




## New psychosocial intervention approaches: reflections on the scope and limitations of the work of “psychosocial pairs” in secondary schools in Temuco, Chile

*Nuevos enfoques de intervención psicosocial: reflexiones sobre los alcances y limitaciones del trabajo de las “duplas psicosociales” en escuelas secundarias de Temuco, Chile*

Novas abordagens de intervenção psicossocial: reflexões sobre o alcance e as limitações do trabalho de “pares psicossociais” em escolas secundárias de Temuco, Chile

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### KEYWORDS

psychosocial teams,  
school, problematic  
student, public policy.

**ABSTRACT.** The objective of this study was to analyze, in an exploratory manner and through a case study, to what extent the presence of psychosocial teams generates an expected positive impact on social relations within schools, and in turn, what may be the unexpected negative consequences that arise as a result of their implementation. The research was qualitative in approach and involved the participation of 22 people, with a total of 29 interviews. The results indicate, on the positive side, a progressive opening of schools to interdisciplinarity and intersectorial work in social intervention with students and their families. On the negative side, it was identified that the subject of regulation par excellence of these teams tends to be represented in the so-called “problematic student”, in addition to the excess of administrative responsibilities to professionals, and, finally, an excessive confidence of the State in the “expert” knowledge, paradigmatically represented in the disciplines that make up these teams.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

duplas psicosociales,  
escuela, estudiante  
problemático, política  
pública.

**RESUMEN.** El objetivo consistió en analizar, de manera exploratoria y a través de un estudio de caso, en qué medida la presencia de equipos psicosociales genera un impacto positivo esperado en las relaciones sociales al interior de las escuelas, y a su vez, cuáles pueden ser las consecuencias negativas no esperadas que surgen como consecuencia de su implementación. La investigación fue de enfoque cualitativo y contó con la participación de 22 personas, desarrollándose un total de 29 entrevistas. Los resultados indican, en su aspecto positivo, una apertura progresiva de los colegios a la interdisciplinaria y al trabajo intersectorial en la intervención social con los estudiantes y sus familias. En sus aspectos negativos, se identificó que el sujeto de regulación por excelencia de estos equipos tiende a representarse en el llamado “estudiante problemático”, además

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del exceso de responsabilidades administrativas a los profesionales, y, por último, una confianza desmedida del Estado en el conocimiento “experto”, representado paradigmáticamente en las disciplinas que conforman estos equipos.

#### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

pares psicossociais, escola, aluno problema, políticas públicas.

**RESUMO.** O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar, de forma exploratória e através de um estudo de caso, em que medida a presença de equipas psicossociais gera um impacto positivo esperado nas relações sociais dentro das escolas e, por sua vez, quais podem ser as consequências negativas inesperadas que como consequência da sua implementação. A pesquisa teve abordagem qualitativa e contou com a participação de 22 pessoas, desenvolvendo um total de 29 entrevistas. Os resultados indicam, em seu aspecto positivo, uma progressiva abertura das escolas à interdisciplinaridade e ao trabalho intersetorial na intervenção social com os alunos e suas famílias. Nos seus aspectos negativos, identificou-se que a disciplina regulatória por excelência dessas equipes tende a estar representada no chamado “aluno problemático”, além do excesso de responsabilidades administrativas para os profissionais e, por fim, um excesso de confiança do Estado no conhecimento “especialista”, representado paradigmaticamente nas disciplinas que compõem essas equipes.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In general, the phenomenon of education has been shown to be of enormous importance for society worldwide, and in particular, in Chile the student revolutions, starting with the so-called “revolución pingüina” of 2006, have demonstrated the need for structural changes in order to overcome the neoliberal experiment in Chilean education (Bellei, 2015; Chávez, 2006; Redondo, 2009). Specifically, and as consequences of privatization, inequity and segregation have come to characterize the entire system, a situation further exacerbated by state reforms in post-dictatorship Chile, whose articulating element is the concept of school effectiveness (Herrera et al., 2018).

One of the most conflictive points of this model is related to the question: effectiveness in what? According to some authors, from the new paradigm, effective schools are identified in relation to success in standardized tests; consequently, what is evaluated appears as what is really significant and pertinent. Thus, the educational process begins to be oriented in terms of educational results forcing the actors of the system to compare and classify themselves, calling into question the integrality of students' education (Herrera et al., 2018).

