

STANDARDIZED STANDARDS AND THE EVALUATION OF TEACHING
PERFORMANCE IN RURAL SCHOOLS

*NORMAS PADRONIZADAS E AVALIAÇÃO DO DESEMPENHO DOCENTE NAS
ESCOLAS RURAIS*

*NORMAS ESTANDARIZADAS Y LA EVALUACIÓN DEL DESEMPEÑO DOCENTE
EN ESCUELAS RURALES*



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ABSTRACT: The objective of the current study was to determine the relationship between standardized norms and the evaluation of teacher performance in subsidized rural schools in the Ñuble region of Chile. The methodological route was based on the quantitative approach and involved a basic inquiry from the perspective of a non-experimental design. A population of 40 educators who work in the aforementioned institutions was considered, and a survey and a questionnaire with a Likert scale were administered to collect information on the examined context. It was validated with the research of specialists in the educational-methodological field and assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, determining high reliability. The most significant findings focused: there is little approval of the standardized norms that are issued by the Ministry of Education of Chile, given that they do not correspond to the reality that teachers live in rural areas, affecting teacher practice and, therefore, the effective performance before the governing authorities at the time of being evaluated.

KEYWORDS: Standards. Standardized. Assessment. Performance. Chile.

RESUMO: O objetivo do presente estudo foi determinar a relação entre normas padronizadas e a avaliação do desempenho dos professores em escolas rurais subsidiadas na região de Ñuble, no Chile. O percurso metodológico baseou-se na abordagem quantitativa e envolveu uma investigação básica, na perspectiva de um desenho não experimental. Foi considerada uma população de 40 educadores que atuam nas instituições citadas e aplicado um questionário com escala Likert para coletar informações sobre o contexto examinado. Foi validado por meio de pesquisa realizada por especialistas na área educacional-metodológica e avaliado utilizando o coeficiente Alfa de Cronbach, o que determinou alta confiabilidade. As conclusões mais significativas centraram-se no seguinte: há pouca aprovação das normas padronizadas emitidas pelo Ministério da Educação do Chile, visto que não correspondem à realidade que os professores vivem nas áreas rurais, afetando a prática docente e, portanto, a eficácia desempenho perante as autoridades governamentais no momento da avaliação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Normas. Padronizado. Avaliação. Desempenho. Chile.

RESUMEN: El objetivo del actual estudio fue determinar la relación de las normas estandarizadas y la evaluación del desempeño docente en escuelas rurales subvencionadas de la región del Ñuble-Chile. La ruta metodológica fundamentada en el enfoque cuantitativo y se envolvió en una indagación básica, bajo la perspectiva de un diseño no experimental. Se considero una población de 40 educadores que se desempeñan en las instituciones antes referidas y se manejó una encuesta y un cuestionario con escalamiento Likert para recolar la información del contexto examinado. El mismo fue validado con la pesquisa de especialistas en el ramo educativo-metodológico, valorándose por medio del coeficiente Alfa de Cronbach, determinándose una fiabilidad alta. Los hallazgos más significativos centrados: existe poca aprobación de las normas estandarizadas que son emitidas por el Ministerio de Educación de Chile, dado que las mismas no se corresponden con la realidad que viven los profesores en el área rural, afectando la práctica del docente y, por ende, el desempeño efectivo ante las autoridades rectoras al momento de ser evaluados.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Normas. Estandarizadas. Evaluación. Desempenho. Chile.

Introduction

The complex role of educators in schools is further entangled by the numerous uncertainties that arise in the daily classroom work, generated by the incessant perspectives imposed by the educational system. Globally, in the study conducted by Núñez *et al.* (2022), the focus is on the situation of rural schools in terms of difficulties in recruiting and training rural students, complicating the training and pedagogical management in these areas.

For this reason, the school in rural areas is perceived as a unitary and unvarying entity anchored in a rural context and culture. It consists of a distinct and unique organizational structure, depending on the type of school, as well as a pedagogical arrangement involving different components. This conceptualization individualizes rural schools with students of different levels and, in turn, will depend on the area in which they are located (MORALES, 2019).

