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## Public education and student movements: the Chilean rebellion under a neoliberal experiment

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### ABSTRACT

Chile is recognized in the educational policy field as one of the first laboratories of neoliberal initiatives. These policies, initiated under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, did not change with the new democratic governments after 1990. This characteristic led international organizations to promote the Chilean policies in different contexts in Latin America and beyond. In 2006, a high school student movement occupied public and private schools, demystifying the outcomes of these policies. A new wave of demonstrations took place in 2011, with a college student leadership that paralyzed a significant amount of universities and schools throughout the country. After both waves of mobilizations, the political system opened the process of policy-making that considered the demands of social movements. In this article, we explore the dynamics between educational policies and social student movements in Chile, and the possibilities of change in favor of public education.

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Neoliberalism; public education; student movements; privatization; educational apartheid

## Introduction

Chile's educational system represents one of the most extreme cases of the introduction of neoliberal principles in the world, assuming a laboratory policy format (Harvey 2005). The terrains of experimentation have been fundamental for the development and transfer of neoliberal policies around the world (Dezalay and Garth 2002).

Both left and right political turns have shaped the neoliberal education policy to date. The neoliberal Chilean educational policies were developed under the military dictatorship from 1981, which implied an alteration of the policy-making field, excluding teachers and students, actors who had actively participated in the construction of the Chilean educational project before the civic-military coup of 1973. For more than two decades, the Chilean educational system maintained the policies of the dictatorship, surviving even after the return to democracy in 1990. This continuity was the product of consensus between the political parties of the center-left and the Chilean right, which decided to give course to a reformist and non-transformative position. Thus, Chile went from a neoliberal experiment

to an example of post-dictatorship governance, which is highlighted by international organizations such as the World Bank (Assaél et al. 2015).

Paying for education and entering private schools became the norm. However, the consensus of the political elites during the early 2000s exploded in the form of the revolution featuring secondary students. The severe consequences of the implementation of neoliberal policies then became evident. Since 2006, students have become relevant political actors and have managed to maintain a critical stance on the educational and political-economic system as a whole.

This article focuses on the intersection of educational policies in Chile and student movements. This intersection implies the forced opening of a new agenda, the incorporation of social demands with a reorganization of conservative resistance to keep elements central to the neoliberal educational model.

### **Policy-making and student movements**

In understanding the Chilean educational policies of the last two decades, it is necessary to recognize the role that the student movements have had in evidencing and problematizing the policy-making process itself. Initially, in the analysis of educational policies, we can identify two levels. On one hand, a *de facto* policy that is constituted by political texts or speeches and legislative texts that are the basis of the policies in execution; and on the other, policies in use, which refer to the discourses and institutional practices that emerge in the implementation process (Meinardes 2006). This separation allows for the description of a trajectory from the generation of the policy where interest groups, analysts, politicians, and policy-makers converge, until its implementation in a school. The legislative text is inserted into a complex process that considers a 'chronology of an issue coming onto the policy agenda, the construction of a policy text, its implementation and sometimes evaluation' (Rizvi and Lingard 2010, 14). Meanwhile, in schools, the policy is translated or interpreted, producing results not always in line with the express intentions of the legislation (Van Zanten 2007). However, in a context of state transformation, the boundaries between the areas of policy-making, implementation, and evaluation of policies seem to become more diffuse. The cooperation, coordination, and interdependence of public and private actors are at the foundation of processes marking the way from government to governance (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000; Lipman 2011).

The policy-making arena is susceptible to the intervention of multiple actors. Thus, policy networks are structured as regulatory spaces that seek to influence decision-making going well beyond the state (Ball 2008; Nambissan and Ball 2010). It should be noted that the weakening of the role of the state not only opens the process of policy-making at the national level but also at the transnational level. For the majority of countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, the action of international organizations, multinational corporations, and think tanks occupies a central place in the production and dissemination of transnational neoliberal discourses (Van Zanten 2007), building policy networks and thus promoting educational reforms. This massive eruption was associated with the Structural Adjustment Programs mobilized by the World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s, which subsequently dominated the educational field (Lauder et al. 2006; Domenech 2007; Emeagwali 2011). The subaltern position of these regions of the world made them susceptible to the implementation of reforms inspired by a neoliberalism, already legitimized as a theory and policy paradigm (Jessop 2010).