A second point is that the evidence shows that school results faithfully reproduce the socioeconomic and cultural capital conditions of families. Thus, there is a very high association between parents' educational level and SIMCE2 results, a correlation that is also observed between school results and parents' income or social vulnerability (Chávez, 2006). Thus, we can say that the vast majority of children and young people have access to basic and secondary education, but they do not have the same right to quality education, which seems to be reserved for those who can pay for it (Chávez, 2006).

A third point of conflict refers to selection practices, especially those that constitute price discrimination, which have been associated with the very high and growing levels of socioeconomic segregation in Chilean school

<sup>2</sup> The so-called Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación (SIMCE) corresponds to a standardized test applied in Chile through different evaluation instruments applied in different periods of school life, in order to ensure that all students reach a similar level of educational quality and equity (Vallejos, 2012). Its application and validity, however, has been strongly criticized by different specialists. See, for example, Meckes & Mena (2021), Bellei (2015), Vallejos (2012) y Chávez (2006).

education (Valenzuela et al., 2010). These practices, supposedly protected by the freedom of education and parental choice, have progressively consolidated a school system of “educational apartheid”. This is a new phenomenon in Chilean educational history, and has been warned and denounced by international organizations stating that our school system is consciously structured by classes (Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE)<sup>3</sup>, 2004; Redondo, 2009). As a consequence, in Chile a differentiated educational offer has been consolidated for each segment of our society (Chávez, 2006). And according to 2014 data, Chile has one of the most segregated educational systems, from a socio-economic point of view, of all countries (Aubry & McKernan, 2014).

As a fourth and last point, it is important to consider the consequences of these policies on teachers' professional work. This issue is analyzed in the study conducted by Falabella and Opazo (2014) where the authors highlight the dynamics triggered among teachers by the education quality assurance system. According to these authors, teachers orient their work towards “demonstration management” of performance and achievement, to the detriment of educational work in the area of children's personal development and coexistence, as well as to the detriment of pedagogical innovation, which also becomes a source of conflict and tension for them. The study also reports on teacher discomfort due to work overload, lack of recognition and class preparation time, low salaries, among others. Regarding the relationship between these dynamics and the rest of the school community, the authors also tell us that it seems that the school experience as a process promotes a certain type of society and a certain type of subjects, whose particularity in relation to students is described by Carrasco (2014) as “test-response subjects, uniformed and devoid of a substantive educational experience” (p. 9).

As we can see, the impact of this topic can only be understood if it is appreciated through its complexity. In this sense, this difficulty has favored the development of different studies on education, which in Chile have focused on phenomena such as: the privatization process of Chilean education, segregation, the design and impact of student reforms, as well as critical studies focused on the implementation and impact of psychosocial intervention (psychosocial duos) within schools (Bellei, 2015; Aubry y McKernan, 2014; Chávez, 2006; Redondo, 2009; Falabella & Opazo, 2014; Herrera et al., 2018; Cárcamo et al., 2020)..

In this last sense, it is evident that, in the last decade, Latin American states have had to adapt their educational policies to face the complex realities of education in the 21st century. In this context, it is possible to appreciate a set of policies and legislations implemented with the purpose of regulating social relations within schools. In this scenario, the improvement of school coexistence has been understood and sought to be enhanced, among other things, through the creation of new functions and positions; among which stand out the figures of the so-called “psychosocial duos” or “psychosocial work teams”. This initiative represents a paradigmatic change of openness, both towards the approach of social problems previously not considered in the teaching-learning process, and towards interdisciplinarity within schools. However, despite the fact that international literature supports the necessary presence of these psychosocial work teams and professional cooperation within the

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<sup>3</sup> The Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE) (by name and acronym in Spanish) is an international organization whose mission is to improve the economic and social well-being of people and countries through a set of co-operation and development policies (source: oecd.org).

educational systems, the truth is that, at least in Chile, we still do not have enough studies<sup>4</sup> that provide the necessary evidence to know the real impact of their work inside (and outside) schools (Ortiz & López, 2021).

