



Educational Reform in Chile: Local Autonomy versus State Control, Tensions in the Rural Context¹

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyse, within the context of paradox theory, the tensions and opportunities introduced by the meetings of microcentres, as spaces for teacher professional development within an educational reform. After a qualitative study, it was concluded that four types of paradox are present: organisation, learning, belonging, and performance. Additionally, the microcentres are sites of negotiation between local autonomy and state control.*

Keywords: *educational reform, professional development, microcentres, rural education, paradoxes*

INTRODUCTION

Plenty of literature has documented the hardships of implementing educational reforms, which are already complex by definition, and, like every change, give birth to paradoxes (Berti & Simpson, 2021). Law 21.040 orders the progressive creation of 70 Local Public Education Services (the Spanish acronym is SLEP), in charge of leading the continuous improvement of educational establishments and the learning of students in a specific territory. To date, 15 SLEPs have been installed across Chile, a process that comes with the transfer of schools, teachers, school

authorities, and administrative staff, as well as the integration of practices for continuous improvement and professional development that stemmed from previous administrations.

This study centres around rural education; more specifically, it is focused on microcentre meetings. In this sense, the aim of the study is to analyse, in the context of paradox theory, the tensions and opportunities of the meetings of microcentres as a space for teacher professional development within the implementation of a large-scale educational reform (Rivas & Sánchez, 2020). Although paradox theory has been more prominently used in the business field,

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it lends itself to analysing this reform, insofar as it gives birth to a new institution. This study aims to fill a void regarding research on the effects reforms have on rural education. To achieve this purpose, the study employs paradox theory (Schaap & Vanlommel, 2024), a theoretical framework which allows the recognition and classification of tensions, the analysis of the response of each part involved, and problematisation based on their discourse. Taking this into consideration, the present document is divided into five sections: the first tackles the frame of reference, the second describes the methodology employed, the third goes over the results, the fourth covers the discussion, and, finally, the fifth section presents the conclusions of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section has two purposes; the first is to present a general overview of the ongoing reform, characterising rural education in the process, and the second is to present a framework for the analysis of paradoxes.

Educational Reform and Rural Education

In the year 2017, a bill was approved to create the National Public Education System (Law 21.040), which establishes the progressive creation of 70 Local Public Education Services (the Spanish acronym is SLEP). Their main purpose

is to support and give technical-pedagogical accompaniment to educational establishments in order to improve their management processes and the learning of students. In the same vein, the formation of a SLEP entails the gathering of schools, teachers, authorities, and staff under a single administration, one that used to depend on multiple municipalities. In this sense, the reform means a great change, an extremely challenging one (Concha & García-Huidobro, 2020), a change that goes against the grain of international tendencies, strengthening public institutionality instead of reinforcing the participation of the private educational sector and reducing the public system (Donoso-Díaz, 2021).

Employing Viñaó's concept (2006), this reform has a political-administrative nature; it changes the ways the education system is governed, organised, and managed. Naturally, this also implies that it is a complex reform, which in turn would explain the diversity of the studies conducted regarding its implementation, for instance, from the perspective of the centralisation of education (Donoso-Díaz, 2021), finance (Donoso-Díaz, Araya, & Rojas, 2021), the training needs of middle management (Uribe, Galdames, & Obregón, 2022), the selection process for directors of SLEPs (Viancos-González et al., 2023), and sense-making around the reform (Muñoz-Stuardo, 2021), among others. However, there are no studies focused on the effects on rural schools



and the meetings of microcentres as instances of professional development; this is the aim of the present study in order to gain an understanding of the tensions and paradoxes found in them. In this sense, analogous problems, paradoxes, and tensions could be identified in other national contexts, to the degree that some recurring traits in rural education are common on the international stage.

Teacher Professional Development

The relation between teacher professional development and improvements in learning is widely accepted by the scientific community (Kennedy, 2016). Likewise, it is acknowledged that teachers in rural schools face particular challenges in order to access professional development, such as geographical isolation, a lack of resources, and a lack of available personnel to support their efforts (Glover et al., 2016; Sahin, Soylu, & Jafari, 2024).