On the margins of this proliferation of networks of policies that hegemonize the educational field, movements have emerged in open opposition. These social movements are excluded in the spaces of political decisions increasingly distant from public deliberation (Rowe 2017). Experiences of rebellions have not been absent in the recent history of Latin America. Larrabure and Torchia (2015) highlight that these experiences since the 2000s share a specific manner of organization that promotes horizontal relationships, maximizing participation and maintaining self-organization and state autonomy.

Protests for education in Chile have been theoretically defined as an example of social movements when they have considered hard actions, such as occupations, blockades, or hunger strikes, which imply taking physical risks (Rowe 2017). Since 2006, we recognize the emergence of a complex web of interrelation between the student movement and educational policies.

### **The neoliberal coup**

In 1976, during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet and under policies of state terrorism, a group of policy-makers trained at the School of Economics of the University of Chicago initiated a radical transformation of Chile (Tome 2015; Bellei, Cabalin, and Orellana 2014). The neoliberal current that prevailed then was that of the *laissez-faire* doctrine promoted by Milton Friedman (Cerny 2014). Thus, the State began a process of dismantling in social areas (Weyland 2004) to give rise to market participation (Au and Ferrare 2015).

In 1980, the government approved the establishment of a new Constitution for the country through a fraudulent plebiscite. This Constitution defined the right to education as the prior right and responsibility of parents to educate their children, while the state should give special protection to this right (Article 19 of the Constitution). At the same time, the Constitution protected school choice and the liberty to establish and organize schools under the right of entrepreneurship (Article 19). In practice, this legal disposition implied promotion of the privatization and the validation of private entrepreneurs in education as pre-eminent actors in the educational policy field.

After the economic crisis of 1982, Chile followed the orientation of the Austro-German Ordoliberal School version of neoliberalism (Cerny 2014). That is, the policies of decentralization and privatization were validated; however, new state regulations were established. The structural pillars of the new educational system were centered on the following four elements: a new framework for the management of the schools; a new model of financial administration; a system of standardization; and a regulatory framework.

This history reflects the importance of the Chilean laboratory on the map of the north-south circulation of global educational policies (Dezalay and Garth 2002). Chile was instrumental in the upgrade, construction, and reconstruction (Peck and Theodore 2015) of neoliberal theories. We will consider as neoliberalism not only a set of policies but also 'forms of governance, and discourses and ideologies that promote self-interest, unrestricted flows of capital, deep reductions in the cost of labor, and sharp retrenchment of the public sphere' (Lipman 2011, 6). This framework was materialized in the installation of new policies of school management, a model of financial administration, a system of standardization, and a regulatory framework.

### ***A new framework for the management of the schools***

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Chile had made progress in building a strong public system, oriented toward universal, non-denominational, tuition-free education at all levels. The conquest and extension of the right to education as a social right compromised the educational actors in general in the protection and delivery of this right (Holmwood 2017). The last aspect incorporated in the Chilean model was the democratization of management; that is, the opening of representative bodies of the unions and the community in the management of schools. The Chilean state was also defined as an educating state (Núñez 2003).

Until 1980, the Chilean public schools were still administered directly by the Ministry of Education. In 1981, the government began the dismantling of the role of the state as the educator. The figure of the school manager or stakeholder was established, in the logic to foster decentralization. The stakeholder is a private or public provider that regulates the school staff contracts, administers the curriculum, and establishes the school norms and regulations. The state discontinued the direct administration of the schools. In the case of the public sector, more than 300 municipalities took over the administration of the elementary and high schools in a process that began in 1979 and ended in 1987 (Inzunza 2009; Donoso 2013). This transfer entailed the loss of capacities and influence of the Ministry of Education on the public schools and a growing inequality among the municipalities, including work conditions, preparation of the local staff, teacher salary, and financial and equipment support.