Parallel to the changes described above in the educational system, it is possible to note that the laws on childhood and adolescence in Chile, whose enforcement is guaranteed by the Servicio Nacional de Menores de Chile<sup>5</sup> (Sename), have undergone a major paradigm shift. In 1990, Chile ratified the signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), thus initiating a profound reform to adapt its internal regulations and public policies to the spirit of the convention. In this process, Chile moved from the so-called “Irregular Situation Doctrine” or “Needs Approach” to a “Doctrine of Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents” or also called “Rights Approach” (UNICEF<sup>6</sup> & Contreras, 2007).

Article 28 establishes the right of every child to education, as well as the obligation of States to develop actions aimed at achieving equal opportunities in the exercise of this right. Likewise, Article No. 29 refers to the fact that the objectives of education should be aimed at developing the capacities and personality of the child, within a human rights framework. From this perspective, the right to education is an enabling right for the exercise of other rights, since it promotes freedom, personal autonomy, enables the acquisition of knowledge and favors social integration. Thus, the various forms of exclusion of children and adolescents from the education system would constitute, in themselves, a violation of their fundamental rights (Sename Y MIDE UC,<sup>7</sup> 2016).

Consequently, and in a similar way to what has occurred in the educational system, Sename deploys an important set of public policies and programs in order to “contribuir a la restitución de derechos de niños, niñas y adolescentes, vulnerados/as, así como a la responsabilización y reinserción social de los adolescentes infractores/as de ley” (Sename, 2017, p. 6).

In the city of Temuco, in the IX region of Araucanía in southern Chile, it is possible to observe several initiatives related to both the school system and Sename, whose articulating axis could be described through the concept of “psychosocial intervention”. Among them, the relative new role of the so-called “duplas psicosociales” (psychologists and social workers inside primary and secondary schools) and the so-called “Programas de Intervención Especializada (PIE 24 horas)” (Sename outpatient programs). Both initiatives are of special importance in the city of Temuco due, firstly, to their pilot nature in different areas, and whose impact (both expected positive and unexpected negative) is still a matter of study and debate. And, secondly, because, in addition to sharing the experimental nature of their implementation, in many cases they also share the subjects of attention and intervention.

Thus, the analysis of these programs is presented as a privileged and novel scenario for social analysis, especially when asking to what extent the strategies of psychosocial regulation and intervention promoted within

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<sup>4</sup> Among those available on this topic, the following works can be cited: Ortiz & López (2021), Pedreros & Aracena (2021), Cárcamo et al. (2020), Gatica (2016), Barraza (2015) y Leal (2005).

<sup>5</sup> Hereafter, we will refer to the Chilean National Service for Minors (Servicio Nacional de Menores de Chile), through its official acronym Sename..

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF is an international organization for children, under the United Nations Fund, whose purpose is to promote the protection of the rights of children and adolescents around the world (source: unicef.org).

<sup>7</sup> MIDE UC is a non-profit center for research, development and services, attached to the School of Psychology of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, oriented to measurement and evaluation applied in various fields such as education, organizations and society (source: mideuc.cl).

educational establishments have or do not have an expected positive impact on their organizations (mainly high schools of high socioeconomic vulnerability). And at the same time, to reflect on the unexpected negative results of these public policies, in particular, the psychosocial duos within schools.

Based on the above, we pose the following questions: What did the psychosocial duplicate programs seek to regulate in the schools? How did they intend to do so? What are the expected positive results of these policies? To what extent is this being achieved? Finally, what unintended negative effects can be observed in the implementation of these policies?

In the aforementioned context, the results of a research conducted in 2019 are presented, which consists of analyzing, in an exploratory manner and through a case study, to what extent the presence of psychosocial teams in schools generates an expected positive impact on social relations within schools. And in turn, what may be the unexpected negative consequences that arise as a result of its implementation.

## 2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

The data collected during a six-month fieldwork experience in the programs of the National Service for Minors of Chile (Sename), Programas de intervención especializada (24 horas) PIE Creseres y el programa PIE Inapewma both administered by a private institution collaborating with Sename called Fundación Creseres, are analyzed. The experience also included home visits to the young people's homes and school coordination in three secondary schools in the city of Temuco.

