HOW DO WE INCLUDE THOSE CHILDREN?
ATTITUDES TOWARD AND PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION IN CHILE

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The inclusion of students with special educational needs was recently adopted as the national educational policy in Chile. The intention of this policy is to increase the quality of education and equity for all students as outlined in the Salamanca Statement. The adoption of this policy in nation states has created tension and resistance; challenging educational systems to change, transform, re-align and redesign as school systems wrestle with the complex processes of including students with special educational needs. As a result of limited research on inclusive education in Chile and based on previous studies examining this challenging mandate, it was considered imperative to develop a system of data analysis which would focus on educators' perceptions and attitudes, while eliciting recommendations for its successful implementation. Three themes of general attitudes, implementation and recommendations were determined by the responses received from focus groups. The 75outcomes of this study showed tendencies common to other countries and unique concerns which merit attention, at the international, national and local authority levels.

Introduction

During the 1990's and the first decade of the twenty first century, global educational reform initiatives, the signing of international agreements, and the alignment of national policies to these mandates by the majority of nations has provided a momentum and a foundation for the provision of an equitable and just education by including children with special educational needs in the context of Education for All (EFA). While most countries have adopted these mandates there is some question as to how this process of transformation, restructuring and alignment have been received by professionals responsible for the operationalization of these policies and dictates (Mitchell, 2005; Tenorio Eitel, 2005). Research and reviews of scholarly work suggest that educational reform is complex and in many countries has been a top down process with little input from key stakeholders (Fletcher & Artiles, 2005). These authors question the process and success of program implementation and evaluation and the fact that little research has been done to examine how these mandates have filtered down and actually transformed the practices of professionals. Artiles and Dyson (2005) equally argue that the efforts of policy makers and researchers have been heavily weighted towards what these decision makers intend to happen but there are few robust evaluative mechanisms in place to examine the actual outcomes. This question clearly resonates throughout the globe as educational systems restructure, reform and wrestle with the goal of accountability aimed at improving and increasing the educational outcomes of all students. This study examines the perspective of professional educators' response in Chile to reform efforts in special education and the implementation process through their respective lenses.

It is important to note that in Chile the national policymakers have adopted the international mandate of inclusion and implemented a policy designed to integrate students with disabilities into the regular educational system systematically and ultimately provide curricular modifications to those students based upon their special educational needs. As a result, the ultimate goal of the policy is to gradually integrate students into the general education system, eliminate the academic and social segregation of students by phasing out segregated settings and practices. Regular schools would become centers equipped and prepared to attend the diverse learning characteristics of the total student population including children with special educational needs (SEN).

The first governmentally funded study examining disability issues in Chilean society was carried out and published in 2005. The researchers used a survey format employing 66 questions designed to determine a) the incidence of disability in the country and b) provide a profile characterizing those individuals identified or reported. It surveyed a nationally representative random sample of over 13,000 families in urban and rural settings (Fondo Nacional de la Disacapacidad, 2005). Of interest was the finding that there were more women than men with disabilities from age 15 to 40. But, from birth to 15 years of age there were more males than females identified. Another finding was that one of every two individuals with disabilities had not completed 9th grade. Finally, four of every five individuals with a disability declared that their disability had a negative economic impact on their family.

Another study published by Tenorio Eitel (2005) examined general teacher perspectives on educational policies promoting the inclusion of children with SEN into the regular educational setting. It was reported that general education teachers see diversity as a problem and that

specialists are necessary to attend to the "deficit" of the child in the traditional medical model fashion. They also identified a lack of skills in their repertoire to adapt and modify the curriculum for children with certain learning and behavior characteristics.   Lastly, the integration of students with disabilities into the general education classroom is seen principally as a public policy, a necessity of the state implemented by bureaucrats in the educational system.

This study explores Chilean educators' perceptions of inclusion for students with SEN in public schools and provides an additional perspective on special education reform efforts in Latin America.