The private providers received the same state support of public schools under the principle of equality of treatment. This has implied the dissolution of the concept of public good, giving rise to a public–private amalgam (Ruiz 2010). Now, private subsidized schools were considered part of the public system due to the financial state support and free of major accountability.

### ***A new model of financial administration***

In 1955, Milton Friedman presented a theoretical model for a change in the administrative framework of public services. Friedman hoped to create conditions for competitiveness among different providers, not distinguishing between public and private schools. Families were to receive a voucher to decide where to use it in accordance with the concept of school choice (Cox 2005).

The Chilean model did not exactly follow the idea of Milton Friedman. The voucher was directly given to the schools, not to the families, based on student enrollment and daily attendance (Donoso 2013). In the 1980s, the expenditure in education decreased from 27% between 1982 and 1990. The voucher plunged, reaching a critical situation for most of the public schools.

### ***A system of standardization***

From a neoliberal perspective, school choice is only possible if there is information available to compare school performance. Education is progressively defined as a commodity, and high-stakes testing is one of the most important instruments to achieve this goal. In this

way, Chile became one of the first countries in Latin America to develop an instrument to measure student performance on a large scale.

The Chilean System of Quality Measurement (Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación [SIMCE]) was born at the end of the dictatorship (1988) through a public–private agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Pontifical Catholic University. This association enabled the conformation of a critical mass to implement not only the evaluation system in Chile but also several in Latin America (Campos-Martínez, Corbalán, and Inzunza 2015). The SIMCE incorporated a battery of tests to measure student performance in Spanish, mathematics, and science.

### ***A regulatory framework***

All of these components described, including displacement of the right to education, municipalization, privatization, the voucher system, and standardization, were integrated into a new law enacted in 1990, known as the Constitutional Organic Law of Education (LOCE). In this law, these components were articulated to consolidate the subsidiary role of the state (Bellei and Cabalin 2013), reinforcing the role of families in school choice. The LOCE avoided the participation of educational actors in the regulation of the different levels of the educational system and affirmed the necessity of developing high-stakes tests. The constitutional rank of this law implied the need for a high percentage of approval to change it. This law endured almost four democratic governments (1990–2009).

### **Legitimation of neoliberal policies through consensus and reorganization**

The final assessment of the implementation of the neoliberal policies as a whole has left serious deficiencies. The public educational system suffered a great decline in disinvestment and abandonment of state responsibility. The municipalities were pushed to compete but survive with minimal assistance. In this context, the new democratic governments in the 1990s established five axes of their educational reform (García-Huidobro 2000; Cox 2005): augmentation of public expenditure in education; development of a curricular reform; establishment of the full school day; implementation of equity and quality programs; and launching of professional development initiatives. To establish an outline for policy-making, the new authorities constituted a technical team in the Ministry of Education that introduced measures to balance two objectives: minimizing the inequity and increasing the quality of the K–12 system outcomes. While the government introduced measures of support through affirmative action policies, greater economic investment in school buildings, and increases in the voucher value, it deployed a competition system to develop pedagogical projects and progressively placed the SIMCE at the core of the policy assessment (Inzunza 2009).

The different governments promoted a policy of consensus; however, not all sectors were invited to participate in these agreements. The participation of the Chilean Teachers Union and students' representative bodies in these entities was minimal.

The Ministry of Education assumed a coordination role in policy-making, definitively leaving its historical role of conduction developed during the twentieth century. The technical support of the World Bank legitimized the development of this hybrid model by which the neoliberal framework operated behind the great discourse of educational reform. The World Bank implemented four improvement plans (1990–2004), enthusiastically disseminating the Chilean policies.

In the 2000s, the policies for quality improvement took a pivotal position at the expense of equality initiatives, such as the programs of affirmative action. These policies brought forward accountability initiatives through pressure over the schools. High-stakes standardized tests remained the main instruments of evaluation for the different levels of the educational system. This context of apparent success burst with the mobilization of high school students in 2006.