The study was based on the interpretative paradigm of social phenomena, which aims to build knowledge from the meanings and experiences that give meaning to the existence of certain people and/or human groups, through observation, dialogue and critical analysis of the contexts and daily discourses in which social actors develop (Archenti & Piovani, 2007).

In this sense, the study had a qualitative approach, was exploratory and was developed through a case study. This implied field work that sought to delve into how reality is understood by the subjects with the intention of understanding it in its specificity, rather than seeking representativeness or generalizations (Archenti, 2007; Stake, 1999).

From this perspective, and understanding that access to speech in itself is an act of power (Zaslavsky, 2019), in the analysis of the impact of the implementation of the psychosocial duos as a public policy of psychosocial intervention, we focused on the discursive construction of the social actors who, directly or indirectly, were affected/benefited by it (students, teachers and other members of the school community and Sename workers). In this sense, the relevance was placed on the discourses that the actors constructed on their personal experiences regarding the role of the professionals of the psychosocial teams (psychologist and social worker). The above, however, takes into account Ortner's (2016) reflection on agency<sup>8</sup>, as well as the warning of Follari (1998) who recalls that the participants' discourses should be used as information to be interpreted. In other

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<sup>8</sup> In short, the problem of agency is that as speakers we are burdened with the idealization of being masters of our own discourse, but this is influenced by a wide range of factors, including social, cultural and historical factors (Ortner, 2016).

words, remember that “la idea no es reproducir la palabra del actor, sino ofrecer una explicación que dé cuenta de sus determinaciones” (Piovani et al., 2008, p. 140).

In turn, the fieldwork was focused on three different but closely related areas, namely: the specialized intervention programs (PIE 24 hours) of the Chilean National Service for Minors, school coordination in three secondary schools, and home visits to the homes of some young people, all of whom were admitted both to Sename programs and to the high schools mentioned above.

The research population consisted of 22 people, from which 29 interviews were conducted. Among the people: 11 young people admitted to Sename programs and who were also or were students referred to work with psychosocial teams within their schools (with a total of 18 interviews); 7 Sename professionals, whose knowledge and relevance in this topic is explained by the intersectoral and articulation work they frequently carried out with the professionals of the psychosocial teams of the schools (with a total of 7 interviews); and 4 education professionals from schools, among them, 3 teachers and a member of a psychosocial team (with a total of 4 interviews). The sample was constructed based on non-probabilistic sampling and the information saturation criterion (Ñaupas et al., 2014; Martínez, 2012).

The research technique used was the in-depth interview, understood as the “registro de información a través de conversaciones” (Balcázar et al., 2006, p. 58), oriented towards understanding the points of view that people have about their lives, experiences or circumstances, “tal como son expresadas con sus propias palabras” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1996, p. 101). This process was accompanied by the application of informed consent for all participants.

The relevance of the instrument used as a guideline of guiding questions in the interviews, as well as the model of informed consent, was supervised and validated by a professional director of a Sename program in the city of Temuco. This validation is related to ensuring its internal and external coherence, as well as ensuring the ethical and confidentiality aspects required by Sename.

Finally, the analysis procedure was carried out through a process of coding and construction of emerging categories, for which the Atlas.ti 8 computer tool was used.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### *Expected positive results*

The expected positive results of these policies can be summarized in the search for greater equity and inclusion, access to quality education and the reduction of multidimensional vulnerability factors of the young people who are the target of these public policies (Cárcamo et al., 2020).

An undoubtedly important aspect that stands out from the analysis is related to the complexity of some clinical diagnoses that are part of the reality of young people called “problem students”. Among these diagnoses we find: impulsivity, low frustration tolerance, impulse control disorders, oppositional defiant disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), bullying, personality disorder, depression, among others, an aspect that had already been noted in previous studies (Pedreros & Aracena, 2021). According to most of the interviewees,



these symptoms are usually a problem for the daily life of any structured space (such as schools) due to the poor management of these issues by education professionals. Hence the importance of incorporating psychosocial teams within schools and high schools.