Method

The educators in this study include general and special education teachers and administrators representing five educational authorities in three regions of Chile. Aside from the objective of comparison between two Latin American countries of Mexico in North America and Chile in South America, the analysis of data called for the development of an innovative coding system. A coding system may involve data simplification and clarification, as accordingly general themes and associated categories may emerge while intensifying and extracting specific information from the data itself. This in turn may allow for the formulation of new questions and levels of interpretation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) and the detection of general tendencies as well as simultaneously searching for tendencies unique to each focus group. Due to the varied geography of Chile and taking into account the long distances from north to south; over 6,000 kilometers, these unique diversities; historical, cultural and social traditions, needed to be considered as they could influence differences in responses. Inter professional responses were also taken into account.

Focus Groups
The investigation team chose the focus group interview process over the traditionally more favored quantitative survey instrument process. According to Beck, Trambetta, and Share (1986), a focus group is an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics relevant to the situation at hand. This option was chosen even though, emphases on positivistic quantitative studies, especially in the United States, has resulted in favoring the use of the individual questionnaire as the superior data collecting method (Madriz, 2000).

However, this focus group method was preferred, as on the one hand, such groups can be most efficient when endeavoring to identify issues in areas where little previous research exists (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Other clear advantages over the individual interview process with respect to learning about participants' opinions, attitudes, perceptions, and everyday experiences regarding inclusion, include that it allows the investigation team the opportunity to observe group interaction between the participants and the interviewer. Additionally, the focus group method gives participants the opportunity to react to their fellow participants' responses which may often trigger each participant to more profoundly consider their own responses, consequently eliciting more information. Furthermore, participants' responses can prompt additional spontaneous questions from the interviewer which will subsequently bring forth still more information.

Fontana and Frey (2005), also mention the downside of this methodology questioning the mode of correction and interpretation in the measurement of individual responses. They warn that the social nature of the group and the type of question being asked by the moderator could have a detrimental effect. They therefore recommend that even as individual responses are tallied, wider themes with supporting evidence should ensure a wider range more representative, of the ideas and issues, raised by the group. A further disadvantage of focus groups is that sometimes one participant may provide irrelevant information and therefore no response can be coded.

A previously mentioned disadvantage common to focus groups methodology is that a participant may provide irrelevant information and therefore no response can be coded. This situation occurred in only one of the five locations even though the moderator attempted to bring the participants back on line through the insertion of an additional question. This strategy was generally but not always successful.

Background of the research

The initial research took place in Chile, and consisted of data collection through the use of focus group interviews conducted by the first author in association with the team members from the Corporación para el Desarrollo del Aprendizaje, Chile, Clinic for the Development of Learning (CDA). The CDA staff networked with professionals from local or charter school authorities. The project was described to them and their collaboration was requested. The authorities expressed delight at the opportunity to participate in the project.

Six CDA therapists (health or education qualified professionals with a specialty as certified therapists in the Method for Cognition, Development and Learning: CDA Method) were trained over a period of 36 hours. Training included both practical and theoretical aspects of focus group and qualitative research required to carry out the project.

In a first instance, an interview guide was used and the completed questionnaire was submitted to the moderator during the preliminary meeting with 300 representatives of the educational community of La Serena, Chile. During this particular session, the Mexican results were presented to these participants regarding professionals' opinions, attitudes and perceptions on the implementation of inclusive education as an example of the research constituting, comparative data leading to the realization of related research in this second Latin American country; Chile. (This Focus Group Interview Questionnaire is in Appendix.)

Data were collected over a period of three months from March to May, 2005. The length of the focus interview sessions varied from 90 to 150 minutes. Three types of professionals were participants in the focus groups. These included: school administrators, educational specialists (i.e., speech therapists, psychologists, and health education professionals) and regular classroom teachers. To increase the representativeness of the sample three distinct geographical regions of Chile were included in the study. The northern region was represented by the towns of Vicuña and La Serena; the mid-region, by Santiago and Lampa; and the southern region by Punta Arenas. Rooms in local schools were adapted with adequate furniture and lighting in order to accommodate the focus group(s) and noise levels were controlled. The responses of the group dialogue were videoed and audio taped using standard audio and video equipment .The tapes were later transcribed by a qualified translator in Chile with transcription experience. Spanish to English translation and coding of responses were carried out by qualified bilingual special education staff at another university in Arizona. Data

analysis followed the guiding principles proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), updated by Miles and Huberman, (1994) and Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996).