### High school students in rebellion against inequality

It is not accidental that in Lota, a small mining city located 538 kilometers south of Santiago, one of the greatest student movements in Chilean history erupted. On 25 April 2006, the students of Carlos Cousiño High School took over the school in protest against the broken water filtrations and electric cables without protection. The poor infrastructure of this high school was similar to several other marginalized schools from the capital city's periphery. At the same time, the rise in fees of the university entrance examination and restrictions of the transportation benefits triggered the massive activation of the students.

The Chilean student organizations have a historic trajectory of struggles to obtain rights during the twentieth century. They reached full bloom during the Socialist government of Salvador Allende (1970–1973) and struck against the dictatorship especially in the decade of 1980 (OPECH 2009). Student organizations decided to call for a national mobilization that took the shape of school occupations, strikes, demonstrations, and building occupations of the Ministry of Education, political parties, and the UNESCO headquarters. Rapidly, the movement conquered the sympathy of different social organizations and the general population (Tome 2015).

The first national demands were soon expanded to structural aspects of the educational system (Larrabure and Torchia 2015). The students questioned the axes and implementation of educational reform, including the core of the neoliberal framework inherited from the dictatorship, consisting of the demand for free education, rejection of for-profit educational providers, defense of public education, and elimination of schools' discriminatory practices (Bellei and Cabalin 2013). Later, the students visualized a major objective: the elimination of the municipalization and the repeal of the LOCE (Herrera 2010; Cornejo et al. 2010). After two months, more than 80% of the high schools in the country were mobilized and resisting the government's attempt to deny or minimize the strong criticism, or simply repress it with police actions on the streets and the occupied schools. Finally, for the first time in the democratic government after the dictatorship, the government decided to open a large council that officially considered the participation of the student movement.

Since this year, the so-called *movimiento secundario*, or the high school student movement, has been a relevant political actor in the public sphere in placing the subjects of education, equality, and justice on the official political agenda. Political authorities, policy-makers, and the press disqualified the students as valid interlocutors to discuss policies. One of the spokespeople for this young generation described this situation as a social contradiction and disputes that:

Clashed with the established adult centered structures that segregate, defining age barriers for youth participation or placement in an unequal position. The common argument is that 'your initial social formation' is incomplete and not fulfilling the necessary canons to present

in a public tribune to give a rational opinion. Least of all, they say that we haven't got the experience (understood as time), in the eyes of common sense, to justify a solid criticism. (Herrera 2010, 239–240)

The occupied schools gave students an opportunity for self-government and auto-regulation, challenging the official order and promoting self-education in politics (Colectivo Diatriba-OPECH/Centro Alerta 2012; González, Sánchez, and Sobarzo 2011). One of the leaders from a school from the south of Chile noted:

The informal education, the self-education, was a great learning opportunity for the secondary movement. How is it possible that these learning processes occurred? We felt the fear, because at any moment the police and their repression could arrive. In addition, we had precarious conditions, we knew that the high schools were not the most comfortable places to sleep and eat. How is possible that youth learn more on how to critique, analyze, argue, in a occupied school than in any classes of philosophy and history? (Aranda 2009)

Tensions were not just derived from the fact that students were adolescents but also because a great percentage of them were part of the lower and middle class and because part of the leadership was female. The student movement managed to shake the status quo of 26 years, causing the political agenda of education to become one of the most important axes of public discussion from then until today in Chile. The student movement was also validated as a political interlocutor.

## **Reshaping the neoliberal frame: the elite negotiation**

The commission convened by the president, known as the Presidential Advisory Council for Quality of Education, worked until the end of 2006. The students, teachers, and parents participating in this council articulated the Social Bloc that built proposals to install ideas for the educational transformation.