In the research conducted by Garofalo (2018), he considered that education in rural areas is in a state of apathy, given the scarcity of financial resources allocated for its advancement. Restricted investment and attention, as well as resources, both material and human, allocated to meet the requirements deserving of student education, hinder the achievement of standards set by international institutions for an organized educational system with the demands a nation requires. This results in a lack of resources that hampers progress towards optimal improvement in the quality of life and the development of skills in students.

According to Rojas (2021), the evaluation of teaching performance represents a continuous, methodical, and participatory assessment procedure that seeks to affirm the quality of the educator's work. Additionally, it centralizes the estimation of the personal, academic, and professional competencies of the teacher, substantiating the scope of work as well as the scope of student learning.

Indeed, performance evaluation estimates educational skills and active methods and examines the essential situations in which teachers perform their duties, as several components affect their practices. Furthermore, it has a methodical perspective closely linked to the level of conviction that the educator has regarding their evaluation (ESTRADA *et al.*, 2022).

In this regard, in Chile, the complexity of teaching work in rural schools stands out. This complexity is accentuated by the standardized norms issued by the Ministry of Education (central level). Therefore, its standardized nature consists largely of guidelines that do not always apply appropriately to the specific reality of each school (TAPIA, 2021). These guidelines involve components such as the distribution of schedules between teaching and non-

teaching activities, standardized measurements like the System for Measuring the Quality of Education (SIMCE), decisions to optimize education, and the evaluation of the educator with students of different levels in the same classroom.

Similarly, according to Castillo, Williamson, and Hidalgo (2017), it is common for most rural schools to manage classrooms where students from different grades share the same space. Many are located in hard-to-reach contexts, and some require essential basic services to meet minimum operating requirements. Something very relevant in these schools is the difficulty of access to the internet, resulting in limited access to guidelines issued by the Ministry, especially standardized norms and performance evaluations of teachers who teach in this area.

For this reason, at the regional level in Chile, educational guidelines for public representation are issued at the central level and, in most cases, are detached from the reality experienced in rural localities. Such guidelines ignore the context or conditions in the aforementioned schools; resulting in the need to appeal more to complementary legislation to correct the deficiencies that manifest in teachers' performance in rural areas (AZIZ, 2018).

Based on the above, in subsidized rural schools located in the Ñuble region, the implementation of a multigrade classroom perspective is observed to adjust to the diversity of student composition attending these institutions. This approach takes into account different age groups, learning orientations, and initial modes of student discernment.

In the rural schools of the Ñuble region, the situation is quite delicate, as teachers have expressed a lack of equality for all and a rapid increase in discrimination in this area. Similarly, government bodies, including the Ministry of Education, are developing plans adapted to the rural context to adjust performance evaluation to the educational resources used to teach in multigrade classrooms. It is important to note that internet access poses significant challenges, hindering the development of teacher portfolios.

Consequently, the aforementioned issues pose challenges to the daily performance of teachers in rural schools integrated into the educational system of the Ñuble Region. These difficulties arise largely due to the geographical context in which they are located, often lacking facilities and adequate resources to ensure their smooth operation. This has motivated the following investigation, which aims to analyze the relationship between standardized norms and the evaluation of teaching performance in subsidized rural schools in the Ñuble region, Chile.

Standardized Norms

Standardized norms imply the grouping of guidelines implemented in different contexts, especially in educational, economic, social, and scientific realms, to establish, order, and optimize activities inherent to these fields. At the same time, standardized norms symbolize the process of creating and applying guidelines for a systematic approach to a specific action in favor of and with the participation of all involved (HERNÁNDEZ; RAMIREZ; GAMBOA, 2018). These norms focus on stating and implementing canons to endorse the fulfillment of established actions.

For this reason, standardized norms are part of the international approach to administration in educational environments, including the ISO 9000 Standards established by the International Organization for Standardization. These standards represent a generic and internationally approved management system for administrative requirements in the educational field (MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN DE CHILE, 2017). In summary, internationally, there are widely used sets of standards serving as essential benchmarks for evaluation in organizations, specifically in the educational context, developed to establish guidelines adapted to the particularities of each school.

