

**From postponement to synergy: building participation through
a coexistence Committee**

*De la postergación a la sinergia: construyendo participación a
través de un Comité de Convivencia*

*Do adiamento à sinergia: construcindo participação mediante um
Comitê de Coexistência*

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Abstract

Democratic school coexistence is a growing challenge in Latin America. In Chile, schools must respond to ministerial guidelines and their own internal structures, as well as national and international dynamics. This study analyzes the case of a public school that created a Coexistence Committee with participation from all community members. Through participatory methods, such as timelines and group workshops, the meanings, achievements, critical issues, and projections of the Committee were explored. The results offer insights into the conditions for horizontal and participatory coexistence management, highlighting shared goals, community identity, and collective agency, which, according to participants, enable a transition "from postponement to synergy."

Keywords: Education for participation, school interaction, school management model.

Resumen

Democratic school coexistence is a growing challenge in Latin America. In Chile, schools must respond to ministerial prescriptions and their own internal structure, as well as national and international dynamics. This study analyzes the case of a public school that created a Coexistence Committee with the participation of all levels. Through participatory methodologies, such as timelines and group workshops, the Committee's meanings, achievements, critical nodes and projections were explored. The results allow us to reflect on conditions for horizontal and participatory management, highlighting common goals, community identity and collective agency, which allow us to move, according to its protagonists, "from postponement to synergy".

Keywords: Education for participation, school interaction, school management model.

Resumo

A convivência escolar democrática é um desafio ascendente na América Latina. No Chile, as escolas devem responder às prescrições ministeriais e à sua própria estrutura interna, bem como às dinâmicas nacionais e internacionais. Este estudo analisa o caso de uma escola pública que criou um Comitê de Convivência com a participação de todos os estratos. Through participatory methodologies, such as linhas do tempo e oficinas em grupo, foram explorados os significados, conquistas, pontos crítica e projeções do Comitê. Our results allow us to reflect on as condições for uma gestão horizontal e participativa, highlighting common goals, identidade comunitária e agência coletiva, which we allow to pass through, according to its protagonists, "da postergação à sinergia".

Palavras-chave: Educação para a participação, interação escolar, modelo de gestão escolar.

Introduction

Educational policies related to school coexistence in Chile have given rise to multiple translations in the concrete practices of educational communities, which has configured a persistent challenge in the daily management of coexistence within establishments. These policies have been characterized as hybrid: simultaneously combining formative and punitive components, creating tensions and contradictions that schools must interpret and operationalize in their daily work.

This article describes how a Chilean public school has organized an autonomous school coexistence device (the Committee), developing practices that are outside the guidelines established by current educational policies.

In a context where school coexistence holds a central place in the educational agenda, the Coexistence Committee analyzed emerges as an example of active and democratic participation. It brings together diverse actors of the educational community in processes of organization, planning, deliberation, and implementation of actions aimed at supporting school life in a participatory manner.

The experience described was developed during a semester in a public school in the Valparaíso Region (Chile), an institution with almost a century of experience and which constitutes the only public education offer in its nearby territory. Moreover, this school has had a sustained tradition of collaboration with various research projects, which enabled the development of a collaborative research process that constituted the methodological core of this study.

In summary, this article seeks to contribute to the discussion on the conditions that enable the construction of more democratic and inclusive spaces for coexistence management, as well as to explore the tensions and potentialities that emerge when educational communities attempt to appropriate public policies and translate them into transformative practices.

Theoretical references

The ways of understanding and managing school coexistence in Latin America have historically been diverse and have evolved over time. Since the 1990s school coexistence began to be understood as an issue linked to communal life within the school space (Fierro-Evans & Carbajal-Padilla, 2019). Its relevance was amplified with the Delors report (1996), which highlighted 'learning to live together' as one of the fundamental pillars of learning. Subsequently, the United Nations Educational Organization (hereinafter UNESCO) deepened this vision through the Niamey Declaration (UNESCO, 2015), incorporating values such as democracy and an active stance towards peace as central components of school coexistence.

Since then, the concept has acquired new layers of meaning, linking itself to practical knowledge in teaching and learning processes and integrating dimensions such as social interaction, respect for diversity, and the valuing of difference (Ascorra et al., 2018; Fierro-Evans & Carbajal-Padilla, 2019). Consequently, school coexistence has been consolidated as a complex area that challenges educational communities to develop approaches of promotion and management of coexistence, often intuitive and in the absence of clear guidelines or systematic accompaniment.