However, the action of policy-maker representatives of the right wing and the government converged on a common cause: the proposal of a small reform to the neoliberal model (OPECH 2007), leaving out the discussion on vouchers, competition logic, profit in education, and standardization. Some weeks before the final report of the council, the Social Bloc quit the council, arguing that the final report overrepresented the neoliberal sector of the council. The President and the Ministry of Education prepared a new act for education in 2007 that was later reshaped with the right-wing parties and signified the commitment of four new laws. The president celebrated this political accord saying:

The Government has seen a real opportunity in the issues raised by the student movement last year to advance in effective agreements to achieve not just quality education but more equitable education as well. (Mensaje N° 216-355 2007, 3).

The policy-making arena restored the old format to negotiate the new laws, neglecting again the participation of the student movements and teacher organizations. Between 2008 and 2011, Congress passed four laws that together structured a new regulatory framework of Chilean education (Assaél et al. 2015), derogating the LOCE. These regulations were as follows:



- The Preferential School Subsidy Act (Ley N° 20.248, 2008) that introduced economic incentives to the public or private schools to serve socioeconomically vulnerable students.
- The General Education Act (Ley N°20.370, 2009) that established an ensemble of new regulations toward the promotion of quality of learning.
- The Quality and Equity Act (Ley N°20.501, 2011) that sought the adjustment of the Teaching Statutes in place since 1991.
- The K–12 Quality Assurance (Ley N°20.529, 2011) that creates institutions to determine the educational standards and modalities of scrutiny on them. These institutions are the National Council of Education and the Quality Agency and Superintendents of Education.

Paradoxically, the allocation of more economic resources has not meant an improvement for the most impoverished schools in the system. This new regulatory framework fostered competition and performance mechanisms of privatization through external agencies of intervention, standardization, examination, and accountability through high-stakes standardized tests (Carrasco 2013; Assaél et al. 2011). These elements are described as the second wave of educational reforms, which generated uniformity and inequity, and thus negatively impacted teacher motivation and student learning (Shirley et al. 2013; Hargreaves and Shirley 2009). With this new framework, the learning measurement was placed at the forefront of the educational policy, reinforcing performance on the SIMCE as the main indicator of educational progress (Campos-Martínez, Corbalán, and Inzunza 2015). The accountability system implemented in accordance with these laws implied that the new Quality Agency ought to determine and enforce the standards for the SIMCE. Not accomplishing these standards could result in the loss of professional and management autonomy or shut down of the schools. This regulation drove to consolidate a market of external inspection and technical assistance, processes known as endo-privatization (Ball and Youdell 2007); in other words, processes that sought the introduction of private management logics into public education.

The schools as a workplace became even harsher environments for teachers. The individual responsibility for test results through teacher evaluation introduced hiring flexibility and salary incentives. It should be noted that neoliberal policies relied on subjectivity that became a battle zone for teachers that involved engagement and refusal (Ball 2016). Paradoxically, Chile became the only country in the world to boast new public management policies in education with the declared intention to de-commercialize school education (Verger and Normand 2015).

### **Students without fear: the educational market in the spotlight**

The conservative counteroffensive reconquered its dominant spot in the policy-making arena bolstering these new reforms. The triumph of Sebastian Piñera, the right-wing candidate in the presidential election of 2010, represented a confirmation of this new neoliberal conservative momentum.

In 2011, the main student college unions in Chile conducted a large protest that lasted seven months, aiming to demand free education for all from kindergarten to college, since Chilean families were financing 73% of higher education costs (Bellei and Cabalin 2013). Free college ended in Chile during the dictatorship, opening a prosperous market for private individuals, even if profit was not legally allowed. This occurred mainly in the form of

building leases (Monckeberg 2007) and underfunding or privatizing of public higher education.

In these national and comprehensive protests, the students coordinated with the teachers' union, high school student organizations, worker unions, and others. The list of demands included changes in the admission process to higher education institutions, strengthening of the public universities, and a new system of public funding for higher education (Abarca and Becker 2011; Bellei and Cabalin 2013; Cornejo et al. 2015). During the Chilean Winter more than 17 universities and 600 high schools were occupied by their students.