Simultaneously, Assaél, Albornoz, and Caro (2018) asserted that standardized norms are fundamental to understanding excellence in the educational environment. These norms explore performance and continuous improvement definitions, establishing a results-oriented standards system. In other words, this convergent methodological approach encompasses various domains, addressing guidance for prosperity, school effectiveness, and academic success, as well as global quality standards.

However, as noted by Venegas (2021), the standardized norms applied to rural schools in the Ñuble region, Chile, have incorporated variables that do not significantly impact teachers' performance. These guidelines provided a framework for comparing each standardized norm and its implications on the work carried out by educators in rural schools, as well as the planning of content aimed at promoting learning.

However, a quite specific situation arises for educators when attempting to adhere to standardized norms. In many instances, this stems from the geographical distance from the urban context, the scarcity of resources, and the eventual isolation they experience, thereby limiting the likelihood of effective performance (GELBER *et al.*, 2019). This scenario requires appropriate measures that consider the particularities of subsidized private schools in the rural context and the reality teachers face.

The diversity of guidelines in the form of standardized norms results in a quantitative orientation in the system. The quantitative component is intrinsically linked to all activities aimed at establishing a robust educational system (MADRID *et al.*, 2019). An example is the learning standard, which is used to assess curriculum coverage and is closely related to the work carried out by the System for Measuring the Quality of Education.

In this context, two relevant indicators are discussed in relation to this variable of standardized norms, with the first contributing to acceptance by educators. According to Demarchi (2020), teachers' approval of standardized norms is crucial when an educator implements them, seeking activities to optimize their life or career trajectory. This equally represents individuals' ability to adapt to challenging or complicated environments, especially in unresolved situations.

Arevalo (2020) suggests that educators' approval is related to the acceptance of circumstances, where the teaching professional must adjust or conform to norms or regulations established by official bodies to optimize their work and evaluation. Similarly, students must agree to a set of standardized norms, guidelines, or rules for coexistence in the exercise of their functions.

Consequently, norms that vary for all educational centers are developed at the central level. Although they focus on the principles of equity and equal opportunities for teaching all students in the country, these norms are often impractical to implement due to the nature of rural schools or the territorial context in which the institution is located.

The second indicator related to relevance in the school environment, as defined by Herrera, Guevara, and Urías (2020), is essentially one that requires the consideration of ethical principles, maintaining an impartial stance, promoting creativity, and simultaneously strengthening commitment to the challenges faced by society and the workplace. Moreover, it should be based on long-term strategies to address objectives and needs comprehensively. Similarly, relevance should be subject to the equality of conditions that should exist in a given educational center in terms of educational, financial, pedagogical, academic, and institutional resources, among others.

In summary, relevance in the school environment presupposes the need for standardized norms to coexist with the certification of the educational center by governing bodies, in this case, the Ministry of Education. In this way, many teachers in rural areas choose to develop their pedagogical resources with a lack of reflection on rural life. These materials are equally

assigned to the type of school within the national territory, and a high percentage of their content does not address the rural environment in a contextualized manner (ÁVILA, 2019).

Teacher Performance Evaluation

Performance evaluation is conceived as a procedure conducted within institutions, outlined and executed to assist employees in understanding their performance, occupations, and expectations placed upon them (RUÍZ, 2021). In other words, performance evaluation focuses on the methods or processes carried out in a particular organization, with the aim of facilitating workers to assess their benefits, work, occupations, incentives, and self-perceptions.

Thus, performance evaluation represents a systematic assessment of the work of each individual in their commitment to an institution in the present and the future. Every evaluation seeks to motivate or conceptualize the value, excellence, and peculiarities of an individual (CHIAVENATO, 2018). In other words, the evaluation is aimed at the harmonious understanding of each individual's occupation and the verification of their roles in the activities performed.