The meta-analysis conducted by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) identifies seven essential elements for effective professional development for teachers: A) Focus on content: centred around up-to-date disciplinary knowledge; B) Active learning: consisting of using authentic didactic resources, interactive activities, and other strategies to ensure an environment of professional learning in a real context; C) Collaboration: promoting the condi-

tions for teachers to share ideas and collaborate within the work environment; D) Design of active practices: the use of lesson planning models, curriculum units, student work, peer review, and teaching case studies; E) Accompaniment of instructors and experts: encompassing the exchange of knowledge of evidence-based content and practices; F) Encourage reflection: facilitate feedback between peers and reflection; G) Continuity and consistency: learning opportunities for teachers, ideally, have to be continuous and persistent over time.

The importance of teacher professional development for rural teachers has been discussed from various perspectives and models. For example, the studies of King and Yin (2022) and Lay et al. (2020) showed how online professional learning communities reduce the feeling of isolation for rural teachers. In the same vein, Herrington et al. (2006) conclude that teacher professional development improves the learning and performance of students, which is consistent with the results obtained by McConnell et al. (2013). One form of teacher professional development is peer support, and the studies conducted by Ackerman, Whitney, and Samudre (2022) and Golden et al. (2021) suggest feedback between peers after a lesson as a way to contribute to teacher professional development. Furthermore, a study focused on the relation between rural teachers and low-performing students conducted by Liu, Li, and Chen



(2024) recommends giving rural teachers systematic and appropriate opportunities or spaces for collaborative reflection, in this way preventing isolation and feelings of professional solitude. However, this can be hindered by the time needed for teachers to observe and discuss their remarks (Torelli et al., 2024), especially in small schools which have few teaching professionals.

Given the above considerations, teacher professional development plays a pivotal role in the rural context. Continuous education and collaborative work are essential elements for learning in the context of teachers working in rural schools, a place where educational needs can differ from those in urban areas (Perdomo-Díaz, Rojas, & Felmer, 2018). In this regard, it is important that teacher professional development in rural contexts focuses on the essential tasks of teaching and learning, considering the cultural and social diversity of students (Trillo et al., 2017).

Rural Schools and Microcentres

Rural schools tend to share certain traits, such as being located in remote areas far from urban areas or having limited access and connectivity. Likewise, they usually have a less developed structure and a shortage of specialised teachers, as well as having more low-income students and, in Latin American countries, more students from ethnic minorities. In general, the

number of students is low, and classrooms are shared by students of different educational levels. The smallest schools have only one classroom where students of different ages and levels are grouped.

As already pointed out, the professional development of rural teachers faces several challenges. However, one way to support them is through networks of education professionals. The study of Washington and O'Connor (2020) compares networks of professionals formed in Ontario and Colombia, both based on peer collaboration. In the case of Colombia, microcentres are analysed from the perspective of networks of professionals, defined by Brown (2023) as groups of teachers who participate in instances of peer learning with people outside their usual educational community with the goal of improving the academic performance of their students. Consistently with this definition, microcentre meetings in Chilean rural schools were created to: A) collaborate on educational design; B) share experiences and generate discussions that allow reflection; C) learn about teaching methods and approaches; D) test different work strategies with the group of teachers; E) overcome the isolation characteristic of the teaching rural context, together with the strengthening of self-confidence and the development of awareness of their capabilities as professionals (Ávalos, 2003). Considering this, the Chilean microcentres can be considered a strategy for professional



development based on collaboration and the sharing of experiences, situated in a specific place, that contributes to the improvement of teaching practices. Furthermore, microcentres are a professional development initiative spread across numerous Latin American countries such as Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico, among others.

