

Chapter 28

Public Education Policies in Chile: Tensions and Conflicts in the Ongoing Reforms

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28.1 Introduction

Education has been a matter of increasing relevance for Chilean society, to the extent that today it is an unavoidable topic of public discussion. The reforms of the education sector, which started in 2014 under the new State administration, took into consideration – nominally, at least – an important part of the social movements' demands from the year 2006 and those from 2011, which efficiently catalyzed the discontent of the population with the sociopolitical model imposed by the dictatorship at the beginning of the 1980s, which was administered without sufficient corrections by the democratic governments that followed (Concert of Parties for Democracy, 1990–2009, and Alliance for Chile, 2010–2013), the first of such coalitions a center left, the second clearly a right wing.

The social covenant in force during this democratic quarter of a century (1990–2015) faced an enormous crisis, impossible to measure in its full extent, as a result of the neoliberal model that, in its most significant scopes, has increased the social inequality and inequity, involving education within this dissatisfaction, because it has not had the prescribed impact on the class mobility of the population. Thus, the imbalance between public and private education have deepened even in democracy, alongside the progress of social differences, which are also reflected in the growing gaps between urban and rural education, accounting for a structural phenomenon of inequalities of high complexity.

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Education has been the catalyst agent for the large social dissatisfaction, which has a wide variety of expressions. Nonetheless and despite the manifest crisis, education continues being for many the great hope of reaching a better quality of life in the near future – sufficient reason to explain its importance.

The student movement of 2006 put educational issues on the public agenda, achieving an important presence in Chilean politics. Another turning point was the big student movement of 2011, which resumed and deepened the previous movement's demands, many of which were fully in force – clear evidence of the public education crisis, extending the phenomenon to a crisis of the whole social system and exceeding the education sphere, although education remains the binding element.

The presidential campaign of 2013 and, as a consequence of that, the government's shift in focus from 2014, renders an account of a society that is looking for significant transformations, one of which is education. Nevertheless, there are different views on the depth and meaning of such a shift in focus. Essentially, the dilemma is either to maintain, with corrections, the market model in the Chilean society or, alternatively, introduce major transformations oriented at assuming it as a social right, implicitly demanding the installation of a new paradigm in this regard. The political debates on Chilean education during this decade have revolved around these aspects, with nuances and incidences that make the phenomenon analyzed a significant case study.

Essentially these reflect an issue in which at least three components can be identified. One, the understanding that it is not by chance that the problem has reached its present state, but that it is the consequence of a sociopolitical model that requires the market to reach, precisely, the results that have been achieved. Second, the system has reached a critical point, consistent with the weaknesses shown by the social covenant governance, that requires strategic decisions, paths which imply completely different impacts when intending to correct the market or, finally, to withdraw education from the market and treat it as a social right. Three, this disjunctive renders accounts of different content, for which there are different analyses and proposals, not completely accomplished and consistent, highlighting the role of the State, the meaning of public education and the freedom of teaching, among others.

The chapter is built from the tensions of Chilean society originating in the disjunctive orientations of the transformations of the educational sector, contextualizing them within the framework of the principal social conflicts that currently find expression. The text is sustained by the bibliographical analysis of the subject matter whose organization requires the central conflict of the tensions, the dominant logics of the proposals being discussed, and analyzing the views directed to regulate the market as well as those seeking to replace it sustained on the social right, in order to, finally, associate these matters with the theoretical challenges that burden education in its disciplinary development, but conceived of in their capability to solve the problems of the sector.

28.2 The Conflict: Adjustments of the Market Model or a New Paradigm in Education?

The student movements of 2006 and 2011 are unavoidable benchmarks in the analysis of educational policy and even more so for public education. Their ambitions and dimensions are the subject of study. Although the analysis of the trajectory of the main themes of Chilean educational policy can be referenced to the beginning of the present millennium, the social crisis of 2006 clearly exemplifies the end of what Burton (2012) called the period of “limited representation,” characterized by the hegemonic paradigm operating without counterbalance and the weaknesses of the social movements, which presents itself in the post dictatorship political model as “a total suitability between the forms of the State and the state of the social relationships” (Ranci ere 1996: p. 129), also defined by others as the unfinished transition toward democracy and its effects (Garret on y Garret on 2010).