In the context of teacher performance evaluation, according to Gajardo and González (2023), a competency-based system is adopted, where evaluators make judgments based on evidence from various sources to conceptualize whether an individual meets the obligations established by a norm or set of criteria. Teacher evaluation is associated with the appreciation of skills, with those conducting the evaluation validating it with reality through various forms of information.

Gajardo, González, and Gajardo (2020) emphasize that the fundamental purpose of teacher performance evaluation is to enhance the work of educators and contribute to the improvement of educational excellence. This evaluation is based on standards that rely on dimensions described in the "Framework for Good Teaching," a document issued and centrally elaborated. In summary, the Ministry determines the performance of teachers, focusing on strengthening teaching performance and promoting skill development in educational environments.

In this variable, two indicators are considered, one related to standardized measures and the other to indicative standards of teaching work. Standardized measures refer to essential information with a certain level of accuracy, collected continuously and systematically, aiming

to assess people's performance in their work environments, using evidence-based data and considering especially the information being gathered (ARANCIBIA, 2018).

Prieto (2019) argued that the main purpose of standardized measures is to enable comparisons between individuals based on the position they occupy in an institution with its own characteristics. Thus, the evaluation of teachers is not equated to a mere comparison, as each one operates according to the specific demands of the school or the central level.

As for the indicative standards of educator's work, according to Díaz and Rodríguez (2021), these are conceptualized as reference points used as guidelines to assess the systematic aspects of administration in educational centers and those committed to them. These standards focus on a set of norms intended to evaluate the processes involved in pedagogical and institutional management.

According to information from the Chilean Ministry of Education (2020), indicative standards of educator's work are linked to the successful practices carried out by teachers to optimize pedagogical, academic, and institutional procedures in a specific school. The levels of development allow institutions to intuit their perspective and determine the most suitable methods to enhance management and achieve planned objectives.

In summary, indicative standards of educator's work represent a meritorious mechanism for assessing the improvement of administrative processes and the work of principals and teachers. The goal is to optimize school conditions, as well as the performance of teaching professionals, evaluating strengths and weaknesses for the benefit of students, the community, and other members of the institution.

Methodology

The research adopted a quantitative approach, as supported by Ruiz (2020), which refers to the depth with which a phenomenon or object of study is examined for evaluation based on the researcher's perspective. Therefore, with the choice of this perspective, data collection was carried out.

The type of study was classified as descriptive, according to Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza (2018), characterized by autonomously examining the most significant characteristics of individuals, groups of subjects, or collectivities under analysis, in this case, educators working in subsidized schools in the Coquimbo Region, Chile.

The research design was non-experimental, as specified by Álvarez (2020), indicating the absence of planned manipulation of variables, focusing solely on the observation of the phenomenon in its natural essence, to be subsequently analyzed. Simultaneously, a correlational design was adopted, evaluating the correspondence between variables and the measurement of each of them (BONILLA; RODRÍGUEZ, 2018).

The population consisted of 40 teachers working in subsidized rural schools in the Ñuble Region, Chile. It is worth noting that the entire population was included in the research, with no sampling conducted, in accordance with Bravo's proposal (2019), which considers the total population when it consists of approximately 30 to 60 individuals. From this point, the sample represents the population.

In this context, for information collection, a Likert-scale questionnaire was used, containing response options: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." It is essential to highlight that the options "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" represented the most positive or high choice of responses provided by the participants, while the options "Disagree," "Neutral," and "Strongly Disagree" represent negative alternatives, indicating lower favorability of the information (HERNÁNDEZ-SAMPIERI; MENDOZA, 2018). Experts in the field of rural education and methodologies validated the instrument. Subsequently, reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, resulting in a value of 0.89, indicating high reliability.

For data processing, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was adopted, a statistical package that provides tools for data processing. The presentation of results after the questionnaire application follows the logic in which negative alternatives indicate unfavorable information (HERNÁNDEZ-SAMPIERI; MENDOZA, 2018). Descriptive analysis was used to organize and summarize the results, presenting them through bar charts to facilitate the appreciation of data trends.