In Chile, this process has been marked by a dense web of educational policies that, from the military dictatorship to the present, have shaped various ways of understanding and managing school coexistence. The enactment of the Constitutional Organic Law on Education (LOCE) in 1990 (MINEDUC, 1990), which corresponds to the last educational legislation of the dictatorship, meant the abandonment of the Teaching State principle and the establishment of 'freedom of education' as the guiding principle. This shift gave way to a neoliberal model of educational administration, based on competition and the logic of demand subsidy (Falabella, 2015), which has persisted under democratic governments, reproducing a market logic that segments, individualizes and commodifies the school experience (Fuentes-Vásquez et al., 2025; Valdés, 2023).

In this scenario, schools have had to interpret and implement a wide variety of regulations and guidelines that address coexistence from multiple perspectives. This plurality has led to divergent understandings and therefore to dissimilar school practices, subject to the approaches adopted by each educational community (López et al., 2018, 2023). Thus, school coexistence is located between two poles: on the one hand, as a space for the strengthening of

democratic participation, and on the other, as a control instrument linked to the standardized measurement of educational quality (Jacovkis et al., 2022).

In practice, the management of coexistence in schools has been organized on three interrelated pillars: i) the regulatory framework composed of laws, decrees and regulations; ii) ministerial policies and guidelines; and iii) the internal management instruments of each establishment, such as the Institutional Educational Project (PIE, in Spanish), the Educational Improvement Plan (PME, in Spanish), the School Coexistence Plan and other specific plans such as sexuality, affectivity and gender. While these pillars offer a structural framework, the way they are interpreted and deployed may vary from school to school.

This article focuses on the experience of a Chilean public school that, in response to these challenges, decided to create its own institutional device: the School Coexistence Committee. This Committee was conceived as a collective space for participation where the convergence of various levels of the school community was possible: students, teachers, managers, families, former students and education assistants, in order to manage coexistence from a democratic, participatory and situated perspective.

Routes for the Management of School Coexistence in each School

Since the enactment of Law 20,536 on School Violence (MINEDUC, 2011), subsidized public and private schools in Chile have been obliged to form teams responsible for managing coexistence. However, this legislation has not clearly established the functions, professional profile, or hours allocated to the role, which grants school administrators and principals broad discretion to define their responsibilities (Valenzuela et al., 2018). Several studies have indicated that the tasks of these teams have focused on the implementation of the coexistence plan, case management, the provision of background information to ministerial entities, contact with families and direct attention to students (Villegas-Robertson et al., 2021).

Despite this, an institutional representation has persisted that associates school coexistence with individual functions, such as those exercised by people in charge of coexistence, inspectors or counselors, which has contributed to restricting its deployment to

delegated and technical tasks (Villegas-Robertson et al., 2021). This perspective has limited the formative and democratic potential that coexistence management could have if it were developed from a more community-based logic. Within this framework, authors such as López et al. (2023) have highlighted the need to expand spaces for participation and negotiation as conditions for a formative and democratizing management of school coexistence.

Thus, although there is a national policy on the subject, its implementation is strained by the multiple interpretations that school teams make of current regulations (López et al., 2018). This diversity of approaches gives rise to heterogeneous practices that in many cases reproduce authoritarian models or models focused on reactive conflict resolution, without guaranteeing effective participation processes. Therefore, one of the key challenges in school coexistence management has been precisely to promote participatory practices that transform school life into an experience of active, situated, and plural citizenship, in dialogue with the diversity of voices that comprise each educational community.

Devices for the Management of Democratic Coexistence in Schools

In the school context, different devices aimed at the implementation of the ministerial guidelines on school coexistence have been progressively articulated and developed. These devices have been adapted to the particularities of each educational establishment considering its institutional history, its organizational structure and development projections. According to Sisto and Zelaya (2014) devices can be understood as "analytical techniques, indicators, protocols, among others, (...) that are characterized both by their materiality and by the possibility of bringing demands, teleologies, interpellations that intervene through material action in the field of the local" (p. 134). From this perspective, devices can act to favor participatory deployment through their material dimension, challenging the traditional hierarchical logic of the subject/object relationship, in order to foster more symmetrical and horizontal links among the different sectors that comprise the educational community (Montenegro, 2004).