As is recommended procedure for translation and coding, (Kozleski, Engelbrecht, Hess, Swart, Eloff, Oswald, et al., 2008), a second researcher listened to the tapes in Spanish while at the same time reading the transcript in English to verify the accuracy of the translation. This procedure was carried out in conjunction with the technique whereby at least two translators collaborated, not only on the literal translation but also as referees on inferred meaning in order to attain consensus.

Research sample of participants

The participants worked in five provincial educational jurisdictions of Chile: Vicuna, La Serena, Lampa, Santiago and Punta Arenas. All of the professionals involved in the study representing all of the professional groups are working in either public or charter schools, and have been working in inclusive settings for a period of two years, that is to say, since the mandate of the National Inclusive Education Law of 1995. All participants signed a formal Willingness to Participate consent form.

The majority (92%) of the participants were women with an age range between approximately 28 and 52 years. The average age was 37 years. All were university professionals working in either the public or charter school system. The latter were those associated with lower SES groups and thus all the teachers and specialists involved were subject to the Government Salary Scale whereby salaries are lower than those of the private sector. Between the Administrative corps pay scale and that of the more junior teachers there could be a range between $900,000 to the lower $320,000 (at present approximately 500 Chilean pesos per USD) depending on post graduate, either diplomas or academic degrees and prizes for excellence often based on student test scores (either at school level or individually as a teacher). This information may be helpful in better understanding the interrelation of the dynamic of the roles of the participants in this study. The criteria for selection of participants, is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Selection Criteria for Participants

Location	Selection criteria
Vicuña & La Serena	Sample of participants was recruited from a seminar organized by the Corporación para el Desarrollo del Aprendizaje. The organization and number of differing groups of professionals was administered by local education authority.
Santiago & Lampa	Santiago sample of participants was selected through collaboration between the Corporación para el Desarrollo del Aprendizaje and the two schools involved.
Punta Arenas	Sample of participants was designated by the Corporación Municipal de Educación, Salud y Atención al Menor de la Municipalidad de Punta Arenas in collaboration with the Corporación para el Desarrollo de Aprendizaje who had

previously held an introductory seminar for the various professionals, in order for the participants to understand the objectives of this study.

Data Analysis

Initially, in a preliminary review of the transcribed focus group interviews, the researchers read through the focus group responses individually, to get an overall impression of prevalent tendencies and emerging topics (Yin, 1994). Next, these impressions and themes were shared (i.e., while many of the focus group participants appeared to agree with inclusion, these same participants discussed problems in implementing inclusion laws as a result of poor preparation, limited resources, and a lack of training). In addition to becoming aware of general themes, the researchers noted potential qualitative differences depending on the role of the participant (i.e., administrator, general and special education teacher) and it was therefore decided that participant roles should be identified in order to keep track of possible differences between groups.

From the La Serena preliminary study, groups' responses to the Questionnaire on *Professional Opinion on Inclusive Education* (see Appendix), themes were extracted according to those showing the most prevalence. From these items the moderators determined four tentative topics or themes and formulated some evocative questions to elicit the required dialogue. These themes were: professional role, general attitudes, implementation and recommendation, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes, Topic Area, and Categories

Themes	Categories
General Attitudes	Anti discrimination, right to equal education, collaboration, ownership, effect on special education students-social, effect on special education students-academic, effect on regular education students-social
Implementation	Overall preparedness, transition/implementation process, top down effect, compliance with the law, training quantity, training quality, resources, demands on regular education, collaboration & planning, usefulness of special teams, regular education professional competences, special education professional competences, inclusive versus integration, economics, evaluation of teachers, differentiation of services, evaluation of student progress, special education students evaluation/diagnosis
Recommendations	More/better resources, more/better training, more/better availability of specialists, more/better special education evaluation/diagnosis, more/better parent participation, government planning for implementation, beyond 8th. Grade/vocational training, transitory versus permanent disabilities, more accommodations, school site autonomy, specialist team at every site, general attitudes, implementation, recommendations.