In our analysis, we can draw a line of continuity between the mobilizations of 2006 and 2011 not just in objectives but also in the consolidation of a way of understanding democracy and participation. One student involved in a self-management education project in the city of Valparaiso said: 'This has to do with empowering the educational process and raising our education project ... free, supportive, egalitarian, but above all, liberating, critical and transforming in nature' (Colectivo Diatriba-OPECH/Centro Alerta 2012, 132).

Formal organizations, such as student councils and federations, lost their regular definition as representative entities. Assemblies in occupied colleges and schools were the main participatory structure. Students determined their participation in the local and national mobilizations that were fostered thanks to social media tools. This perspective challenged the marginal role of students and communities in the policy-making processes and regular higher education government. The protests included marches, gatherings, and the banging of pots and pans, leaving room for creative manifestations, such as flash mobs, concerts, batucadas, races, street classes, large-scale kiss-ins, pillow fights, and massive theatrical performances (Rowe 2017) and sustained monthly marches for more than one year.

The impact of this movement was inspirational for the student movements in Colombia, Brazil, and Mexico. The student protests revealed and questioned the inherent contradictions of the government and its relationship with the educational market. As an example, at the same time that Joaquin Lavín was the Minister of Education he was also a shareholder of the Universidad del Desarrollo, one of the most conservative private universities of the country. Three months after the beginning of the mobilizations, Lavín was replaced (Bellei, Cabalin, and Orellana 2014).

### **The new agenda: the student demands in translation**

In the new presidential elections of 2013, education was one of the most important policy matters in debate. The coalition center-left, in opposition to President Piñera, took several students' struggles to call for the young and progressive vote. The former President Michelle Bachelet, the candidate of this coalition, won the election and committed herself to end the paradigm of education as a consumer good and the dominance of the market. With this aim, the government approved several law projects: the Educational Inclusion Act No. 20.845 (Ley N° 20.845 2015); the Professional Development System Act No. 20.903 (Ley No 20.903 2016); the Public Education System Act No. 21.040 (2017); and the proposed legislation for a higher education reform that considered a system of regulation and an act for state universities.

This legislation advanced in the direction of the students' demands. At the level of K-12 education, conditions allowed the private schools to receive public funding: ending copayment charged to families, non-selection of students, and establishing no profit with public

funds. Private schools that wanted to receive public funds had to change their legal status to define themselves as non-profit institutions. These schools received more subsidies from the state to compensate for not charging the families. Furthermore, the principle of non-selection sought to guard against social-economic discrimination. The new regulation determined the end of the municipalities as administrators of education.

The field of teaching experienced important changes: training institutions had to meet the highest standards, the installation of an induction system for new teachers, the augmentation of non-teaching hours in the schools, and the establishment of an evaluation and teacher categorization system associated with salary consequences (*Campaña por una nueva carrera docente* 2015; OPECH 2015).

Even though this legislation recovered old struggles, not just from the student movement but also from the Chilean Teacher Union, it remains a series of elements that are at the core of the neoliberal framework. The financial structure does not eliminate the voucher system. The principle of equity of treatment for public and private institutions implies that the new funding for education will transfer in a great percentage to the private sector. Private schools could still select students arguing historically good performance in state high-stakes standardized testing, which would be the only exception to the application of the law. Regarding the teachers' situation, the Chilean Teacher Union, along with federations and student pedagogy unions, structured a campaign known as the Campaign for a New Teacher Career that criticized these policies, indicating:

We face legislation with the system of professional teacher development that consolidates an accountability model of management into the schools. Schools are defined as enterprises where the principal is no longer a pedagogical leader but rather a manager. [...] Teachers guide students to seek the expected outcomes: standardized testing scores. (*Campaña por una nueva carrera docente* 2015, 102)

The limits of influence of the social movement for public education in Chile are probably found in the post-dictatorship, sociopolitical structure. The analysis by Weyland (2004) helps to explain this point when affirming that the quality of democracy in the countries that implemented a drastic market reform in Latin America has deteriorated. This situation, added Weyland, facilitates the pre-eminence of elite sectors in positions of power, marginalizing intermediate participation organizations. In this perspective, the voice of the student movement would not have effective channels to promote profound transformations of the educational system.