The Chilean regulatory framework indicates that educational institutions that do not receive state subsidies are not required to form a School Council, although they may do so voluntarily. However, all establishments, whether subsidized or not, must constitute a Committee for Good School Coexistence in accordance with the provisions of Law 20,536 on School Violence (MINEDUC, 2011). This regulation also established that the person responsible for coordinating the implementation of school coexistence policies and leading the preparation of the Coexistence Management Plan is the person in charge of school coexistence (article 15).

While the Good School Coexistence Committee should focus on promoting and strengthening respectful and collaborative relationships within the educational space, the School Council must fulfill a broader role in institutional management processes. Both devices have as their central purpose the implementation of public policies in the field of school coexistence, adapting to the requirements of current legislation. However, despite efforts to move towards a welfare policy consistent with international standards, its implementation has been developed within the framework of a strongly hierarchical school structure which has significantly conditioned the operation and scope of these devices (Stuardo-Concha, 2018).

Due to the lack of specificity in the legislation regarding the roles, attitudes and knowledge required both to be part of a school coexistence team (hereinafter ECE) and to be in charge of coexistence, the roles and operating dynamics of these teams have been defined in accordance with the terms of each institution (Valenzuela et al., 2018). This flexibility has led ECEs to adopt approaches that respond to the biomedical model, resulting in a dynamic of "case management" (Ramírez-Casas del Valle & Valdés-Morales, 2019). This has reduced school coexistence to an effort to normalize students who have already gone through other disciplinary instances without obtaining the expected results (López et al., 2011). However, recognizing that humans are not passive in situations of discomfort or pain (Denborough, 2008), some schools have begun to develop alternative strategies and devices from more collective approaches and less focused on individualization.

The need to respond in a practical way to contemporary challenges in school coexistence has led schools to focus on the development of participatory movements within the educational community. These processes of collaborative participation and empowerment require a 'collective agency' (Urbina, 2019) understood as the ability of two or more agents within a school

to work together towards common goals. This collective agency is configured as an emerging feature of the educational context where participation is developed through the interaction of various systems, agents, senses and practices that are articulated within the educational community.

Considering both the situated practices at the micro level and the strength of the regulatory interpellations emerging from the macro level, schools have spontaneously developed different devices to address these demands. These devices, which may function as mechanisms of either reproduction or transformation of educational practices, are often situated at the margins of the prevailing hybrid legality. This article specifically focuses on describing and analyzing the construction of a “Coexistence Committee” device in a Chilean school, conceived as an alternative mechanism for addressing issues of school coexistence. This Committee is configured outside the normative prescriptions and conventional practices of the school institution constituting an innovative experience that strains the current institutional frameworks.

The objective of this study is to describe from the perspective of its participants the meanings attributed to the Committee, its achievements, critical knots, as well as the forms of resistance and shared dreams that have emerged as necessary conditions for its sustainability over time.

Methodology

Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative descriptive design (Tójar, 2006); a case study method was applied in which the case is the Coexistence Committee device (hereafter the Committee). This Committee was created in a Chilean public school as a participatory device for managing school coexistence.

Research context

The Committee was developed in an urban school in the Valparaíso region (Chile) that has more than 100 years of history and is the only public establishment in the nearby territory. This school offers levels of education from early childhood education to secondary education, including secondary technical-professional modalities, and education for young people and adults. Currently, the school serves a total of 575 students, has 54 male and female teachers, and 34 education assistants.

The Committee arose after a process of internal reflection in the school based on a survey and systematization of information based on the Guide for Inclusive Education (Booth & Ainscow, 2015). Through this process, the lack of spaces for participation and dialogue between the different members of the educational community was identified. In response, the school coexistence team proposed the creation of a Committee as a broader device for coexistence management, designed to operate systematically and in the long term. This Committee includes representatives of all levels (students, teachers, managers, families, former students and education assistants), constituting an innovative device for the participation and management of school coexistence, unprecedented in the history of the establishment.

The creation of the Committee incorporated elements from the School Violence Law and the General Education Law (MINEDUC, 2009, 2011) by merging devices formally described in the legislation, such as the Coexistence Team and the School Council. However, the structure of the Committee went beyond what is established by laws and models in the margins of official policy and administration. As part of its functioning, biweekly meetings were established with a minimum quorum that required the representation of at least four different levels for the decisions to be valid. This allowed the Committee to emerge as a device with resolving and not only advisory capacity.