According to Krueger (1988) the topic for discussion should be predetermined and sequenced and based on situational analysis as well as, as in this present case, an in-depth study of the Questionnaire on Professional Opinion on Inclusive Education. At this second stage and with the focus group responses in hand, these theme areas were revised and their suitability confirmed according to the category combinations. The theme titled Professional Role was removed and included as pertinent information with respect to the focus group selection process. The theme of General Attitudes referred to perceptions about recent changes in special education laws related to inclusion, the intention of inclusion and whether they were considered beneficial. More specifically, the following related thought provoking questions were considered: What are general attitudes about recent changes in special education laws related to inclusion? Were intentions good? Is inclusion in theory a "good thing"? The theme of Implementation referred to recent enactments of laws related to inclusion; the advantages and disadvantages and overall effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the reform process. Examples of questions germane to the theme of Implementation are as follows: How has the implementation process been as a result of recent changes in special education laws related to inclusion? Have there been positives/negatives? Does it appear to be working? Why or why not? Recommendations, although originally considered a theme, was designated a specific topic area because direct queries were made to each group eliciting participants' suggestions as to how to improve the process of inclusion.

Following the preliminary review to establish themes, a more complex coding scheme was developed to manage the categories. First, the researchers independently generated and defined individual categories or small units of meaningful information that relate to one concept (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)**.** Second, individual category lists were shared and the categories were combined and refined. Third, categories were grouped by commonalities into broader topic areas or themes each containing several individual categories, as seen below in Table 3.

Subsequently, two researchers defined each category independently and then consensually reached an agreement on the definition. These categories were then combined and refined and grouped under one of the two general themes by commonalities into broader topics (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

As may be seen, in Table 3, 42 categories are listed. These were, however, subject to refinement and fourteen of the original forty two originally detected from the oral/written transcripts were found, for sake of economy, to be better placed and/or combined, in a sister category.

Table 3

Elements of Coding System

Theme/Topic Area	Categories
General Attitudes	Agreement with Inclusion (+1/-1), Anti-Discrimination (+1/-1), Right to Equal Education (+1/-1), Conducive to Collaboration (+1/-1), Effect on Special Education Kids – Social (+1/-1), Effect on Special Education Kids – Academic (+1/-1), Effect on Regular Education Kids – Social (+1/-1), Effect on Regular Education Kids – Academic (+1/-1), Microcosm of Society (+1/-1)
Implementation	Top-Down Effect (+1/-1), Compliance with the Law (+1/-1), Training – Quantity for Inclusion (+1/-1), Training – Quality for Inclusion (+1/-1), Resources (+1/-1), Demands on Regular Education Teachers (+1/-1), Collaboration, Planning, and Communication (+1/-1), Transition from Old to New, Availability of Specialists – Quantity (+1/-1), Effectiveness of Specialists – Quality (+1/-1), Inclusion vs. Integration (+1/-1), Differentiation of Services, Evaluation of Teachers (+1/-1), Evaluation of Student Progress (+1/-1), Special Education Kids – Evaluation/Diagnosis (+1/-1), Parent Participation (+1/-1)
Recommendations	More/Better Resources, More/Better Trainings, More/Better Availability of Specialists, More/Fair Teacher Evaluations, More/Fair Evaluations of Student Progress, More/Better Special Education Kids Evaluation/Diagnosis, More/Better Parent Participation, Government Planning for lmplementation, School to Work/Vocational, High Incidence vs. Low Incidence Disabilities, Need for Appropriate and Effective Accommodations/Modifications

For the purposes of correction and interpretation of the responses, first, each response was classified according to the category as defined with examples in a separate document which the researchers had available to them when coding the transcribed focus groups, (See Appendix). The next step sought to account for differences of opinion, and thus each response was coded with either a +1 or a -1 to reflect either a "positive" or "negative" statement about the category for General Attitudes and Implementation. Obviously, this classification was not applied to the theme of Recommendations.

By means of example, within the broad topic area of general attitudes, the individual category agreement with inclusion laws (overall feelings about inclusion laws) might be supported positively by a statement "Creo que lo importante es que hay una ley [de integración] que va a favorecer a estos niños que tienen estos problemas" or "I believe that it is important that there is an [inclusion] law that favors children that have these problems" (Lampa). On the other hand, agreement with inclusion laws might be supported negatively by a statement, "Soy

proclive a mantener escuelas especiales [no programas de integración], donde el niño sea tratado por especialistas" or "I am inclined to maintain special schools [not inclusion programs], where the student is treated by specialists" (Lampa).