Paradox Theory: Tensions between Local Autonomy and State Control

Large-scale educational reforms generate concern among the actors involved in the school system, considering the changes made. Consequently, paradoxes are born, meaning “a lingering concern between interdependent elements” (Schad et al., 2016, p. 10). Paradoxes are “contradictory yet related elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time” (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 386). The persistency aspect alludes to the quality of spreading over time and the contradictory aspect is not easily reconciled, despite the mutual dependency between elements. As observed by Lewis and Smith (2014), tensions, similarly to paradoxes, are inherent to organisations and are born as a response to discrepancies sparked by change.

The creation of SLEPs generates tensions which, according to paradox theory, could be expressed in four ways: (I) Belonging or identity paradox: generally produced at the meso level and

the individual actors who experience tensions in their values and beliefs; (II) Learning paradox: the contradiction between building knowledge based on the past and, at the same time, destroying it to progress and adapt to what is new; (III) Organisation paradox: organisations are made up of multiple subsystems that act independently and interdependently, with constant tension between the parts and the organisation as a whole; (IV) Performance paradox: opposing demands are expressed by different segments of the organisation (Jarzabkowski, Lê, & Van de Ven, 2013). In contexts of change, these paradoxes can manifest themselves all together; they can even manifest themselves in an overlapping manner and in different levels: individuals, authorities and organisational.

According to Donoso-Díaz et al. (2022), the current reform is centralising in nature, so it is crucial to analyse the tensions between local autonomy and state control, in other words, between the autonomy rural teachers should have to organise and celebrate the microcentre meetings and the control exerted by the SLEP over the planification and execution of these meetings in order to ensure professional development and oversee the fulfilment of public policy. This constitutes one of the paradoxes discussed in the study.

Now we will explore this paradox theoretically, analysing three dimensions of autonomy and control. The first is associated with the place and



the mode in which autonomy is exercised: this can be done by individuals (teachers, parents, students), collectives (teachers' groups, microcentres), and state institutions (SLEPs). In every case it is important to discern the impact that each agent has. The second dimension is associated with "autonomy/control over what?" Usually, the aspect of autonomy under study in educational contexts refers to the teacher's autonomy in the classroom. However, in this study, the aspects to be analysed are microcentres and their autonomy to choose the themes of their meetings to promote teacher professional development. The third dimension is associated with places and modes of control, in relation to the influence mechanisms over an individual, collective, or organisation. Different control styles can be discerned, from slightly persuasive to those that are coercive in nature. Similarly, one must take into consideration that the relation between autonomy and control is recreated constantly in the everyday interactions of the actors involved.

On the one hand, the collective autonomy of teachers contributes to job satisfaction, creativity, and experimentation, as well as productivity. On the other hand, state control helps secure widespread access to education, create safe spaces for student development, and suppress the risks posed by teacher autonomy by providing regulatory frameworks. Therefore, autonomy is not inherently positive, and nor is con-

trol innately negative. As paradox theory points out, ways to circumvent the tensions need to be found, with no exclusion of the seemingly opposing elements (Lewis & Smith, 2014), and with the right combination between autonomy and control for the precise balance for the context being defined.

The responses to paradoxes can be either defensive or active in nature (Lewis, 2000). Defensive responses offer short-term ease, they allow actors to overcome tensions temporarily, and they do not provide a new work method or allow the understanding of the tension. Active responses take a long-term approach and are recognised as part of organisational life. Available research has identified different types of response in each category. For defensive responses, these are excision, regression, suppression, projection, and ambivalence. Each of these defensive responses is, to a greater or lesser extent, a form of polarisation to one of the components of the paradox, which can lead to a spiral of conflicts and the creation of vicious cycles. In contrast, active responses include acceptance, confrontation, and transcendence. Every single one of them entails an adjustment of the parts of the paradox (Lindblom, 1965). Acceptance is the will to find a way of balancing the elements in tension (Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003), confrontation entails tackling and working around the tensions, and transcendence searches for a deep understanding of the elements



of the paradox. It is important to take into consideration the fact that these responses to paradoxes are not necessarily stable or infallible, but rather that one can observe responses that vary in context and time (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to analyse, in the context of paradox theory, the tensions and opportunities present in the meetings of rural schools’ microcentres as spaces in which to promote teacher professional development within an educational reform. A qualitative study was conducted on the basis of the methodology employed by Schaap and Vanlommel (2024), which comprises three

stages: A) enumerate the tensions experienced by individuals, teams, authorities, and other agents involved; B) map the tensions and their interrelations (paradox cases at the organisational level); C) identify the responses to these paradoxes, differentiating the defensive from the active ones.