Participants

All members of the Committee participated in this study, a total of 20 people, as indicated in **Table 1**.

Table 1.

Characterization of the members of the Coexistence Committee

Participant Type (Number)	Description
Management team (4)	Principal, Head of Primary UTP, Head of Secondary UTP, Primary Inspector General
School coexistence coordinators (2)	Coexistence coordinator for the first cycle of primary education and coexistence coordinator for the second cycle of primary and secondary education.
Parent-Guardian (1)	President of the General Parent and Guardian Association
Education Assistant (1)	School Education Assistants Representative
Students (5)	President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Delegate of the Student Council
Teachers (5)	Teacher representative of primary teachers, teacher representative of secondary teachers, two teachers of the school integration program and teacher in charge of professional training technical education
Former students (2)	Two representatives from the School's Former Students' Center

Information production techniques

The case study was developed through participatory techniques: collaborative workshops, group and individual interviews. Two collaborative workshop sessions were held (Tójar, 2006) with the members of the Committee, where a group timeline was built to systematize the creation and development of the Committee (Aguirre García-Carpintero et al., 2018). The purpose of this activity was to reconstruct the perspective of its various participants, identifying the key milestones in its formation and development, as well as the main problems, challenges and goals experienced during the process.

In addition, individual and/or group interviews were conducted with some of the members in order to deepen specific aspects of the functioning of the Committee and explore new opportunities for participation for the different agents of the educational community.

Information production techniques in relation to study participants are described in Table 2.

Table 2.

Information production techniques and their participants

Information production technique	Participants
Participatory workshops	Coexistence managers (primary and secondary), parent/guardian, education assistants, students (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), teachers (1, 2, 3 and 4, former student 1)
Group Interview	Students (1, 2, 3 and 5)
One-to-One Interview	Principal, coexistence coordinators (primary and secondary), education assistant, heads of UTPs (1 and 2), inspector 1, student 5 and former student 2

Procedure

Contact with the school began a couple of years ago within the framework of collaborative research projects that this research team has developed with various schools in the region. This study in particular was integrated into a broader project related to school coexistence practices and the different devices implemented in schools in Chile. Initially, informed consent was obtained from the school principal who, through the institution's coexistence coordinators, facilitated contact with potential participants. In each information production technique the informed consent or assent of the participants was obtained, informing them of the objectives, scope and methodologies of the study.

The information production phase took place over two months at the end of the academic year. Each session of the participatory workshop lasted approximately two hours, while the interviews did not exceed 60 minutes. All information production activities were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Information Analysis Techniques

The analysis of the information was carried out using Atlas.ti software (version 8.2.4) and applying a thematic categorical content analysis (Vázquez, 1994). This analysis was based on a system of emerging categories, but related to the objective of the study.

The contents associated with each category were reviewed in collaboration with the school principal and the coexistence coordinators to ensure consensual validation of the analysis (Flick, 2014). Subsequently, the main results were also discussed with the members of the Committee. This process included the consideration of convergent and complementary elements that emerged from the different techniques of information production, allowing a triangulation of the information produced by incorporating the perspectives of various agents of the educational community (Flick, 2014).

Results

The information produced was organized around four main categories, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

Descriptive matrix of the main categories

Categories	Most relevant content
Meanings associated with the creation of the Committee	Participatory space Inter-stakeholder communication channel Device to strengthen the school's identity Organizational Learning Space
Achievements of the Committee	Configuration as the most participatory space within the school Identifying a common goal Regularity of meetings Operate strategically
Critical challenges for establishing the Committee	Recent formation Negative emotionality regarding their conditions Communication difficulties and installed authoritarian dynamics
Dreams for the future	Empower all sectors Become a meeting space for the whole educational community Move beyond the culture of reproach Build unifying and long-term goals. Improve credibility and motivation Moving towards increasingly participatory leadership

Meanings associated with the creation of the Committee

This category explored how participants perceived the purpose and importance of the Committee. The participants identified the Committee as *a space for participation* that integrated various agents of the educational community, facilitating the construction of common proposals and goals in a climate of mutual support:

Then we realized that there were a lot of people who wanted to participate, but didn't know how (...) So we were in that process of recruiting partners, of seeking objectives (...) It's about... well, creating a space for reconnection and connection (coexistence coordinator 2, Workshop).