The students’ mobilizations in 2006 broke with what had been a situation of full agreement between the groups of dominant power in society, essentially political/economical, creating as an institutional response (by the executive) the Presidential Advisory Council for the Quality of Education, whose final report (2006) presents fundamental elements to understand the recent past (since 1980) as well as current events; summarizing for Corval an (2013), the convergence of great part of “the accounts” about the educational problem include the statist-centre, the market, and the attempt to synthesize both, incarnated by the Concert’s policies. Elements of continuity are discussed within the Advisory Council – education as an instrument of equality in unequal societies, the State’s responsibility in the provision of access to education and for educational content – and also those of the changes, representing rupture and innovations such as the self-limitation of State action as provider, the cession of attributions to private actors, and the profit. Large scale transformations are also mentioned, namely: the redefinition of the relationship between the State and society regarding the provision of education, through the transfer of an institution based on the central State to the market mechanism, and the transition of the fiscal to the municipal (Corval an 2013).

The year 2006, then, constitutes the “deliberation stage” of Chilean education policy (Burton 2012), the turning point that opened the space for the “restricted representation” phase (from 2007 to the present), understood as a manifest expression of the simmering tensions which had not been recognized nor resolved before the mentioned Council (2006), during the “agreements democracy” that neutralized the existing tensions and kept political and social stability. Such tensions, expressed with renewed spirit, divided the political coalitions and social groups, on the basis of three areas which have been the source of conflict: the profit in education, the (re) definition of the role of the State, and selectivity/segregation within the educational system. Areas linked with free education (including the tertiary), were strongly upheld by the social movement of 2011.

The relevance of both social processes and their progressive impact on the political agenda of the governments since then offer glimpses that they were major transformations and may reach paradigmatic traces as education – since 2006 – became the binding element of unfinished social processes, drawing most of the public attention.

The social movement on education of 2011 questioned the market as the best organizer of the educational system. Its evolution severely undermined the market operation, but it was not enough to replace it as coordinator of new social relations. The fact that education is considered merchandise in Chile and as such is distributed according to the rules of the market is a much more difficult problem to tackle than was originally expected. It was not enough to expose the market in its pattern of relations, as it is an intricate network of social phenomena with diverse holds on political, economic, religious, and philosophical enclaves built on more than three decades of hegemonic operation. It also has an ideological/explanatory framework that protects it – until now – from the reformist brunt, including some attempts that took place in democracy, quite convincing at the beginning, and more testimonial afterwards.¹

The increasing criticisms against the market, intended to change the paradigm under which to organize and distribute education, implied that those upholding neoliberalism no longer defended the market as a guarantor of efficiency and freedom, sustaining, on the contrary, that Chilean education does not operate as the market, sheltered in the constitutional articles which regard education as a right (Article 19, N°10). Society (the State) provides education to those that cannot or are not willing to pay for it, which would be proof enough to demonstrate that it does not operate as the market. This reasoning is incorrect for its occurrence is not only politically unacceptable (those who cannot pay are left without education), but it is also at odds with a democratic society. Secondly, the fact that the State offers a basic level does not imply that those pursuing a better quality must not pay for it. On the contrary, in the educational market different “qualities of education” are traded. This means that when one pays a higher price one should get a better quality of education, which is being questioned and for which the defenders of the market do not have an answer other than the one mentioned.

Conservative groups saying “that public education is poor quality education,” sustain that changing the provision of education is not the problem, but improving the quality of free education. The neoliberal argument omits the fact that if there were no different qualities of education for which families could pay, the market would make no sense. For private education to be attractive to investors, and families to opt for paying, it is necessary to provide a low quality public education for the poor. In view of the foregoing, the dilemma takes two aspects (Sandel 2012): Can different criteria apply to the “market” for a society to distribute education?

¹ The more convincing attempts at change took place in the 1990s, with the unsuccessful attempt to change the Constitutional Organic Law on Teaching (LOCE). Those we called “testimonial” correspond to the draft bill on Strengthening Public Education from the year 2006, which had virtually no parliamentary discussion and was finally withdrawn from Parliament.

What would such criteria be? Knowing Chile represents an extreme situation in which the market distributes virtually all goods.

Within this context, in view of the demands being discussed and their incidence in the political agenda, it was possible to believe an important social change stemming from education was approaching. It would involve a paradigmatic transformation of the Chilean State, sustained in the generation by a new bond between the citizens and the State drawn from basic social rights.