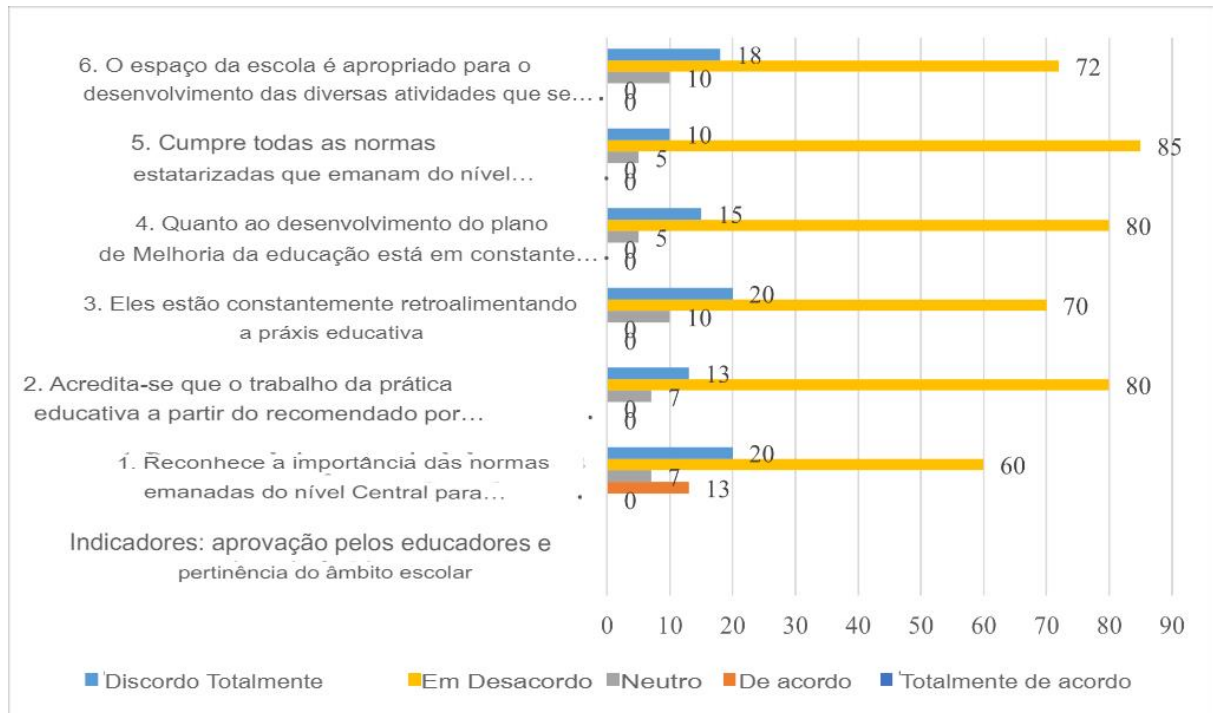
Results

This section presents the results obtained from the survey applied to teachers in subsidized rural schools in the Ñuble Region, Chile. Response categories included: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree."

In summary, this analytical procedure disaggregates and subsequently regroups the components, as applied throughout the study. Furthermore, the conformity of the results with

theoretical perspectives and correspondence with the analyzed variables are verified. The questionnaire analyses are presented below.

Chart 1 – Variables: Standardized Norms and Approval Indicators by Educators and Relevance in the School Environment⁵