The fact that we participate, whether it is parents, students, us (...) I think it is good because we can also give the point of view of both the teachers and the children on their side and so we are mixing and we are seeing the suggestions and right there if a solution can be given to an issue it is much better, then I find that it is super good that we all integrate into the issue of coexistence, because we can, I don't know, a mind does not think as much as more minds together (teacher 2, workshop).

The perception of having a participatory space was linked to the horizontal nature of meetings and the capacity to constitute a *communication channel across sectors*:

Even when disagreeing, the mere fact of taking a person into account makes that person feel committed because they were part of a process, of something, and that's what I believe is necessary in this school—that all sectors be part of what happens in the school, not be mere witnesses or simply endorsers of what is dictated from the administration, but rather that all sectors can truly voice their opinions and that their opinion carries weight in what is decided (coexistence coordinator 1, workshop).

Before there was no opinion. From any of the groups, as students no, for example, before belonging to the student council, when there was no Committee, we didn't know what was happening in the school (student 3, Workshop).

Likewise, the Committee was configured as a device to strengthen *the school's identity*. In its implementation, working on the school's 'signature project' was identified as a common goal, which consisted of improving the school's infrastructure. This led the Committee to organize activities to reclaim the history of the school and use its identity as a local symbol:

Given such a rich identity that can be recovered, to remove that stigma of being troublemakers (flaites¹), people with bad reputations, things that had nothing to do with us and that we felt were unjust from the inside (...) So we also did work through social media, we created the school's Instagram, to publicize all the activities that were done at the school with the kids (coexistence coordinator 2, workshop).

Achievements of the Committee

This category refers to actions identified as collective successes of the Committee. Four main achievements were identified. The first of these was to *be configured as a participatory space within the school*, where activities were collaboratively created to improve coexistence:

Before, [the students] weren't used to receiving information; as I said, they were only used to following orders, but little by little the idea of providing information to students has been incorporated. I mean, I started to get closer little by little, to ask things, and slowly we have been moving forward (student 1, workshop).

I liked that organization that we are all equal [referring to the functioning of the Committee] (student 3, group interview).

The second achievement is related to the *identification of a common goal*, which unified the feelings of most of the agents of the school. This goal, given the precarious state of the school's infrastructure, was to improve that infrastructure:

To try to contribute our grain of sand and all together move forward and row in the same direction, and I think that, we ourselves, because if we wait for them to give us a new school, because since the years when I was studying they've been promising us a new school, we're talking about more than twenty years... (parent/guardian, workshop).

But I think it is fundamental and it is super good that at least we have managed to rank certain needs, that is, already, we are all in the same place (teacher 3, workshop).

¹ Chilean colloquial term, often used pejoratively to describe individuals perceived as vulgar, aggressive, or of low social status

The issue of building the new school is not only an issue that concerns students, but rather it concerns the impact this has on the surrounding community, and it is that community that needs a decent school for their children. And that was a question that spontaneously arose here and that everyone agreed that this should be one of the main elements that this committee should organize (coexistence coordinator 2, workshop).

So, we keep empowering ourselves. I mean, yes... and on top of that, if we have this possibility of something that brings us all together — the whole issue of building the new school — then things could already be different (former student 2, workshop).

The third achievement identified has to do with *maintaining systematicity in Committee meetings*, which was identified as an important step for the institutionalization of the Committee in the school. This validated and made visible the determination of the members toward the Committee's success: "I think we may make many mistakes, but what's important is that this gets established and that the school learns to make use of the space" (Coexistence Coordinator 1, workshop).

The fourth achievement relates to the *implementation of strategies for the Committee's functioning*, such as coordinating actions through institutionally validated figures like the coexistence coordinators. These were identified as the main drivers of the Committee and spokespersons for its mission, both inside and outside the institution.

In addition, the school's identity was used as a lever for change. For example, efforts were made to make the school visible as a symbol for its locality:

Well, I think that this school is the school that has the greatest potential in the local area, there is no other school that is more powerful than this one, there are none, and I assure you that I know them (teacher 5, individual interview)

or its family atmosphere:

They have a connection as identity in that sense, like a family. The parents also in the sense that the school is like 'if I studied there my son is going to study there too', it's like something already, a certain tradition (coexistence coordinator 1, brief report review).