In the meantime, the conservative argument in this matter was changing – point at an issue not entirely foreseen by the social movement in the euphoric days of 2011 – thus demonstrating that neoliberalism was far from “extinction,” doing away with all libertarian slogans as long as it was useful to the objective of saving the market at all costs, as its “deconstruction” is more complex than its construction. The situation gets even more complex when intending to install this transformation only from the education perspective, relevant though it is. Additionally, the market requires few and simple principles to operate, yet its replacement implies a much more elaborate and complex pattern to function. It needs precision and clarification at a higher level than just a political agreement on basic principles (as was the government programme of the current State administration – Bachelet, M. Programa de Gobierno, 2013), expressed on the slogans of the social movements in reference, though not enough to guide its implementation.

Finally, it is essential to recognize that in these decades neoliberalism positioned itself in such a way that there are people ready to defend the education market and demand “the right to pay for education,” which became “a discrimination tax” charged by the school to the families (guaranteeing the selection of the students), to ensure their offspring share just with “equals”, because in Chile the educational results for all the population have been proved beyond any doubt to be linked to the socioeconomic contribution, parallel to the insignificant difference of contribution paid in the subsidized private education over the public (Drago and Paredes 2011) and the low added value of the schools (Treviño and Donoso 2010). That is why it is so important for private schools and for families who ascribe it to this model, that there certainly is the possibility to select students.

In spite of the debates that have taken place, it is evident that discrediting the market was not enough to provoke its collapse. In Chile, after decades of supreme operation, the market is validated for many citizens that only know this rationale. Expected actors have come forward to defend it (laity and religious businessmen, politicians and private sector leaders) as well as unexpected actors, namely, some families from what has been denominated as “the new (social) emerging sectors” demanding their right to pay for education. They demand the possibility to buy education in the market, affirming that their interest does not lie in a system that guarantees a free better education. They want to make sure themselves, as they do not trust the State nor society: do the best you can, it is therefore the great success of neoliberalism.

The critics from the 2006 and 2011 movements to the prevailing model did not reach the degree of strength and coordination required to disjoint the networks of power built by neoliberalism. Their weaknesses as a social movement started when

they concentrated their demands in the field of education² (Oct/Nov 2011), assuming that “all reforms would gather” around it, which was not the case, as demonstrated by the development of the political events from 2014 to date (mid 2015). In this last period, there has been a switch in the language and content between the first and the rest of the announcements from the Government, each time looking for greater consensus from the groups of power and less reference to the initial slogans of the social movements.³

In the meantime, it is clear that the thematic links between the political parties and the social movement were devised in order to adapt the model rather than change it, integrating different social actors without having previously set up a project of a society. The education problem was limited to the educational sector, and not open to become a social decision on how to distribute the assumed public goods (Sandel 2012; Roemer 2000). Within this framework, the major social changes have been hampered. This added to the conservative’s argument, to avoid that the public education solution calls into question the market’s existence, and evidenced the legitimacy reached by neoliberalism in the daily behavior (conscience) of the people (Solano 1999). It looks like the major change – in case of indeed being the desire of the majority of the population –, is in question, until other issues are solved – amongst them the ongoing reforms and the key players’ actions in this regard.

28.3 Tensions: The Logic of the Change in Strategy

The debates about strengthening public education, it is understood, imply first defining the sense of the transformations, and then determining measures and strategies to implement it. The Chilean case does not follow this itinerary, this being perhaps a distinctive feature of the logic behind its installation. Rather, there is a mixture of political timing and the viability of certain changes, without a serious discussion of the subject. They explicitly expect to reform the market, correcting its main imbalances or making a change in the paradigm of the State, as this issue implies important decisions for the government alliance they may not face, without an important burnout cost, questioning the change in paradigm, thus causing new social unrest.

The improvement of the market attracts – initially – less tension in different sectors of the ruling powers, whereas the change in paradigm undoubtedly generates more uncertainty. The improvement is simpler to implement – deepen some

²Some specialists indicate, without necessarily having an empirical base to endorse it, that the new middle layers of Chilean society is moved by two themes: consumption and education. That would indicate belonging to the “new middle class”.

