which could shed light on the impact of these challenges on their learning processes during this period in the context of remote education.

In addition, future research studies on the above-mentioned methodologies could open new focal points of interest for which there is currently insufficient evidence, such as the emotional factors pertaining to students and educational actors in remote learning contexts. From a projective view, it might be interesting to study the consequences of this period as well as the decisions adopted by the educational community regarding student learning and students' learning and in its impact on their educational future.

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