Critical challenges for the establishment of the Committee

This category included the gaps, difficulties and issues that arose during the implementation of the Committee as a school coexistence management device.

The first challenge identified was related to the recent creation of the Committee, which implied the need to restructure lines of action and disseminate their existence and objectives within the educational community:

we are at a completely initial level [referring to the Committee]. Where we are just generating, perhaps, structures that could sustain... or spaces, that could sustain this level of participation (coexistence coordinator 1, interview).

Another challenge identified was *related to negative emotions associated with infrastructure conditions*, which provoked feelings of helplessness, injustice, sadness, and powerlessness. These feelings manifested themselves in interpersonal conflicts and in processes of negative stigmatization of the school, both internally and externally. This critical knot was reflected, for example, in the suspension of classes due to the flooding of classrooms:

the school has had to suspend classes after the winter storms given the flooding of 15 of the 22 classrooms it has (coexistence coordinator 2, workshop).

It brought me down so much (...), because I said 'it's okay that the children are poor, very humble here, but they have dignity and deserve all our respect and they can't be working in this dampness'. I see the children, who come with their sneakers and the water seeps through... the children are very humble, so the decision that was made yesterday [to suspend classes from 10 in the morning] I think was the most correct one that could have been made among all the possibilities (inspector, individual interview).

Similarly, communication problems and authoritarian dynamics within the school were identified as critical knots, since they prevented the establishment of a participatory system: "I think it is an issue that here the school does not have a culture of participation" (teacher 3, workshop); "Me, the 15 years I have been here at the school, I have had 3 principals. Of those 3 principals, 2 were autocrats, basically (teacher 2, Workshop).

In addition, the need for a change of mentality in the school to encourage participation was highlighted:

we have to make a complete change of mindset in the school. And for that, I think, from the outset, the basis of everything is that we can listen to each other (coexistence coordinator 1, workshop).

Dreams for the future

This category addressed the ideals and aspirations of possibility that the Committee built through reflection on its own process of creation and development in the school. One of the Committee's dreams was to *become a space for the empowerment of all levels* of the educational community, thus facilitating autonomous and proactive participation in the generation of positive transformations. The goal was to create the necessary synergy for its functioning, drawing on robust participatory practices from each sector:

It's a tool that you can use within an institution like this to generate those changes in mindset, precisely by empowering the people who represent the different sectors to also begin to have a different role in each of their sectors (coexistence coordinator 1, workshop).

In addition, the Committee aspired to *become a meeting and communication space* in the educational community, promoting greater convening and dialogue:

We need a moment like this where the kids, the students, can have different spaces, where the teacher can talk with the kids, we can talk with the teachers, also with the children. Many times it happens that we administrators don't know all the children, so ultimately I feel that isn't good because, I mean, it kind of dehumanizes us in some way in this whirlwind of things (curriculum coordinator, group interview).

Having meeting spaces could facilitate *progress from a culture of reproach* towards a culture of joint search for solutions and mutual trust:

Another thing that worries me is that we might blow this whole thing up, fight a huge battle, and achieve something good — something important for the school — but then still go on with the same mindset of... blaming each other (Coexistence Coordinator 2, workshop).

The idea is not to look for someone to blame, but to put ourselves at the service of the goals we've set together (teacher 2, workshop).

To achieve the desired change in the school, the Committee identified the need to establish itself as a *credible space capable of motivating the community*. It should generate an enthusiasm that invited everyone to participate and transform the school in the desired direction:

For example, if I were in a place that had been functioning for 70 years in, let's say, a dictatorial way, and they suddenly tell me the story that now it's democratic — well, I'd still, like "Bombo Fica²", say: 'that sounds suspicious to me'(coexistence 2, workshop).

Conclusions

This article has been developed in order to systematize the experience of a Chilean school in the configuration of a device for the management of school coexistence, as was the creation of its Committee. This experience embodies the evolution of the understanding and management of school coexistence in Latin America in recent years, which has gone from traditional approaches focused on conflict resolution, mainly disciplinary problems, to broader perspectives that integrate democracy, peace, participation and human rights as central axes. This evolution has been influenced both by international reports and statements from organizations such as UNESCO (2014, 2015) and by a non-minor set of research on the subject (Ascorra et al., 2018; López et al., 2023; Ramírez-Casas del Valle & Valdés-Morales, 2019) that have allowed expanding the notion of school coexistence and, therefore, the opportunities to reflect on it, its deployment and its management from the educational communities.