In the context of the above, a social worker and member of the psychosocial team of a high school in Temuco, describes their role within the school in this way:

La idea que trabaje en dupla es que, por una parte, se analice la situación de algún acontecimiento escolar, alguna conducta, algún hecho que transcurra en el contexto escolar desde un área psicológica, emocional, etc., y desde el social y familiar. Entonces esas dos fuerzas hacen que se entienda la situación por dos focos, no solo que esa conducta sea algo puntual, sino que indagar un poco más abajo, cual es la situación a través de estrategias psicológicas y sociales, familiares y educativas (social worker, Liceo Tecnológico de la Araucanía).

In this way, it is possible to note that the regulation strategies that were frequently used to control/intervene maladaptive behaviors (which generally have their origin in the family nucleus, either attachment or rejection of it), are related to the incorporation of specialists in psychosocial processes into the educational process of young people. This represents a significant advance if we consider that the positive results expected from public policies of psychosocial intervention, in general terms, are found in the reduction of inequity and exclusion arising from vulnerability factors, such as untreated mental health problems, family dynamics (absence of significant figures, lack of emotional support, FIV, etc.) and community and sociocultural factors such as poverty, delinquency, drug use, etc. (Pedreros & Aracena, 2021; Cárcamo et al., 2020).

For the above, it is necessary to consider that psychosocial teams must still deal with important obstacles that prevent them from delving deeper into these issues in their work, such as: the lack of clearly defined roles, job insecurity and lack of recognition within schools by education professionals (Cárcamo et al., 2020). Likewise, the prohibition to carry out psychosocial interventions outside the school space and the impediment to carry out clinical interventions.

In this last sense, the social worker mentioned above makes it clear that the greatest challenge for her work as a member of a psychosocial team was that education professionals, especially directors and teachers, “entiendan que nuestra labor no es clínica, sino educativa” (social worker, Liceo Tecnológico de la Araucanía). This raises a crucial question: who attends to the clinical needs of students within the schools? Thus, it seems that, despite the implementation of psychosocial teams and other pro-inclusion policies with psychosocial approaches, and without denying progress in this area, comprehensive mental health within schools and high schools in Chile is still a pending issue.

#### *Limitations and unexpected negative results*

In a first consideration, and as we have mentioned, although the answer to the question “What were we seeking to regulate?” seems to be found in the construction of a psychosocial intervention system that prepares agents of change in order to favor greater equity, inclusion, access to quality education and the reduction of multidimensional vulnerability factors of the young people who are the object of these public policies (Pedreros & Aracena, 2021; Cárcamo et al., 2020). This research experience revealed a different and differentiated

objective. In this sense, in the case of the psychosocial duos, the most usual reference related them to the regulation of “problematic” children/youths/students.

Indeed, the label “problem” associated with young people and students with specific characteristics is not new for many of the professionals in the programs studied, where the underlying problem would lie in the regulation of various forms of violence (Pedreros & Aracena, 2021).

In this sense, a teacher of a high school in Temuco comments that, for him, the main task of the psychosocial team in the place where he worked was “to rescue the most serious cases” (history and geography teacher, Liceo Polivalente de Adultos Selva Saavedra de Temuco). That is, those whose behavior was presented as more problematic for teachers and the rest of the educational community.

Similarly, a psychologist from a Sename program mentions that the label “problem” is commonly used within schools and high schools in Temuco, including school coexistence teams and psychosocial teams, which she describes, in relation to how they relate to students, as “entrenados en el déficit y en el defecto” (psychologist, programa de intervención especializada (PIE) Inapewma de Temuco).

This negative view of the use that some school authorities make of psychosocial teams and school coexistence teams is also shared by other Sename program professionals. For example, a director of a Specialized Intervention Program (PIE) in Temuco describes that this label as “problem children” associated with students with different kinds of needs, comes mainly from an idea deeply rooted in education professionals (principals, inspectors, teachers, etc.) who worked before the opening of schools to interdisciplinarity. This idea is currently reproduced as an informal but indispensable requirement for the work of psychosocial teams, as well as for any professional involved in psychosocial intervention processes within schools.