Weighting was determined by coding each time an individual participant responded to a specific category. Tendencies of patterns in the data were determined by counting the total number of responses made by each participant. Moreover, this strategy allowed for coding per each focus group, or regional focus groups, thus opening up the possibility for detecting and charting unique concerns. For example, the unique concern of participants in Punta Arenas was with class size.

Discussion

As may be seen from responses stated in the interviews based on the three emergent themes, Chilean educators believe that they should be allowed to voice opinions and make recommendations concerning the needs of special education children. This prerogative extends to inclusive education and integration projects, both for their students and for themselves subject to any authority above them, be it the administrative staff of a school, the local education authority or central government. This may be due to their clarity of opinion regarding inclusive education.

Theme I: General Attitudes

Examining the responses under the first theme of general attitudes, collaboration was the most popular category with approximately 72% of the participants responding positively or negatively. Of this percentage approximately 70% answered affirmatively. Interestingly, over 70% of the Chilean sample, commented positively on collaboration. Additional information given in responses indicated whether they had had a positive or negative professional experience with collaboration within the inclusion project, which in turn influenced their attitudes toward this question.

Interestingly, the majority of participants mentioning social effects on special education and regular education students felt that these effects were positive. Almost 90% of respondents to this question felt that the inclusion project had a positive social effect on special education children. While on the other hand, although minimal response was received, more respondents had reservations about the effect on academics for special education children.

There are no other categories within this theme receiving a higher rate of response.

Theme II: Implementation

In consideration of this theme, over 90% of the responses were of a negative opinion with respect to the availability of resources, be they financial or special education personnel.

Of the responses to the question of inclusion versus integration, the answers were split 50/50. When analyzed by geographic region, Punta Arenas was the only region favoring integration over inclusion by 68%. The other two regions favored inclusion over integration by 60%. This disposition toward inclusion would seem to portend well, in terms of the implementation of future projects focusing on inclusion in those regions.

In reference to the quality and quantity of training, all regions showed a negative opinion reflected in 95% of responses. Likewise, it is worth noting, that although few in number, a

negative opinion on the professional competencies of the special education staff was expressed.

Topic Area: Recommendations
As mentioned previously, the plus/minus coding technique that was utilized to quantify participants' responses for the themes of general attitudes and implementation, was not used in this area. Nonetheless, this section did yield the most varied responses. These grouped responses were less outstanding in showing tendencies but were more evenly distributed with a diversity of multiple categories. That said, the one category with a clear positive tendency is more and better resources.

The variation in response provided by the participants at a multiregional level emphasized the need for the following: (a) more and better training for special education teachers and specialists, (b) more availability of trained special education teachers and specialists, (c) more parent participation, (d) more effective diagnoses of students with special needs, and (e) more efficient government planning for the implementation of special education programs.

Unique Agenda
Certain localities of Chile had their own unique agenda. This means that unique concerns were expressed regarding the implementation of inclusion. In particular, respondents from the region of La Serena were the only ones to express anxiety over some more exclusive charter schools or those that receive state subsidies placing importance on profits and reputation over that of participating in inclusion projects. Respondents indicated that in some cases, these exclusive charter schools might not accept students with disabilities out of concern that if they admitted these students, this action would lower their test scores on national and international measures. In the province of Vicuna, respondents expressed a unique apprehension about the regular education teacher taking ownership of the special education students in their inclusive classrooms. Lampa was the only province in which concerns regarding the future of special education students in inclusion projects beyond the eighth grade were reported. Moreover, participants in Punta Arenas, were very much concerned about reducing the class size of inclusive education classrooms. One of the Santiago focus groups uniquely expressed distress over the lack of competencies on the part of special education professionals in terms of their ability to successfully carry out their responsibilities. Santiago focus groups were the only ones to indicate apprehension about the fairness of teacher evaluations, which strongly take into account students' standardized test scores within inclusive classrooms. Additionally, these were the only focus groups to convey doubt about the feasibility of accommodating students with emotional and behavioral disorders in regular education classrooms.

As may be seen from responses stated in the interviews, Chilean educators feel they don't have a voice and therefore should be able to express their opinions while at the same time advocating for the needs of students with SEN in inclusion projects. This concern appears to reflect the belief that their opinions are not being taken into account with respect to government planning and subsequent "top-down" implementation of special education programs.