### **The ongoing consequences of the market school model**

The social movements for education in Chile have been effective in situating education as one of the main public concerns. The struggle of the students in the streets and schools made the executive and legislative power prioritize education. The think tanks of the conservative and progressive parties have had to stop thinking about educational policies as a non-debatable area to try to generate proposals that meet social demands. This ambition is stressed by electoral aspirations and political-economic interests of groups related to the educational market. In this section, we will examine data from the Chilean educational system since 1981 and the extent to which social protest has or has not changed the course of trends in the installation of neoliberal policies.

### **The extreme privatization of school enrollment**

One of the first and clearest consequences of the model has been the systemic fall of school enrollment in public schools (municipal) (Assaél et al. 2011). In 2007, one year after the high school revolution, 62 public schools were closed. This created a loss of 73,116 students, while 157 private subsidized schools were added, creating a gain of 29,889 students. It is important to note that the mobilizations failed to stop the privatizing trend of the system. The year 2007 marks a milestone in Chilean education, since the total number of students in the private subsidized system exceeded the enrollment in public schools with 55,344 students. In 2012, one year after the university mobilizations, the difference in favor of private education reached 527,285 students. That year, 66 public schools were closed, while another 209 private schools were opened (Centro de Estudios del MINEDUC 2013). In summary, between 1981 and 2016, the enrollment in public schools fell from 78% of the total school enrollment to 35%, which goes hand in hand with the increase in enrollment in private subsidized schools during the same period from 15% to 54%. These figures place Chile as the country with the least public school education in Latin America. The average of the OECD countries is 90%, leaving Chile among the most privatized countries in the world.

### **Socioeducational segmentation**

A phenomenon linked to educational inequality is the unequal distribution among schools of children with different social, cultural, and economic characteristics, creating 'educational ghettos.' In fact, the OECD (2004, 277) noted that in Chile, 'the educational system is consciously structured by classes.' Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds study mainly in municipal schools, and students from middle or lower middle socioeconomic levels attend private subsidized schools (see Table 1).

This socioeducational segmentation significantly exceeds the existing socioeconomic segmentation in different neighborhoods throughout the country (Valenzuela, Bellei, and De Los Ríos 2010; OECD 2015). The consequences of this segmentation for the country are evident: the school stops fulfilling its historical socializing and civic function, the effect of peers on school learning is stalled, and the public imagination has been increasingly associated with precariousness (Cornejo et al. 2015). As a consequence, there is a stigmatization of society toward public education.

**Table 1.** Distribution of enrollment according to socioeconomic groups.

Socioeconomic group	Mother's years of education	Monthly income (in Chilean pesos)	% municipal enrollment	% private subsidized enrollment	% private paid enrollment
A: low	7	119,000	80.0	20.0	0
B: low middle	9	180,000	79.3	20.7	0
C: middle	11	331,000	38.2	61.8	0
D: upper middle	13	738,000	10.5	89.5	0
E: upper	16	1,526,000	0	12.0	88.0

Source: Centro de Estudios del Mineduc (2013).

### ***Increasing transfer of public funds to private actors***

The transfer of public funds has been a constant and growing trend since 1981. In 2015, it was observed that 45% of public funds were delivered to the municipalities, while the rest was given to the private school sector. Particularly striking will be the significant increase in public funds transferred to private funds in connection with the Inclusion Law. This law proposes to gradually eliminate the payment of families in school education and replace it with monies contributed directly by the state. While the municipal schools received \$444 million, the private subsidy schools started to receive \$2500 million (information retrieved from Ministry of Education upon the request of Sebastian Ligueno in 2015, OPECH). In this perspective, the state has deepened the system of vouchers or subsidy to the demand without distinction of the property of the holder that receives this subsidy as well as various state incentives to private education, such as contributions for infrastructure, communication campaigns linked to the SIMCE test scores, authorization for families to be charged, and donations with a tax discount. It is important to point out that this is a misleading concept of 'equal treatment' between schools, since municipal schools must assume a higher cost to educate poorer students and meet broader social objectives.