³An example of this were the initial announcements, in view of their negative to adopt reforms on profit control, about the Government purchasing private schools, which yield to pressures and was changed by a rental system and finally by a leasing system as a formula to amortize resources, all that in a 6 months period.

corrective measures to the subsidies with emphasis on the public institutions' leveling on the socioeconomic components of the population and their impact on the educational service, and adding some regulations for the private sector.

As indicated, the change in paradigm means conceiving education as a social right, which implies providing it under the sole reason of "being a citizen," namely: a person with equal rights to his peers. This is what the defenders of the market do not accept because it means its disappearance. Under the paradigm of social rights, this is a public issue, because everyone has the right to the same prerogatives. The system should organize itself to fulfill this function based on "society's wealth," expressed by the financial resources that it is capable of assigning to this task (Atria 2014).

This issue with all its nuances has not been discussed in a public debate. Although, the Government has boosted corrective initiatives to the market, directed to the private sector that receives public funding, achieving certain important changes in their behavior, leading to the passing of the Law of Educational Inclusion in January 2015, that partly regulates profits, copayment and the students' selection processes, and as a second line of proposed reforms for 2015–2016, deals directly with strengthening public education.

28.3.1 The Corrective Proposals to the "Market Model" at School Level

The orientation within this field is related to the private sector that receives public funding, which has large enrollment coverage (54 %) in Chile (Mineduc 2013). The debate in this case is not whether the private sector should exist; any attempt to put it under State control would be politically unfeasible. Furthermore, that is not the central problem: the main issue is that education is not distributed according to the rules of the market. So the idea is to fill the lack of measures that allow regulating the private providers of education with public resources, also matching their rights and duties with those of public education.

The discussion is not either on freedom of education and/or on the educational projects of private institutions, as has been stated by some defenders of the market. Freedom of education in Chile means not all the education is to be provided by the State. But, that does not mean that anything can be taught under any standard. Freedom of education must consider the educational projects of the (civil) society in their different expression, as long as they are consistent with the project of the society (Atria 2014). This is not the problem today, to insist that contributes to deflecting attention from the fact that education operates according to market criteria. The objective of the reviewed changes is to restructure the Chilean educational system, for education to cease being a commodity and become an effective right of all the citizens.

Beyond the programme proposal of the present Government – which essentially talks of changes rather than reforms, although it is referred to as one of the great reforms (MB Programme 2013) – the first law drafts deal with the debated issues and are mainly related to the privates: free schooling, understood as ending family copayment; stopping students' selection processes and ending profit-making by educational entrepreneurs, expressed finally in the Law of Inclusion of January 2015.

The principle of free schooling⁴ is closely related to equity in regards to access as well as to the educational processes, and it must be understood in terms of those objectives. In the Chilean case, free schooling is a key principle when viewing education as a social right; it is the way to make equal opportunities a reality. Replacing copayment is based, for the family – not for the educational entrepreneur who will now get his income from the State itself –, on the fact that it ended up being an efficient instrument of students selection, thus increasing discrimination and social exclusion (Valenzuela et al. 2008; Bellei et al. 2013), perverse effects conflicting with the objectives of a democratic society that finances its educational system with public resources. On the other hand, copayment or Shared-Financing⁵ has been a relevant financing instrument for private institutions; that is why the proposal assumes its gradual elimination, considering also public treasury resources. It would also generate positive externalities for the educational entrepreneurs by reducing management costs.

As indicated, its public debate was extremely ideological and, was sometimes regarded by groups from the opposition as an attempt against freedom of education, which as to substance and form is inconsistent with facts and circumstances. Opposition to this initiative from the private business sector is based, more than on its financial impact, on their understanding that in the mid-term private institutions will be forced to accept any student, independent from social condition, which will impact their educational results, leveling them to those of public schools, as a result of the “social mixture” generated by non-selection.

These effects, identified by power groups, influence the activity of private educational leaders gathering their political support to impede copayment elimination. On the other hand, this decision could also have a negative impact in the short term for the public sector, as copayment has been a barrier for the non-migration of students who, willing to move, cannot afford it and have to remain in public education. Eliminating the restriction may produce a migration to the private. In order to reduce this effect it is necessary to strengthen public education in the short term.

In view of the foregoing, the principle of free schooling is closely related to equity of access and of educational processes, central scopes in the Chilean case, because the universal coverage achieved – with the exceptions indicated – does not imply equity in the educational processes. Therefore, this is an important issue to address, for if there is not quality of education, which implies equity in the pro-

⁴This proposal understands free schooling as the provision of a service paid by the State.