Chile and Mexico: Common Features
On an empirical basis it is interesting to observe definite similarities between three different regions of Chile, regarding teachers' attitudes and perceptions of inclusive education. Two

different studies undertaken in Mexico, and this present study in Chile, both highlighted similar patterns of response albeit with some variation.

For example, quality and quantity of professional development are mentioned in both studies. This lack of professional development and training for inclusive education was mentioned by both national groups as being their main source of anxiety and low professional esteem.

Furthermore, reference was made to the lack of program supervision and to the ineffectiveness of government initiated inclusion projects. These observations by Chilean educators are congruent with those of their Mexican counterparts. Their feelings were "captured" in the words of Mexican educators who commented that little administrative exists to support for program evaluation since the implementation of inclusive educational policy (Fletcher, Dejud, Klingler, & Lopez Mariscal, 2003).

A further feature of similarity between both countries is the appreciation of the principle of inclusion (Fletcher et al., 2003). There seems to be little doubt as to the acceptance of inclusion as a reality in school life. Differences of opinion may occur as to whether it is considered effective and best practice. As seen in the Chilean sample, almost 90% of respondents to this question felt that the inclusion project had a positive social effect on special education children. While on the other hand, although minimal response was received, more respondents had reservations about the effect on academics for special education children. Although not expressed in percentages, the Mexican sample showed similar agreement with this principle of inclusion.

Lack of or poor government planning, programming and consultation with the professionals about the implementation of the National Laws of Inclusion in Mexico and Chile, were mentioned in both studies as a negative. As previously pointed out, the Chilean teachers felt confident in their ability to advise the government and other authorities regarding the challenges of implementation. In both nations' study samples, references were made to deficient financial and special education human resources, at least at the level of implementation (Fletcher et al., 2003).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The use of the focus group interview method of investigation resulted in the acquisition and compilation of substantive and authentic data. The guided focus group technique served to prompt participants to both enhance and embellish previous responses. Likewise, the items found on the coding system checklist protocol emerged naturally from the collected data, rather than being imposed upon the data, as in the case of when a predetermined survey questionnaire is used.

A concern often expressed on the part of Chilean and Mexican educators responsible for the implementation of inclusion programs, is that their individual or collective voice was neither solicited nor taken seriously by the national educational authorities in their respective countries. Interestingly, the 1990's were the years when the tendency toward inclusive education gained great momentum worldwide (Karagiannis, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996). Conferences held under the auspices of international organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, OCDE and the World Bank (Fletcher et al., 2003) invited the participation of developing countries, such as Mexico and Chile in this movement, particularly at a governmental level.

Thus, this study was originally undertaken mainly for the purpose of collecting data to compare the Mexican and Chilean models of inclusive education, based on the opinions and perceptions of educators working in the field. Moreover, the methodology employed, particularly in the categorization process for codification and weighting, has proven especially useful in discovering and determining deeper levels of detail, including cross reference and the addition of relevant issues associated with socio-cultural historic idiosyncrasies. Accordingly, this article offers a means of presenting such methodology for replication and generalization.

In terms of replication, the same method of focus group interviews; together with the newly developed coding system could be used in different countries and as a follow up or longitudinal study with the same population of teachers who participated in the Chilean and Mexican data collection. This would provide for problem clarification of issues raised previously; issues which could prompt still more factors to surface and be confronted.

Conversely, with regard to generalization, the formation of focus groups can be complicated and subject to interferences among participants, as well as uncontrollable variables such as costly transcript writing and interpretation. Again, while in the hands of experts as in this case, the situation is manageable, but this is not easily guaranteed outside an academic university situation.

The outcome of the coding methodology with its correction method is predicated on a weighting system addressing the importance of the issue at hand. This suggests the development of an online survey questionnaire which would allow for the extension of data collection to language groups other than English and Spanish, consequently opening up the possibility of international comparisons; given that inclusive education is a worldwide trend.