Source: Authors' Collection

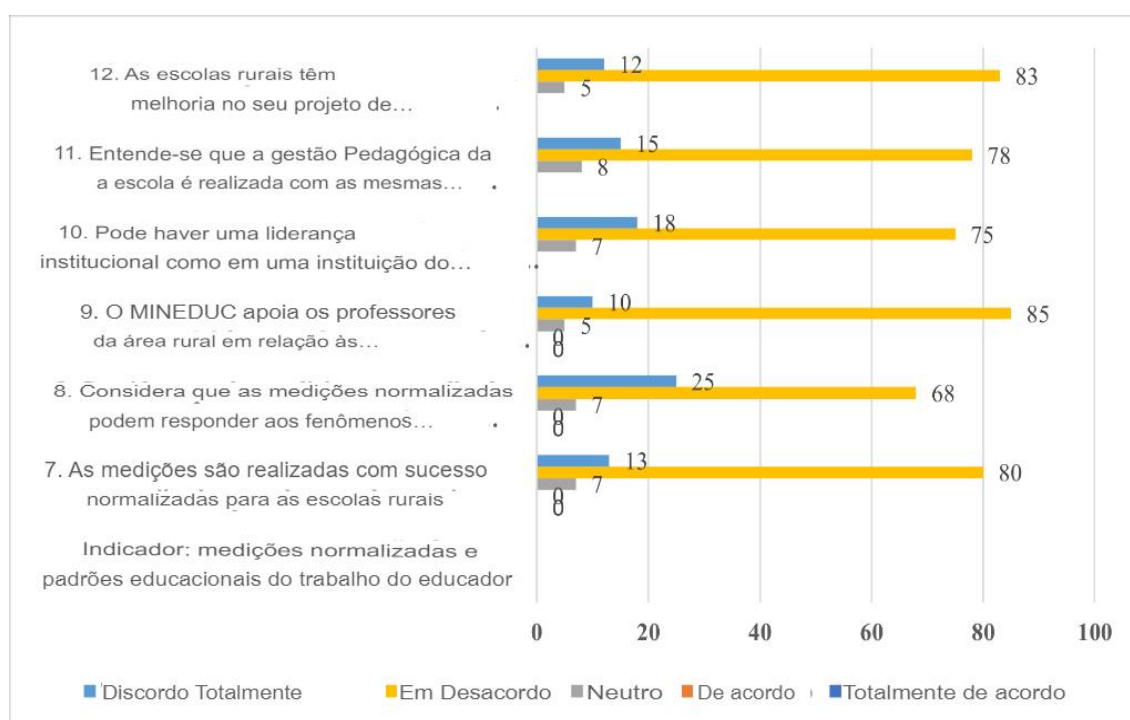
Chart 1 displays the results related to the variable "Standardized Norms" and the indicator of "Approval by Educators." It is observed that 80% of educators disagree, while 20% strongly disagree, demonstrating low approval regarding the relevance of standardized norms from the central level. This scenario not only highlights the lack of acceptance but also emphasizes the need to strengthen educational practices in accordance with the guidelines established by Chile's Ministry of Education. The feedback process is identified as a crucial tool to optimize compliance with these norms. It is concluded that, for educators who agree with standardized norms, it is essential that they be viable practices that do not negatively impact their performance.

Regarding the "Relevance in the School Environment" indicator, the results indicate that the overwhelming majority of teachers, 85%, disagree, while 18% strongly disagree with the relevance of these norms in the rural educational context. Educators believe that such measures

⁵ Translation of the colors: blue square - Strongly disagree; yellow square - Disagree; grey square - Neutral; orange square - Agree; dark blue square - Strongly agree.

do not correspond to the rural environment's social, personal, and professional conditions. There is a perception that strategies implemented in urban schools are inadequately applied to rural schools, disregarding the peculiarities of the context, teaching schedules, organizational conflicts, project execution, and other activities inherent to the rural environment. This position highlights the need for adaptation and consideration of the specificities of the rural environment in educational policies and practices.

Chart 2 – Evaluation of Teacher Performance Variable and Indicators: Standardized Measures and Educator Work Standards⁶



Source: Authors' Collection

Chart 2 presents the relationship between the "Teacher Performance Evaluation" variable and the "Standardized Measures" indicator. Notably, 85% of participants disagree, while 25% strongly disagree with the effectiveness of implementing standardized measures in subsidized rural schools in the Ñuble region, Chile. Educators express the opinion that such measures do not adequately address the complex phenomena that occur in rural areas and consider that the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) does not provide adequate support to teachers in terms of guidance and measurements.

