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## Neoliberal Education and Student Movements in Chile: inequalities and malaise

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**ABSTRACT** This article examines the major consequences of the neoliberal education system implemented in Chile during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet and how two important student movements contested this structure. In 2006 and 2011, thousands of students filled the streets to demand better public education, more social justice and equal opportunities. They rejected the free-market fundamentalism in education that has generated segregation, stratification and inequalities. Students have become important political actors who re-evaluated the discussion on education in Chile. By doing so, they are rejecting the competitive and privatized nature of the current system, which is lacking in quality and equity, and they are demonstrating that new 'social imaginary' in Chilean education is possible.

### Introduction

Thousands of Chilean secondary and university students filled the streets of the nation for seven months in 2011. They were marching to demand changes in the educational system that has been unable to reduce the social and economic differences between poor and rich students. Five years earlier, in 2006, another student movement, known as the 'Penguin Revolution', foreshadowed these protests and was the first major Chilean educational movement since the return of democracy in 1990 (Domedel & Peña y Lillo, 2008). Secondary students, nicknamed 'penguins' because of their black-and-white school uniforms, were in the streets demanding better public education and more social justice in education.

Both student movements shook the elitist Chilean democracy, characterized by low social participation and the exclusion of citizens from the political system (de la Maza, 2010). Yet, the most important outcome of these movements was to generate a public and general criticism towards neoliberal educational policies implemented in Chile (Anderson, 2011). These policies promote the continued privatization of the education sector, which values the right of school choice over the right to an equitable education, and also presents education as a commodity, where schools are presented as a product to buy and sell. Due to this, students have made these factors the major focus of their protests in hopes of steering away from neoliberal practices. The student movements surprised Chile, which is considered one of the most stable countries in Latin America with a sustained economic growth in the last decades (Ffrench-Davis, 2002). This economic advancement, however, has been overshadowed by profound social inequalities produced by the neoliberal project. Chile has one of the most unequal income distributions in the world, with a Gini coefficient at 0.54 (Sehnbruch & Donoso, 2011).

Chile was the first neoliberal experiment in the world (Harvey, 2007). The dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) imposed neoliberalism during the 1980s, following the recommendations of Milton Friedman, who was a mentor of an array of Chilean economists who obtained their PhDs in Economics at the University of Chicago during the 1970s. They were

known as 'the Chicago Boys' (Mönckeberg, 2001), and they implemented the neoliberal model in Chile, which included privileging the free market, debilitating the role that the State played in society and promoting individualization and competitiveness in social relations. With the classical rhetoric and political slogan 'freedom to choose' (McCarthy, 2011), the neoliberal project in Chile also changed the structure of the educational system.

Public education and the right to education have sorely deteriorated (Oliva, 2010). In Chile, education has been commodified, whereby parents are held responsible for their children's education, while the State plays a subsidiary role (Oliva, 2008). This is a consequence of the neoliberal policies implemented during 1980s that later were scarcely modified by the democratic administrations (Donoso, 2005). In terms of access, Chilean education has presented a significant evolution thanks to specific educational policies and the proliferation of voucher or subsidized schools and private institutions. The privatization of schooling has considerably increased in the last two decades, and today, more students attend private schools than public schools (Contreras et al, 2011).

However, this massive access does not mean better educational opportunities for the majority of Chilean students, because neoliberal policies have only increased the quantity of students, not the quality of education, and they have intensified social inequalities in education at every level (elementary, secondary, and higher education). Indeed, Chile has the most segregated educational system in the countries that belong to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2011). Inequality characterizes education in Chile, and students have struggled against this painful reality. The neoliberal 'social imaginary' was imposed in education in the 1980s (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Peters, 2011); however, these student movements have shown that it is possible to conceive of an education system without free-market fundamentalism.

In this context, this article has two objectives: first, examining the principal characteristics of the neoliberal Chilean educational system in the current "global architecture of education" (Jones, 2007, p. 325); and second, analyzing how Chilean student movements in the last decade have struggled against this structure. Chilean education policies are a part of the world dynamics that have established neoliberalism as a unique possible response to the question of how to achieve development (Wade, 2007). However, these policies have failed to reduce the gap between privileged and disadvantaged people. Furthermore, neoliberalism has increased urban, social and educational segregation, impoverishing human relations and the sense of community and citizenship in society (Kellner & Share, 2007). In 2006 and 2011, thousands of Chilean students took to the streets to demonstrate their malaise and their criticism of these disastrous consequences.