⁵Shared-financing was approved in 1988, but it was corrected upward in 1993, during the first democratic government. It was defined as a copayment mechanism, structured in sections, to which schools apply (mainly privates). It entails a monthly fee per student paid by the family.

cesses, effective equity will not be achieved, with a negative incidence on the most vulnerable population.⁶

Closely related to the above is the student selection, because of its incidence in the social segregation as well as in validating profits made by some businessmen using public resources.⁷ Approved new legislation prohibits student selection up to eighth grade (from a 12-year total). It is known that restrictions have not impeded an important number of private and some public schools to select students, although this was restricted to sixth grade by previous laws.⁸ At some point the Constitutional Organic Law on Teaching (LOCE), in effect from March 1990 to August 2009, facilitated this process for privates though denied it to public schools. The latter is correct, though interesting as it legitimized private selection and avoided an eventual social conflict. An important part of the results achieved by subsidized private schools was the students' social capital, more than the teaching added value provided, the result of less poor students migrating from public schools (Treviño and Donoso 2010; Mizala and Torche 2012).

Student selection through copayment and/or merit reasons, both related to the socioeconomic background of the population, guarantees in the Chilean case better educational results thanks to the decisive effect of the "social cradle." That is why it is essential for private entrepreneurs to maintain, overtly or covertly, the selection criteria operational. Moreover, because it allows private schools, considering their better results, to charge the families an additional amount for taking part, legitimizing profits as a fair earning resulting from efficiency and educational service quality, even though this is not finally generated by the school (Atria 2014; Donoso 2013).

The third line of intervention is profit regulation, a complex criterion to install in a system characterized from the beginning by its deregulation. Although in democracy some subsidies matched their goals, during these years the private educational system, according to its founders expectations, was in fact quantitatively strengthened (enrollment from 15 % to 55 % and the number of schools more than tripled), enabling a significant management of resources, which led to the creation of an important group of business enterprises (Corbalán et al. 2009). Any regulation initiative in this matter is a very complex issue, as shown by the debates in this field. The Government's idea was to do away with figures such as a related company and practices like purchasing or rentals at out-of-market prices, so common in the profit making Chilean higher educational system,⁹ establishing criteria for those items, which has created tension between the government and some business groups.

⁶The review of national examination results (SIMCE) or the international (PISA), evidence processes/results.

⁷Some profit making educational entrepreneurs and educational businesses have been criticized for making profits with public resources, at school as well as at tertiary level, though the latter is forbidden by law.

⁸Selection must apply when there are more applicants than vacancies. The criticism arises as selection is related to the socioeconomic background of students' families, thus there are not real equal opportunities.

⁹www.ciperchile.cl Report on profit in Chilean higher education.

The three matters included in the law that intend to correct the market are substantive items and as such will be basic for major changes, although these require time to come into force. As can be observed, the nature of these measures, the interests at stake, the powers involved and the depth of their incidences evidence the political obstacles contained.

28.3.2 *The Proposed Change in the State Paradigm*

Changing the State paradigm should be the core of the strategy for strengthening public education; however, measures introduced in this area do not seem to be directly binding to the objective, which does not imply judging its importance either, as some of them were crucial to undertake such an enterprise.

As mentioned, strengthening public education requires direct measures to support the sector, some of them urgently, others less pressing, as well as regulating and controlling the private sector with public subsidy. Otherwise public education will not be able to do its job, given the asymmetry of rights/duties with privates. Even if the relative situation of public education may improve once the urgent as well as less pressing measures start to show their effects, including the impacts of the educational inclusion law, in order to consolidate its recovery, it is essential to implement major transformations, difficult though to install without jointly installing the basis for a change in the paradigm of the sector.

Within this framework, an unavoidable and imperative step is to increment directly and substantially the financial resources assigned to public education. The 2014 budget, tied up by the right wing government, allowed only some adjustments, although the 2015 budget made advances. However, indispensable new financial instruments are more fundamental than the present welfare subsidy system for students.¹⁰

These mechanisms must be consistent with education as a social right, that is, fundamental contributions based on the socioeconomic needs of the student population and coherent with educational objectives (OCDE 2004; Donoso 2013).