### ***Consolidation of the 'freedom of teaching' as freedom of choice and freedom of enterprise***

The defense of liberty to establish and organize schools under the right of entrepreneurship has been established as the central argument of the various attempts at school reform. Particularly strong was the appeal to this argument by the government itself during the debates generated around the Law of Educational Inclusion. This has allowed the extreme commercialization of education reflected even in the sale of private schools with newspaper adverts.

### ***The construction of new educational markets***

One of the consequences of social movements for education that started in 2006 has been the loss of prestige of some commercial concepts and practices, the main one of which was profit in education and with public money. However, it is possible to verify that, in many of the legal reform initiatives, new spaces of educational markets are opened, such as educational technical aids, teacher evaluation, food and cafeterias, and teacher training and certifications.

### ***An educational debate co-opted by the interest groups***

A central characteristic of the educational debate of these years has been the influence of student organizations, teachers, and representatives. A series of organizations that have called themselves part of civil society have entered the debate. They are financed and supported by various interest groups and large capital sectors in the country. Enseña Chile y Elige Educar are two examples of these groups, and they are financed by banks and insurance companies, petroleum enterprises, bottling companies, logging companies, and communication corporations. A special case is Educación 2020, founded by non-educational

'experts' (mainly engineers and economists). This foundation has reached a great media visibility, to such a point that during the last Bachelet government, two of its members became the secretary and subsecretary of the Ministry of Education. Educación 2020 participates in Red Latinoamericana por la Educación (REDUCA), an international network that promotes the involvement of entrepreneurs in the generation of educational policies in Latin America (Moreira Martins 2013). These new entities are an expression of a reorganization of conservative and neoliberal political and economic forces to pressure pro-private education positions.

## Conclusion

The action of social movements for public education has undoubtedly allowed the installation of issues previously non-existent in the Chilean educational debate: the need to strengthen public education, the rejection of profit in education, tuition-free schools, participation, and comprehensive education. Several spokespeople of the student movement have run in political elections since 2013, gaining a growing participation in the representative system. At the same time, some universities and think tanks have generated research, policy analysis, and proposals for the transformation of the education system. The student movement is still mobilized around the demands for a quality public education and has been seen as skeptical and distrustful of the agreements of the political parties around the new legislation.

Nevertheless, the political and economic elite, or at least a majority sector of it, has demonstrated a great capacity to appropriate these social demands, and, particularly after the mobilizations of 2006, strengthened the commercial model and increased privatization. It has also become clear that the interests of the educational market transcend, by far, the traditional political organizations of the right. In almost all of the parties of the center-left governments of the post-dictatorship, there are militants and sectors of power with ownership interests over elementary and secondary schools, training centers, and private universities. For a better understanding of these aspects, it is necessary to carry out further research on the dynamics of elite reorganization in order to defend self-interests, which ultimately limit the scope of progress in student change proposals.

By following the current debates within the social movements for education, it is obvious that at least two major historical challenges remain unresolved. The first challenge is the complex understanding of all aspects involved in the processes of educational privatization, which become more complex after the installation of endo-privatization or the covert privatization phenomena. As some social leaders have pointed out, not all of the sectors that reject the mercantile model have the same analysis regarding the vast process of endo-privatization that has been experienced in Chile (González 2016). Secondly, there is a lack of clarity that many educational actors recognize, regarding what it means to strengthen public education and regarding the very conception of the public in education. There are sectors that believe public education is strengthened by increasing individual rights and regulating the functioning of private institutions (Atria 2014). There are sectors that consider the strengthening and expansion of the state in their coverage of enrollment, financing, and management training as an indispensable step to strengthen public education. Likewise, there is a debate regarding the form that the relationship between the state and the educational communities should take in this strengthening process (ACES 2011). These are

fundamental problems that are of a historical nature, in which ‘the reconstruction of the public requires a high dose of collective creativity in the struggle of social movements, through permanent and far-reaching work’ (OPECH 2014, 2).

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