Thus, we observe that one aspect to consider about these teams is that, in practice, they are used by some institutional agents (principals, teachers, etc.) as strategies to regulate maladaptive behaviors rather than to transform an unequal and non-inclusive system. In this sense, they have a dual task: 1) to promote policies of rights and inclusion of children and adolescents, addressing special needs that arise both from their personal characteristics and the context in which they develop (basic cultural capital, peer group effect, vulnerable neighborhoods, etc.), and 2) to intervene maladaptive behaviors (reflected in the paradigmatic label of “young people” and/or “problem students”) in a normative sense. This implies the use of exclusion strategies. Context in which the new professionals in schools are limited in their actions by a pedagogical vision that reduces their functions to those of a rather “reforming” entity.

The second consideration is related to the fact that, in order to confirm the expected positive results and avoid unexpected negative effects, it is necessary, to put it simply, to contemplate an evaluative monitoring of the stages that are part of the policy (ex ante, ex during and ex post). In this sense, we agree with Paulus & Blanco (2020) who argue that:

para efectos de comprender el procesamiento de las políticas debiese examinarse no solo los motivos, intereses y percepciones implicadas en una política específica, sino además introducirse en la forma en la cual esta es redefinida y reenmarcada por los distintos actores en las diversas etapas del proceso (p. 272).



Following the above, it is observed that one of the most problematic aspects in the achievement of the expected positive results of the policies studied, including the emergence of unexpected negative effects, is related to a set of “tensiones entre lo político y lo técnico, como una expresión del nuevo management público y de la vigencia de un modelo centrado en las evidencias que presiona, excesivamente, la rendición de cuentas” (Cárcamo et al., 2020). This issue has a structural impact on the organizations where these policies are implemented.

Indeed, both in the case of Sename workers and in the case of psychosocial teams, as had been noted in the case of teachers (Falabella & Opazo, 2014), a problem that seems to accompany each new policy that emerges from the State is repeated: the need for professionals to prepare for periodic evaluations in which they are required to demonstrate good performance and a task focused on the achievement of goals.

Consequently, we see that among the unexpected negative results of these policies is the overload of administrative work. This is similar to the way in which teachers are forced to orient their work in terms of performance management and achievement, to the detriment of educational work in the field of students' personal development and coexistence (Falabella & Opazo, 2014). The professionals of the psychosocial teams are constantly faced with the need to respond to administrative tasks that have little to do with the processes and objectives of intervention with children and adolescents, thus generating deficient attention and mistrust among young people and their families. As in the case of teachers, this often becomes a source of conflict and tension for them.

Another consequence of the influence of this new public management policy refers to the fact that, despite the existence of an important set of recent regulations centered on ideas of inclusion, equality and the perspective of rights, these policies have not managed to transcend “una aproximación a la escuela como dispositivo de gobierno, donde predomina la racionalidad instrumental heredada del positivismo” (Cárcamo et al., 2020).

In this context, it is observed that, in the processes of psychosocial intervention, both in Sename programs and psychosocial teams, work continues with psychodynamic models of intervention that Apablaza (2017) calls “Psi” discourses or technologies. Whose main consequence would be in an excessive importance on an “expert knowledge” that “over-pathologizes” individuals and families, reducing the complexity of psychosocial intervention to a methodological operation that reproduces

formas de pensar al sujeto, ya sea estudiante y sus familias, como un objeto de estudio, diagnóstico e intervención por parte de saberes disciplinares provenientes de las ciencias sociales y en especial del campo de la psicología y la psiquiatría (Apablaza, 2017, p. 53).

In this sense, this research evidenced the common practice of classifying and labeling young people and their families as a daily disciplinary and institutional practice in schools. In this context, in addition to the labels that describe certain young people as “difficult”, “maladjusted” or “problematic”, it is possible to identify other categories for young people and their families, such as: “flaites”, “backward”, “drug addicts”, “offenders”, “poor”, “marginal”, “incompetent”, “dysfunctional”, “violent” or with mental health problems (“sick”, “craz”, etc.).

This is important because there is a close relationship between the use of these labels and intra- and inter-psychic processes of stigmatization. In this sense, an unexpected negative result of these policies is that this practice of classifying and labeling young people and their families (as part of psychosocial intervention

processes) often accompanies and constructs them, both in a personal (intrapsychic) and social (interpsychic) sense. In addition, the present study also revealed that some young people take refuge in this. That is, to the extent that the “diagnosis” or “label” explains their situation, and therefore seems to close off the discussion about the origin and destination of their problems, adolescents tend to evade their responsibilities in making certain decisions. This situation also prevents the search for or consideration of other possible explanations and approaches.

