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## **Exploring effective secondary schools in challenging contexts: A study in two Chilean Regions**

Roxana Balbontin

*University of Nottingham, Nottingham, United Kingdom*

### **Background**

School Effectiveness in areas of social deprivation is a fundamental issue for every society, because it is related to social justice, equity, equality and development, which are important concepts for every developed or developing country.

Social justice in education demands that any student, whatever their social background, have equal access and opportunities to receive an education of quality.

It is often considered that schools in the poorest neighbourhoods provide a lower quality of education than institutions in more advantaged areas. Nevertheless, taking into account all the barriers that some schools have to face, there are some institutions that seem to make a difference. They have demonstrated that it is possible to be more successful in terms of educational outcomes, despite the impact of their intake of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **Research Questions**

The main aim of this research is to gain greater understanding of the particular characteristics of more effective schools in areas of social deprivation and the influences of these particular features on the students' social and academic outcomes. The intention is to explore the schools' histories and the processes that support effectiveness and to generate some illuminating findings, in order to contribute to the educational policy and practice.

### **Methods**

A sample of schools in challenging contexts were selected after the analysis of their results in national standard examinations during a period of 3 years, taking into account contextual conditions such as the socio- economic status of the students. These schools have been analysed using case studies and a mixed method approach of data collection that combines quantitative and qualitative research traditions.

### **Research findings**

This study intends to contribute to the field of School Effectiveness and School Improvement through the study of effective secondary schools from areas of social deprivation in two important regions in Chile: Metropolitana and Biobío.

This paper is introduced with a description and a reflection about the Chilean Educational context and the purpose of undertaking this type of research. After that, it presents a brief synthesis of the literature review on School Effectiveness and Improvement. The next section details the general structure of the research project and discusses each component of its structure: The main objectives and research questions; the methodology and some of the criteria used to choose a mixed-method approach to collect and analyse the data; the process of sampling; the instruments of data collection; etc. In the last section, a summary of the results of the case-studies and main conclusions are presented. As well as some last comments about the potential implications and the contributions of undertaking this type of research in the Chilean context.

**Key Words: School effectiveness; areas of social deprivation; school improvement.**