Furthermore, this type of participatory interaction on the part of teachers participating in the focus group interviews, serves to encourage a bottom-up approach, facilitating the collection of opinions, attitudes and perceptions regarding the implementation of inclusive education. Nonetheless, this methodology of registration of group dialogue entails a responsibility to respond to the questions as posed by these participants. For example, with respect to the complaint regarding class sizes, (46 per class), this number is stipulated in the dispositions of the Chilean Ministry of Education and is subject to neither discussion nor change at the present; consequently innovating alternatives should be sought (i.e., example; the inclusion of mothers suitably trained to act as classroom assistants) particularly in the Primary Cycle of General Basic Education. A further concern with no immediate possibility of resolution is the perceived incompetence on the part of regular education teachers to manage students with special educational needs due to a lack of training and a shortage of specialists (i.e., speech, physical therapists, and school psychologists), particularly in small towns such as Lampa and Vicuña. Here the local education authorities may consider in-service training, bringing in outside specialists or even promoting the formation of an on-line consultation service, such as the interactive platform of medical information with its publications listings, including courses; both in training and e-learning available to Chilean general medical practitioners (Bachelet, 2005). Certainly innovation and creativity are needed to confront and resolve many of the problematic issues clearly stated and described by the participants in this study.

We concur with Fletcher and Artiles (2005) that attempting to bring about systematic and systemic change by focusing on one aspect of the system without examining the greater context of social and economic policies of a particular country (i.e., lack of human resources development in Latin America due to the lack of education investment in the citizenry), "will

have little success in reducing poverty, combating inequality and impeding economic development throughout Latin America" (p. 209).

Acknowledgement

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Appendix

Questionnaire on Professional Opinion on Inclusive Education

Name

Profession

Years of professional experience

School or schools

Region

Please complete the following questionnaire. If you require more space than that allowed, please put the question number on the back of the form and continue writing there. For your attention, thank you.

Castellano	English
Nº1¿Qué impacto tiene la Ley de Integración en transformar las prácticas de la comunidad educativa en la educación e integración de los alumnos con necesidades especiales?	What impact does the Law of Integration have in transforming the practices of the school community on education and integration of students with special needs?
Nº2 ¿ En su opinión, qué implica la integración educativa? Y se diferencia de la educación inclusiva?	In your opinion what does integration imply? And how does it differ from inclusion?

Nº3¿Cuáles son los objetivos de la integración educativa?	What are the objectives of integration?
Nº4 ¿Estima Ud. que la educación inclusiva funcionará en nuestro país?	Do you feel that inclusion will work in your country?
Nº5 ¿En su opinión, cuál es la motivación que hace que tal educación sea adoptada en algunos países y no en otros?	In your opinion, what is the motivating factor or factors that account for the successful adoption of inclusion/integration in some countries, but not in others?
Nº6 ¿Cómo se puede lograr que la comunidad educativa incluyendo a los padres asumen la educación inclusiva?	How do we insure that the school community, including parents are involved in inclusion?
Nº7 ¿Qué modelos nacionales de la integración educativa u inclusiva en acción conoce Ud?	Which national methods of integration in education or inclusion in action do you know?
Nº8 ¿Siente Ud. adecuadamente capacitado para atender al alumno con necesidades educativas especiales?	Do you feel adequately training to work with special needs students?
Nº9 ¿Cuáles son los objetivos mínimos que esperan alcanzar con los alumnos integrados?	What are the minimum objectives that you hope to master with students who are integrated?
Nº10 ¿Según su profesión, los	Professionally speaking, do special

educadores diferenciales tienen un nuevo rol frente a la integracion eduacional?

education teachers have a new role with respect to integration in education?

Nº11 ¿Qué se obtiene con este nuevo estilo de atención?

What is the benefit of this new method of attention to special education students?

Nº12 ¿Cómo les ha impactado en lo personal la integración educativa?

How has the integration in education affected you personally?

Nº13 ¿Según su profesión, de qué manera ha cambiado Ud. en consecuencia de esta nueva iniciativa de integrar a los alumnos con discapacidades a las escuelas regulares?

Professionally speaking, how have you changed as a result of this new initiative to integrate students with disabilities into regular education schools?

Nº14 ¿Con qué obstáculos se enfrenta y que desafíos se le han presentado?

With which obstacles and challenges have you been confronted?

Nº15 ¿Qué sugerencias tiene Ud. para mejorar a éste modelo?

What suggestions do you have to improve this model?