Finally, and in a similar sense, this exploratory research experience led to a conclusion that points to the preeminence of expert discourses (psychologists, social workers and teachers) in the construction of diagnoses of youth problems, as well as of the actions to be taken to intervene and reverse their effects. In this sense, the expert discourse on most of the topics discussed (psychosocial intervention) was pigeonholed into two specific disciplines: psychology and social work.

This opens a topic of utmost importance for understanding regulation strategies and social intervention processes, but also those problems that are increasingly being incorporated into school contexts and social problems in general: why do the State and institutions, in general, assign and delegate to the so-called psychosocial duos (psychology and social work) the expert knowledge in the management and intervention of complex social problems? Why are the discourses and eventual contributions of other social science disciplines practically absent and vaguely known by professionals in these contexts?

We maintain, contrary to the social imaginaries surrounding these disciplines, that the reason for their placement in the contexts where the fieldwork of this research was carried out is due mainly, although not exclusively, not to the deployment of expert knowledge, but rather to their potential to adapt to institutional policies and requirements. By this we mean that, beyond the skills and capacity of professionals to perform in various contexts, what is actually expected of them from the institutional logics at different levels (the State, the educational system, schools, etc.) is that they reproduce the formulas already socialized by these entities to understand and practice their disciplines. In other words, that they perform what is expected and demanded of them. Moreover, they find that in their contexts, the possibilities for innovation and critical thinking are often limited or made invisible by a school culture that still dominates educational spaces. In this context, did encountering “officials” become the rule? In general, we think so. Although it should also be mentioned that these experiences were lived as a source of conflict and tension for some (although not for most) of these professionals.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Returning to the objective of the article, namely: to analyze to what extent the presence of psychosocial teams in schools generates an expected positive impact on social relations within schools, and at the same time, what may be the unexpected negative consequences that arise as a consequence of its implementation. We see that, in the first place, we have started by asking ourselves about the possibilities and limitations of this policy, understood as a regulation strategy in specific contexts.

We found that the implementation of these programs represents an example of the need and intention of the state to develop strategies in order to reduce the inequity and exclusion in which the most disadvantaged sectors of society find themselves. This is reflected in the so-called “psychosocial intervention” policies.

Secondly, among the positive results expected from these policies, the progressive opening of schools and the educational system, through the implementation of psychosocial teams, to interdisciplinary and intersectoral work in the intervention of students stands out. This has made possible, among other achievements, the access of many young people to intervention processes for complex problems that affect them, such as mental health diagnoses and problems derived from diverse family and sociocultural relationships.

Thirdly, we have seen that the so-called “psycho-social duos” represent, in practice, a form of classification, labeling and regulation of the behavior of young people, in the context of and in harmony with a state vision that transcends these specific policies. In this sense, we have identified that the subject of regulation par excellence of the policies studied is related to the so-called “problematic student”.

Fourthly, with respect to the limitations and unexpected negative results, we found that the protagonism of a public management vision of the state is presented as the main problem. In this sense, we observed an excess of administrative demands on the different professionals, which limits their possibilities for psychosocial interventions with young people. In addition, we identified an excessive reliance of these policies on the “expert” knowledge of two disciplines: psychology and social work. This is related to the instrumentalization of these disciplines by the state itself, which prevents a real opening to inclusion processes beyond the strategies, regulations and objectives of the state itself.

Finally, we consider that the exploratory nature of this research leaves open the question of the real impact of the so-called psychosocial teams in the processes of intervention of social problems within schools and high schools, especially considering the uncertainty surrounding the slow processes of return to “normality” in which we find ourselves, after a year and a half of confinement due to the world pandemic of Covid-19 and the process of change of constitution in which we find ourselves. All in all, we believe that the exposed results provide inputs that may confirm important issues for future research, especially: the real opening of the school system to a successful interdisciplinary work, the relationship of psychosocial teams with a new way of understanding, constructing and intervening the figure of “problematic students”, and the eventual new role of the state in the design and application of public policies, with a view to overcome -or not- the prevailing vision of public management.

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