

# Second chance schools: background, training and current instructional practices of teachers

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The objective of the present study was to assess which teachers hired to teach secondary school dropouts are most likely to adapt their practices to match their students' characteristics. Chile recently initiated a system "second chance" schools for dropouts. Most of the teaching staff were recruited from the secondary schools from which the students had withdrawn. There was little variation in instructional practices or schedules. The second chance schools provide intensive instruction, small classes and flexibility in schedules and sequence of courses. The study sought to identify the teachers most likely to adapt old practices or learn new ones in order to provide students a different educational experience than that offered in conventional secondary schools. **Design/methodology/approach:** The sampling design for this study was developed by the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Education. Taking enrollment into account, they randomly selected second chance schools from 13 of Chile's 16 regions. Then, they randomly selected 617 teachers from 38 of the selected schools. The teachers were invited to respond to a self-administered survey questionnaire that covered beliefs about and attitudes toward dropouts, and frequency of use of different teaching methods. The analytical procedures used include nonparametric correlations and logit regression. **Findings:** Teaching methods in the second chance schools are influenced mostly by type of in-service training and not by student characteristics. Most teachers expect most students to graduate; teachers with more years of teaching are the least optimistic. **Originality/value:** Relatively little research on second chance schools has been published in Latin America. The Second Opportunity Schools are the first effort in Chile to provide public secondary school to dropouts. The study provides detailed information about background and training linked to current teachers' instructional practices. The findings suggest actions that can be taken to improve the new schools.