31 interviews with rural school teachers and seven interviews with Pedagogical Technical Advisors were conducted; the participants belonged to three different SLEPs. Both groups are represented in Tables 1 and 2. The interviews were conducted in their respective workplaces for the Pedagogical Technical Advisors and in the schools for the teachers. All the interviewees and authorities from the SLEP signed an informed consent, which has

Table 1 Characterisation of teachers interviewed according to the number of teachers in their respective schools and average experience in rural teaching

SLEP	One-teacher	Two-teachers	Three-teachers	Average experience as rural teacher
A	1	0	5	15 years
B	11	0	4	21 years
C	0	0	10	17 years

Source: developed by author

Table 2 Characterisation of Pedagogical Technical Advisors

SLEP	Average experience in the position	N° of interviewees
A	2 years	3
B	2 years	3
C	1 year	1

Source: developed by author



a bioethical certification issued by the university that hosts this study. The interviews lasted from 30 up to 75 minutes. They were transcribed and then analysed in three steps: first, an analysis to identify tensions was performed; second, these tensions were sorted and mapped to identify the categories and to establish relations between tensions; third, the different responses to the paradoxes were identified.

In order to carry out the analysis, it was necessary to identify the categories in which tensions at the organisational level were observed, related to the meetings of microcentres and professional development. In Table 3 the Book of Codes is shown, where the number of occurrences together with the associated codes and subcodes can be seen.

RESULTS

The data that was analysed revealed three paradoxes relevant to this study, that is, the tensions that were present in the microcentres and stemmed from the transfer of rural schools to the SLEP. A name was conceived to express the extremes in tension for each paradox, and a brief contextualisation is given for each one, as well as interviewee testimonies where they present themselves and the type of responses implemented.

First Paradox. Implementation of public policy against community of practice

Microcentre meetings originated in the year 1995 as part of a rural ed-

Table 3 Book of Codes

Category	Code	N° of occurrences	Subcode	N° of occurrences
Microcentres	Bureaucratic paradox	112	Autonomy of microcentres	49
			Bureaucratic Control	63
	Microcentres' agenda	96	Self-defined by teachers	29
			Defined by Pedagogical Technical Advisors	55
			Type of communication	41
	Complexity of change	63	Endogenous factor	20
			Exogenous factor	33

Source: developed by author



educational reform. They are monthly meetings where teachers from a particular territory gather and, over time, these meetings led to the development of work practices and shared meaning related to the microcentres that are specific to each of them.

In this sense, a tension between the role and the purpose of the meetings of the microcentres is born. On one side, teachers describe it as a chance to “... *share successful pedagogical experiences. To reflect and plan activities together*”. And on the other side, Pedagogical Technical Advisors describe it as an opportunity to “...*share information about the requirements of public policy*”. This means that these meetings are an instance of professional development for teachers, while for the Pedagogical Technical Advisors it is one focused on communicating public policy and accountability. This tension is organisational in nature, and it is expressed in the microcentre as conflicts over the usage of time, the contents, and the handling of the meeting.

Additionally, microcentres are extremely strongly influenced by the geographical and cultural traits of the territory in which they are located. For example: “...*we used to organise celebrations with the community... the Andean New Year*”. Each microcentre has a local identity of its own: “...*when we celebrate our microcentre meetings at the school, the parents and community show their support and work so everything goes well*”. This leads to microcentre meet-

ings acquiring a unique identity which involves the community. In contrast, the transfer of schools to a SLEP carries a new meaning for the space, as one whose purpose is to receive information about public policies and align their activities with the strategic plan of the SLEP, with little involvement of local communities.