Secondly, within the unpredictable, it is necessary to provide education with a new organic institution and a normative integrated to the financial reforms, called the new architecture, to take care of “*di-counseling*”¹¹ demands from different sectors and solve structural problems at that level, otherwise the sector’s future may be in jeopardy (Bellei et al. 2010; Cepepe 2011; Elacqua et al. 2010; Eyzaguirre 2012; García-Huidobro 2010; Marcel and Raczynski 2009; Martinic and Elacqua 2010). This is, a true and real strengthening public education proposal (Donoso et al. 2015).

These changes are also an opportunity to decisively advance toward a technical and administrative decentralization of education, shifting attributions from the central

¹⁰ A detailed review of financial instruments, foundations and critical aspects is presented by Donoso (2013) Chapter III, pgs. 87–170.

¹¹ Withdraw school from council administration (translator’s note)

government to regional governments (Finot 2007), generating more autonomous public institutions linked to macro-territories, providing them with corporation governing bodies, technical and managerial capacity and competence to develop long term educational projects, and finances consistent with these goals (Marcel 2012; Bertoglia et al. 2011; Mejías and Anastasio 2008). This task is also a challenge to test the capacity of an excessively centralist country demanding transformations in this field to reach development.¹²

Third, facing project sense transformations, it is necessary to analyze some urgent and substantive matters, even though their impact may be mid to long term, namely:

- (i) Radically modify the teaching training system, considering that beyond determining socioeconomic elements in education, there is an all-inclusive problem of teaching quality in Chile, worsened by a low added value in education that implies facing this strategic problem, whose solution will impact the next decade, which is why it is urgent. This is a State concern, important for different institutional actors, and requires a solid social agreement not yet explicit.
- (ii) A second task is to design a new teaching career and school directive, consistent with the new educational normative, complex objective due to teachers' historical demands. This normative should transcend the public sector and involve privates receiving public subsidies – as used in other countries – this obviously implies a political agreement with private entrepreneurs which does not look easy.

The advantages are considerable for teacher development and stability, with a positive impact on teaching quality and school management. It is, therefore, important to move forward soon with its discussion, in spite of difficulties in their processes and implications at different levels.

On third level transformations, structural type, consistent with the proposed paradigm, should be undertaken at different fronts and matters. On the political front, it is very important that a change of this magnitude be a legitimate answer to the original problem. For this reason there should be a broad social agreement on education, reinforcing the role of the State as a democratic articulator of its citizens, from their weak situation in Chilean society to a new proper role of their social rights demands.

Consistently, a wide constitutional recognition of the right to education is necessary in this area, assigning it top priority and unfailingly committing the State to implementing it as a public law.

In the field of public management, the Chilean State is under-capacitated to efficiently meet the population's demands. The current educational institutions, more fragmented than in the last decade, evidence a patched together design of solutions more than a systemic design. In this scope it shows its weakness as a result of its

¹²In September 2014, an ad hoc commission handed to the government a proposal considering from direct election of political authorities to greater autonomy for the sector. The itinerary would start in 2015, though relevant educational measures are proposed as of 2018.

reduced size and attributions. The present model of the State is not consistent with the support required in this respect by education as a social right.

Likewise, the institutions and the State management processes should adjust to the new design of public education at the subnational level, which needs to articulate itself wisely to avoid further fragmentation and bureaucracy. Along this line, a wider technical and financial autonomy would be a strong element to reduce that possibility, but complex political issues are conjugated to make that decision in such a centralized State as the Chilean (Eaton 2012).

To take the market out of education will require significant powers to regulate offer and demand at the territorial level, not available today because of the “dogma” of not attempting against freedom of teaching besides limiting the market, widening this function to regulate offers at the tertiary level, that in the case at issue, given the wide population coverage (more than 40% of the population at respective age groups), will imply analyzing the situation in some areas with a surplus of professionals.

It is important to understand that introducing greater public regulation in different areas and at different levels does not directly imply less market – as has been pointed out by some private officials. It is necessary to transform the foundations of the model, incorporating a number of elements, otherwise the public will end up being inevitably “controlled” by the private, as has happened in these years.

Main transformations toward a new paradigm inevitably imply changing the financial system of compulsory education, public or subsidized private, considering the higher costs involved in improving quality. More resources include adjusting to operational standards costs, studies of schools according to their size, social and cultural capital of the students’ population, location and goals to be achieved. This means new principles to sustain financing and mechanisms and instruments coherent with the social right to education.