This Committee, as a device for the management of school coexistence, emerged as an adaptation of the ministerial guidelines to the particular reality of the school. In other words, it constituted an alternative route in a Chilean public school, operating on the border of the prescriptions of public policy and from a community whose identity was also identified in marginality. The creation of this Committee highlights how, despite existing policies and laws, it may be possible to develop innovative devices that overcome the limitations of traditional models of thinking and acting in educational communities.

Several factors drove the creation of the Committee. One of the most important was the positive evaluation of the Committee as a channel for the participation of various levels and for the improvement of communication within the educational community. This allowed school

² Chilean comedian

members to become more actively involved in decision-making and building a common identity. This is related to the success in establishing itself as a participatory space and in identifying common goals (López et al., 2023), especially in relation to the improvement of school infrastructure. These achievements helped build a sense of community and a collaborative approach to issues.

Despite the progress, the Committee faced significant challenges, such as initial resistance to participation and the routinization of authoritarian or fragmented dynamics and communication problems that were identified as important barriers to more effective and equitable participation by its members. This, for example, was reflected in the fact that the 'coexistence' coordinators were the ones who operated as the Committee's main facilitators, having difficulty sharing that agency in their practices with other member sectors, not because they didn't want to, but because the strength of their role granted by the community itself kept them in that position and associated with those practices.

Despite these important challenges to overcome to achieve full and effective participation in the educational community, the Committee did constitute itself as an instance where the different levels allowed the school, as a system, to reflect on itself, allowing Committee participants to also identify their main threats to the sustainability of the initiative over time. In this way, the Committee did manage to understand that its conformation operated against an established hierarchical culture. This is why, within the framework of action for school coexistence management that allowed the formation of this Committee, it was possible to create a cross-sectoral community that systematically, over several months, was able to dialogue and reflect together on ways to address the main challenges. The Committee managed to exemplify how schools are constituted as real school communities, capable of learning and living together in diversity and with respect for their historical and territorial context.

This article gives an account of the forms of assembly and articulation that the device can offer, with the aim of promoting transversal participation and the possibility of exercising democratic citizenship within the school space. The School Coexistence Committee is presented as a valuable experience for participatory management of school coexistence, highlighting both its achievements and the challenges faced in the effort to break the established inertia. The creation of the Committee allowed progress in participation and collaboration among members of the educational community, although it also revealed significant obstacles related to negative

emotionality linked to the precariousness of its infrastructure and organizational culture, more accustomed to a hierarchical organization of power. Dreams for the future reflected a desire to deepen community empowerment and build a more inclusive and participatory school environment, in connection with their territory. This Committee, being a device for local translation of educational policy while operating at its margins, reaffirms once again, as various authors have done on previous occasions (López et al., 2023), the importance of a shared vision of school coexistence and the active participation of its agents.

It has been interesting to observe that, for participants, the common goal is shaped by the feeling of 'not being seen,' which involves negative emotions related to abandonment, experienced daily and which unites members in a sense of precariousness. Under these conditions, the Committee members have understood that organizations also learn and that 'being community' can be a pathway for that learning: to move from postponement to synergy. In practice, this meant meeting in a Committee under the normative pretext of managing school coexistence, to manage coexistence through the act of coexisting.

From a theoretical perspective, this evolution can be understood through the understanding of social capital, which highlights how networks of social relations and mutual trust facilitate cohesion and cooperation within an educational community (Echeverría, 2020). The inclusion of democracy and peace in the management of school coexistence reflects a movement towards the construction of social capital in the educational field, where active participation and respect for diversity are mechanisms to strengthen the social fabric of school communities (Aguirre García-Carpintero et al., 2018).

Although these devices can promote participation and democracy, their effectiveness is conditioned by the hierarchical structure and limitations of regulatory frameworks. The experiences of the Coexistence Committees in Chile highlight the importance of collective agency and the need to overcome management models focused on attention to individual cases, to promote a more inclusive and participatory coexistence.

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