Considering that microcentres are a type of pedagogical organisation of rural schools, the transfer of these to a SLEP does not only mean a new employer for the teachers, but also the transfer of long-standing individual and collective practices. This entails a structural-organisational tension, generated by the conflict of various parts of the organisation (Lewis, 2000). In turn, the Pedagogical Technical Advisors face performance paradoxes (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008), since they must try to perform their role (present public policies) within a context of tension with the practices and expectations of the teachers. In some cases, this demands the execution of contradictory activities within one meeting and the negotiation with the microcentre manager for the use of time: “...*Here we discuss the meeting agenda with the microcentre manager and negotiate for time*”. This paradox is also usually present at the micro level; Pedagogical Technical Advisors as well as teachers strive to answer contradictory demands born from their constantly redefined roles, in a search for balance.

There have been various responses to this paradox at the organisational level.



Some SLEPs have developed confrontational active responses. After analysing the tensions, they have drawn conclusions such as: *"...out of the ten microcentres celebrated this year, six were reserved by teachers for their own topics and four for the local service"*. By contrast, others have more defensive responses with traits related to excision: *"...every meeting we assigned two hours for them to talk about their topics and the rest of the meeting is for us. Obviously, we always accompany them"*. In the latter type of response, the polarity is not analysed and, although confrontation is avoided, it cannot be considered a long-term solution that helps rebalance the paradox.

Second Paradox. Microcenter Coordinator versus Pedagogical Technical Advisors of SLEPs

In order to understand this paradox, a brief explanation about the role of a microcentre coordinator and the Pedagogical Technical Advisors is necessary.

Since its creation, every microcentre has elected a coordinator from amongst the teachers. The coordinator's responsibilities include preparing the annual work plan and submitting it to the authorities for approval: *"...at that time we had little trouble with the municipality; our coordinator had a good relationship with the mayor"*.

Pedagogical Technical Advisors are SLEP workers, and their role is to sup-

port the school leadership teams, implementing the improvement plan called the "Capacity Development Plan". The seven Pedagogical Technical Advisors who were interviewed are professionals in social sciences and have experience in urban education. None knew or had worked in rural contexts before, so this counselling process has been a novelty for them: *"...visiting rural schools has been a valuable learning experience"*.

Regarding the microcentre meetings, the coordinators and advisors understand their role and purpose in different ways. The former promote the exchange of pedagogical experiences, while the latter consider the meeting a place to discuss and work on the strategic guidelines of the SLEP and inform about policy.

The tensions that comprise the paradox can and will be analysed in two dimensions. The first is related to continuous improvement and the second related to tensions between the microcentre's annual plan and the accompaniment plan of the Pedagogical Technical Advisors.

Continuous Improvement: Concepts in Tension

On one side, rural teachers have established operational practices and concepts regarding how to promote the educational improvement in their establishments, based on curricular autonomy, local customs, linking the classroom with the territory, and col-



laborative work among peers: “...the schools of the microcenter organise activities together. We help each other, because we are small”. In contrast, SLEPs promote improvement based on eight attributes: I) the establishment of teacher development mechanisms; II) the development of professional leadership; III) the promotion of cross-school collaboration; IV) the use of evidence and data; V) the establishment of a vision, mission, and goals; VI) the design of teaching plans consistent with the data; VII) curricular coherence; VIII) continuous development. These attributes are worked on every month alongside each team of authorities; although this is not without its difficulties, as a Pedagogical Technical Advisor explains: “... it’s hard to implement the guidelines in the schools; teachers are used to being autonomous”.

The tensions present there are related to belonging and identity. Rural teachers and Pedagogical Technical Advisors are entities that interact and clash to reconcile diverse values and beliefs on a common space for action, the microcentre, and the role it plays in educational improvement.