This design should be arranged by public education new subnational institutions, substituting the failed “*counciling*” (or putting education under council administration) which requires a very fluid dialog between its both components (financing and institutions). An unbalance between them could have negative consequences in the mid and long term, as the Chilean experience itself has demonstrated. New institutions will advise, by aggregate effect, redesigning the national education system, or at least its Ministry; a good occasion to update it, as its institution is behind in many aspects (Núñez and Weinstein 2010).

This matter also requires fine tuning, from the decentralizing policies, the central government articulation of functions with subnational entities, and providing them with administration and technical powers. In this perspective a pro-democracy institutional organic structure is required to manage education in its mid and long term tasks, namely: install new ways of designing and implementing education policies in a centralist country, unused to democratic management processes, besides overrating technical options encouraged in these decades. That is why it is necessary to empower the citizens’ validation practices of the mid and long term processes and strategies in the sector at various levels, subnational and national, with their respective legal support, consistent with the paradigm in its entirety.

28.4 Public Education Policy in Light of New Horizons: Challenges

Within the scenario at hand, educational policies face a growing complexity arising from the visibility and importance education has for participants, institutions, political and social projects, and citizens themselves. The appearance of some education endogenous elements taking part of the demands, aims at giving an account of new constitutive elements of the design and implementation of guidelines to install the new educational paradigm.

In less than four decades Chilean educational policy went from being thrown in the “useless junk courtyard of the State,” where it was confined by the dictatorship in structural alliance with the neoliberalism, to locate itself in “society’s prominent places” where it currently resides. The path was not easy; high costs were paid for the social devaluation education was subjected to, and for the weaknesses of the policy makers in the technical and political mastery of a complex field like this one, where its theoretical-epistemic nor its methodological understanding are enough, but it is necessary to have an empirical knowledge of its situation, considering the diversity of experiences, players and situations that explain their day-to-day routine at school and in the whole educational system. It is essential to have an intra-system experience that questions political, economic and other pressures from different power groups, including international financing agencies.

28.4.1 *The Positional Switch of Education and the New Concepts in Debate*

The relevance achieved by the educational sector has meant a substantive transformation of its focus of attention, procedures and objectives, and of the resources framework within which it operates. This has been similar to its increasing vertical and horizontal complexity, as well as to the contents and instruments it uses, to the players involved and to the public scrutiny it presently attracts.

Educational policy in the time of the dictatorship focused its action on the school, treating it essentially as an object isolated from its social context, under a management reduced to the scope of administrators, namely: a bureaucrat, not a teaching professional leader. Moreover, they were protected with security of tenure, which made dismissal impossible, even after a decade of democratic period, with the evident damage this would cause to any society subject to such rules. The slow and complex change of the educational system at the beginning of the recovered democracy was caused more by exogenous than endogenous factors, a tendency that continues today although with an emphasis on the endogenous.

The elements that have contributed to making this change more evident are society’s educational system increasingly growing unsatisfied with demands, requirements of articulating the educational system with the social covenant and society’s

governance, and availability of financial resources in volumes unknown in recent history, such as in the 1980s, when public contribution to education fell by nearly 25% (González 2003: 610). In that decade of installation and consolidation of the education neoliberal model, educational policy was mainly oriented to privatize, overtly or covertly, the educational system. There was no other policy and, within this framework, the market was in charge of its articulation. The public sector was there just to balance the market; public educational policy was reduced to keeping the system going unaltered and to synchronizing it with the privatization tendencies (Jofré 1988).

The first democratic governments tried to install some “educational dreams” begotten during the years of the dictatorship, but amongst the political demands agreed for the transition and the demands from the World Bank, the “public education *counciling*” imposed in the 1980s. Added to their own mistakes such as Shared Financing, the results were slow, supported by interesting initiatives like school reinsertion and expansion of coverage at all levels, that as a deficiency corrective methods only mitigated the negative effects of the model regarding inequality and educational segregation (Picazo 2013; Bellei et al. 2013).

In the educational field, the second democratic decade ended up with big demonstrations of social protest and less new ideas for the sector, too much technocracy in education policy-making, a limited approach toward the social movements and the acute problems faced by the system. These increased at the beginning of the present decade by the skimpy assertiveness of the rightwing government to social demands, related essentially to strengthening public education, and created the critical situation that took us to today’s turning point: improve the market or change the paradigm toward social rights.