⁶ Translation of the colors: blue square - Strongly disagree; yellow square - Disagree; grey square - Neutral; orange square - Agree; dark blue square - Strongly agree.

As for the "Educator Work Standards" indicator, 83% disagree, while 18% strongly disagree with the idea that there is institutional leadership similar to that exercised in urban educational centers. Additionally, pedagogical management is not perceived as similar, and rural schools in the Ñuble region need to improve their Educational Improvement Projects. These findings indicate that rural schools have a deeper understanding of more effective methods to optimize standardized measures, educational standards, leadership, and educators' pedagogical practices. The implementation of these improvements can positively impact teaching and academic performance.

Discussion

Examining the results in the "Standardized Norms" variable and the "Approval" indicator, it is observed that educators express low approval regarding the standardized norms issued by Chile's Ministry of Education. This dissatisfaction is attributed to the lack of correspondence between these norms and the reality experienced by teachers in rural areas, negatively impacting both teacher practice and performance assessed by government authorities. This finding contradicts the proposal of Donoso and Ruffinelli (2020), who emphasize that standardized norms should be contextualized according to the specific conditions of directors and teachers, especially in leadership, pedagogical practice, academic aspects, and administration in rural schools.

The "Relevance in the School Environment" indicator results indicate the complete lack of relevance of standardized norms in subsidized rural schools in the Ñuble region. This lack of adaptation is related to the specific conditions and unique characteristics of schools, including limited resources, administrative aspects, and restrictions on access to technology due to difficulty and precarious transportation in these areas. These data contrast with the suggestion of Castañeda and Castañeda (2021), who argue that the relevance of norms should be aligned with school dynamics, criteria, regulations, pedagogical and academic practices, management, and indicators linked to the quality of student education, considering all procedures inherent to the work of teachers.

Similarly, as established by Tapia, Meléndez, and Yuni (2022), the relevance of norms is intrinsically linked to the connection with values, mechanisms, and ethical strategies that favor the creation of spaces conducive to a participatory culture. In this context, values such as capacity, collaboration, responsibility, and reflection are fundamental to addressing equality in

rural schools, promoting teamwork, integrating thought and action, and contributing to the optimization of pedagogical praxis, dialogic, and activities that strengthen Educational Improvement Plans.

Regarding the results obtained in the variables "Teacher Performance Evaluation" and "Standardized Measurement Indicators," a complete absence of standardized measures implementation in schools is observed. This gap is attributed to the disconnect of these measures with the rural conditions in which teachers are immersed. These findings contradict the proposal by Arancibia (2018), which emphasizes that standardized measures focus on obtaining data to assess educators' performance based on measurements, tests, and evaluations that provide detailed information.

On the other hand, in the "Educator Work Standards" indicator, the absence of institutional leadership, pedagogical management, and a lack of depth in the Educational Improvement Project are highlighted as crucial aspects in evaluating educator performance. These results contradict Escribano's (2018) proposal, which emphasizes the importance of having engaged professionals in their roles to optimize teaching. This implies creating opportunities to understand the particularities of the context, as well as the challenges faced by students, the community, and other members of rural schools.

Simultaneously, the study conducted by Riascos and Becerril (2021) showed that institutional and pedagogical leadership impacts the mobilization of rural schools, aiming for continuous optimization of procedures related to teacher practice and the development of essential competencies to improve student education and performance. Similarly, the guidelines of the Ministry of Education of Chile (2020) emphasize the importance of teacher performance evaluation, aiming to demonstrate adherence to competitive practices, enhance good teaching practices, promote the advancement of academic activities, and implement the Educational Improvement Project.

In summary, the results of this research are valuable for both administrators and professionals working in rural schools and, above all, for the investigated institutions. The rigorous conduct of this type of research allows governing bodies, including the Ministry of Education of Chile, in collaboration with directors and teachers, to establish standardized norms aligned with the context, reality, local geography, and resource availability, among other factors. This enables the evaluation of these teachers' performance in accordance with their needs and interests, allowing them to advance to another level in their roles.

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