Microcentre’s Annual Plan versus Accompaniment Plan

On one side, the microcentre’s annual plan is developed by teachers and supervised by the coordinator, with its content being defined on the basis of the educational projects and improve-

ment plans of the schools. This allows synergy between the resources and capabilities of each school. On the other side, the counselling plan implemented by the Pedagogical Technical Advisors is related to the eight attributes previously mentioned and the goals established in the strategic plan of the SLEP, which are based on its assessment of each school.

The contrast between the creation of the microcentre’s annual plan and the counselling plan can be seen as a tension that constitutes a learning paradox. This entails a contradiction between the need to build on the basis of the past and, at the same time, erase it or leave it behind in order to push forward (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Teachers are faced with the need for new knowledge and adaptation to new processes and frameworks (Beech et al., 2004; Clegg, da Cunha, & e Cunha, 2002). In itself, this is common to almost every process of change. However, what is unique about this paradox is that the tension itself gets created between the different ways of acquiring knowledge, so it can be difficult to observe directly and tends to be expressed in other paradoxes or conflicts. The response to this tension is usually defensive of the excision variation, that is, by increasing the polarisation around the two strategies for continuous improvement. This is reflected in constant negotiations for time and on the meaning of the topics at hand during microcentre meetings.



Third Paradox. Local versus National

Rural schools usually have low enrolment rates and are located in communities with small populations, where the neighbours know each other. This plays a pivotal role for the teachers who were interviewed and it is expressed in curricular adaptations. Such adaptations tend to: include biophysical elements (Ardoin, 2006; Ardoin, Schuh, & Gould, 2012); show a significant attachment to the location, reflected in the appreciation of the local culture; and support measures to improve the community. In some cases, teachers also fulfil other civil society roles such as being the president of the neighbourhood association or, for instance: *"...I have been in this school and town many years. Everybody knows me; I am also the president of the dance group for the celebration of the Virgin."*

These schools are usually multi-grade: the students share a classroom and lessons with classmates of different ages and levels of education. This pushes teachers to make curricular adjustments to fit the different levels of education present in the classroom, taking into consideration the subjects and the rural context of their students. Rural teachers are forced to interpret the national curriculum and adapt it to their specific context.

Another trait of rural schools can be observed at the pedagogical leadership level. In contrast with urban establish-

ments, the leadership of rural schools resides in the figure of the Rural School Manager, who performs both teaching and school management tasks. This duplication of roles tends to be demanding on the teachers who take this role.

After the transfer to the SLEP, all of the above culminates in the creation of a tension, which materialises in a performance paradox. In other words, the tasks and duties of those teachers have been tensioned and, in some cases, blurred by an educational improvement model more suitable for urban schools, establishments with classrooms attended by students of the same level of education and local communities that are less culturally involved with their schools. The responses to this paradox tend to be defensive: on the one hand, rural teachers reinforce the peculiarities of their leadership, *"...here we don't have teams, we must do everything on our own"*. On the other hand, the Pedagogical Technical Advisors emphasise the dimensions of the capacity development plan: *"...although the school is of the single-teacher kind, it is crucial for them to know the capacity development plan and work in accordance with it"*. However, this polarisation is mitigated by the Pedagogical Technical Advisors' on-site visits, which tend to mitigate the isolation and loneliness of rural teaching.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of educational reforms is a complex task. In this study



four types of paradox were identified, manifesting themselves in microcentre meetings in relation to the reform: learning, organisational, belonging, and performance. One of the reasons for these paradoxes is the systemic nature of the reform, in the sense that it affects all organisational levels. These paradoxes also tend to be interconnected. For instance, the learning paradox is related to the other three because of learning being necessary in response to organisational tensions generated by systemic changes, as well as individual tensions caused by changing roles, objectives, and values (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Likewise, “the adaptive nature of systems spurs temporal tensions associated with paradoxes of learning and organizing as the demands of today differ from the needs for tomorrow” (Smith & Lewis; 2011, p. 389).

At the same time, a diverse cast of frequent responses was identified. The responses range from those of a defensive nature, through excision, in which polarisation deepens, to active responses, such as confrontation, in which the tension is analysed and intermediate agreements are sought. The variety of responses proves that the SLEPs, as new organisations, are also going through a learning process and developing practices that allow the improvement of schools, in alignment with state guidelines.