28.4.2 New Time Limit and Components for the Design of Educational Policies

The educational system horizon has undergone meaningful transformations. Short and midterm results – not always substantive – tend to postpone long term actions. The nationally and internationally generated “learning achievements rankings” have contributed to focusing attention on short term results and have had an incidence on shifting public system concern from a full formation of their students toward a restrictive approach on learning and measurement standards.

From the turn of the millennium onward, cultural transformations in the Chilean education have been too fast, (i) almost without time to see results, (ii) without sufficient technical, empirical and scientific support, (iii) included numerous demands from different sectors (iv), plus a massive incorporation of payers with a range of viewpoints on the subject.

This situation is the result of an increased social and political valuation of education, from the State management at its different levels as well as from the citizens

themselves. It has not been by accident that the massive social conflicts during the last decades have evolved around education, evidencing its importance.

Likewise, education faces huge challenges regarding its functionality as a pro-governance agent for societies. The area complexity is expressed at all levels, in its institutions (norms, resources), in its aims and objectives, in the players from different levels, and finally, in direct demands to improve quality with efficiency/efficacy.

The context in which policies are inserted – finally taken as territory and culture – has increased its importance. In the Chilean case, this is not yet a fully incorporated element, due to the historic centralization of the macro educational political processes, in which the visualization of the territories was always “unified” as similar entities in their most relevant dimensions. It has been mistakenly established that the territory is a third-rate player; even in the most recent and massive decentralization processes it has not been a relevant player (Castro 2012).

From a conceptual stand point, the neoliberal vision explicitly sought to weaken the border between public and private education, the product of the installation without constraint of this homogenous vision, whose overt intention was to weaken the role of the State as a corrective agent for inequality, reducing its performance and diminishing its responsiveness, which enabled them to first overtly privatize and then covertly continue with the process (Ball 2009).

Accordingly, demands for more efficiency and efficacy from the most technically and politically conservative sector of society are essentially focused on the allocation of financial resources, as the need for a substantial increase is evident.¹³ Nevertheless, the provision of education with social right is also going to change the evaluation/allocation criteria, as well as the understanding of other instruments, such as national evaluation tests, mainly in the use of its information for educational purposes, frequency and public outreach, emphasizing its contribution to the design of teaching strategies, maintaining transparency and result disclosure, and reducing the ranking effect.

28.5 Final Reflection

In today’s Chilean society education is a theme with driving power, in which very different views are expressed on social sense, individual and socioeconomic development. That is to say, about the very purpose of education. However, one of its key missions, iteratively claimed at critical moments, is its contribution to governance. At present, this governance seems to require major changes to meet these needs, related to integrating democratic processes in the organization and system management, with an appropriate technical soundness in the search for relevant and

¹³ Although education expenditure in Chile is approximately 7%, public expenditure it is slightly higher than 4%, thus there is a need to increase it, not counting the debated private expenditure replacement in some areas at school level (Gobierno de Chile 2014).

efficient solutions, with pre-eminence on circumstantial factors, with major challenges on decentralizing management and decisions and, equally, on making a substantial contribution to installing in this area a society without rooted practices in this field. This means people understand the reasonableness of the State, of representative democracy, its rights and duties on the described framework, namely: a major structural change in education and of the sense of public in this new scenario.

However, the problems of the Chilean education system, deeply rooted in a very unequal and segregated society, and the weaknesses in correcting these difficulties, have led the very system to a critical point in which substantial decisions must be adopted regarding its orientation, which, incidentally, imply very different ways.

This scenario in which education reforms are installed, especially public education reforms, implies facing these conflicts and tensions, understanding that results show much more than the collapse of the model, that posed contradictions were not “system failures” but an integral part of it, and that market failures are not, essentially, malfunctioning but necessary steps to reach the results achieved. Therefore, the way the education system developed, despite the promises, was not a mechanism to moderate social immobility and elite privilege, but one of its main causes.

In this endeavor, educational policy, beyond the adopted directions, faces significant and complex challenges to integrate approaches and levels, defined as micro and macro policies, a relevant task in itself. This is directly related to its contribution to society and to the current and sought social covenant.

It is about a substantial self-transformation, as well as transforming its epistemology, its field, and, certainly, about its direct or indirect implementation object.

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