In the context of microcentres, learning paradoxes are important in themselves because they generate tension in

the way teachers understand their own professional development, the importance of collaboration, and the role of local identity in curricular decisions. In turn, this makes it possible to link the learning paradox with those of performance and organisation. One way of approaching these paradoxes is through the understanding that the current reform involves the centralisation of education in the state through the SLEPs. At the microcentre level, this manifests itself as a dispute between local autonomy and state control.

Undoubtedly, the former dependence of rural schools on local municipalities had its problems, such as political interventionism. But it also allowed for the development of negotiating skills in authorities’ teams and the autonomy necessary to develop and implement their own curricular projects. This individual and collective learning allowed rural teachers to generate collaborative partnerships with local communities, something which has become strained after the introduction of the SLEPs.

Considering the problematic nature of the paradoxes studied here and their manifestation in tensions between local autonomy and state control, it is crucial to deepen our understanding of how such paradoxes relate to each other. Likewise, it is necessary to understand how the SLEPs can provide guidance and contextualise the public policy in order to foster organisational learning and continuous improvement. This, among other things, involves guiding



the SLEPs in the implementation of persuasive control measures, in order to facilitate the resolution of these and other paradoxes caused by the reform.

CONCLUSIONS

Moving from a highly decentralised system with 356 supporting municipalities to a centralised one composed of only 70 SLEPs is, without any doubt, a large-scale reform. Given the geographical conditions of rural schools, they represent a long tradition of self-sufficiency, facing challenges through their relationships with nearby schools, support from local communities, and microcentre meetings. The transfer of rural schools to the SLEPs creates tension within said autonomy, since it greatly increases the state control to which they are subjected.

Coherently with the provided context, microcentres have historically consolidated themselves as practical communities, in which teachers organise on their own with their peers to develop curricular projects. This autonomy is deeply rooted in the schools and local communities. Because of this, the control exercised by the SLEPs contradicts the collectively developed values and beliefs of these rural teachers. Subsequently, decision makers need to take into account certain considerations before implementing new SLEPs. Changes create tensions within both schools and microcentres, with Pedagogical

Technical Advisors being the closest agents. With that in mind, it would be beneficial to provide training to Pedagogical Technical Advisors in pedagogical leadership, as this could aid in the comprehension of changes and their effects at the organisational level (Pan, 2021), as well as in the development of organisational responses to paradoxes (Knight & Paroutis, 2017). This would allow them to soothe the tensions between seemingly opposite ends, excluding neither of them (Lewis & Smith, 2014), and defining a balance between autonomy and control that would fit the context.

Additionally, it is key to find a balance for the role of microcentre meetings, as several studies point out the importance of collaboration between teachers and the existence of systematic spaces, appropriate for significant reflection, originating from their own educational context. This is especially important to the implementation of the reform, since rural schools are an essential component in the social fabric of their communities.

Although the results of the present study contribute to the understanding of the effects of the reform on the context of rural teachers and their professional development, it is necessary to carry out more studies that explore these issues and allow us to advance in a detailed understanding of them and the development of proposals, in order to properly grasp the tensions between local autonomy and state control.



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QUIROGA LOBOS, M. Reforma vzdělávání v Chile a napětí ve venkovském prostředí: místní autonomie versus státní kontrola

Cílem této studie je v kontextu teorie paradoxu analyzovat napětí a příležitosti, které přináší působení mikrocenter jako prostor pro profesní rozvoj učitelů v rámci reformy vzdělávání. Prostřednictvím kvalitativní studie bylo zjištěno, že jsou přítomny čtyři typy paradoxů: organizace, učení, sounáležitost a výkon a že mikrocentra jsou místem negociace mezi místní autonomií a státní kontrolou.

Klíčová slova: *vzdělávací reforma, profesní rozvoj, mikrocentra, rurální vzdělávání, paradoxy*