### **Chile and Global Education**

Chile is part of the neoliberal world trend in education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Apple, 2001) whereby social justice has been totally damaged (Lipman & Hursh, 2007). These policies began to be executed in the 1980s, when neoliberalism was promoted by the Reagan and Thatcher administrations that supported the guidelines established by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Harvey, 2007). Under the ideological discourse of freedom to choose, neoliberalism cannot be considered as only an economic theory - it must also be seen as a social one, because it is a method used to build society (Gómez Leyton, 2008). Neoliberalism can be understood as a 'social imaginary', which shapes discourses in education and in all social aspects, from the economy and politics to cultural and symbolic production (Lipman, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Education has also been impacted by the neoliberal program, emphasizing market practices in the design, execution, implementation, and evaluation of educational policies (Mundy, 2005). This influences educational institutions across the world in terms of the normal practice of their operations (Tuchman, 2009).

Globalization has had an impact on the current context of the educational policies. This global scenery has generated radical transformations in society and in the economy (Carnoy, 2002). This new economy involves a flexible, well-educated and multi-tasking workforce. Globalization thereby changes education purposes, assessment and outcomes (Gardner, 2004). Countries have adjusted the development of their educational policies to the global economy and neoliberalism in order to 'ensure their competitiveness' and productivity (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 3). If education

was initially associated with the nation-state construction (Mundy, 2005; Peña, 2007), today it is seen as an essential element of the global economy.

Chile has attempted to be an active member of the global economy for the last three decades (Ffrench-Davis, 2002). Free-market fundamentalism has been the technique to achieve this goal in all fields. For example, in education the same characteristics that are part of the current discourse of educational policies and practices are present: privatization, freedom of choice, accountability, subsidiary public role, managerialism, competitiveness, and standardized tests, among other issues (Apple, 2007). Neoliberalism has brought about a paradigm shift in education worldwide and most countries have undertaken reform to address this, while public education or the right to education seems to be an obsolete discussion. Neoliberal reforms have entailed the reduction of public funding and the increase of private providers in education, expanding access, but neglecting social justice. Chile does not escape from this framework (Oliva, 2010).

Under the Pinochet dictatorship, Chilean education was profoundly transformed from a strong public system to a neoliberal and unequal system (Donoso, 2005; Oliva, 2010). Privatization, freedom of education and competitiveness were the discursive and political keys of this strategy, which was promoted as the way of developing equality in education. However, as we will see in the next sections, this model has conserved the privileges of dominant classes, increased segregation and caused inequality between a small elite and the majority of the population. In Chile, the market in education has failed (Bellei, 2011) and the neoliberal competition in education proves to be 'senseless' (Carnoy, 2010).

The democratic administrations achieved a pacific transition from dictatorship to democracy (Navia, 2010), but they did not develop real reforms to leap from the neoliberal inheritance that damaged public education. The Concertación, a social democratic coalition that governed Chile for 20 years (1990-2010), undertook 'reforms co-financed by the Chilean government and the World Bank ... with the aim of improving the quality of education as a prerequisite for economic growth and social cohesion' (Matear, 2007, p. 101). Therefore, Chile assumed the global dynamics related to education where supranational institutions play a crucial role (Jones, 2007; Rose, 2003).

The Concertación increased public funding in education four times from 1990 to 2006 (Cox, 2007), but at the same time fostered the expansion of the private sector in education instead strengthening public education. As Mizala and Torche indicated, the 'public sector enrollment dropped from 78 percent in 1981 to 53 percent of the total enrollment in 2002 and 50 percent in 2004' (2012, p. 132). Following the world trend, Chile adopted a competitive voucher system where private subsidized schools compete with public schools to enroll pupils and receive public funding according to the number of students (Elacqua, 2009). As Matear (2007) said, 'the tension here is one of perceptions, values, and assumptions by parents, policy makers, and international lenders of the superiority of the private over the public, even in the face of evidence to the contrary' (p. 112). This situation is consistent with the majority of neoliberal orientations in educational policies.

However, 'pro-market policies have had limited effects on the quality in education' (Contreras et al, 2011, p. 7). In the case of Chile, there are no significant differences between voucher and public schools, when both of them have the same educational resources and socioeconomic conditions (Contreras et al, 2010; Bellei, 2009). On the contrary, the impact on social equality in education is catastrophic. The data from the System for Measuring the Quality of Education (Sistema de Medición de Calidad de la Educación, SIMCE) showed that the difference in mathematics between rich and poor students was 114 points in 2010 (MINEDUC, 2010). Socioeconomic background is still a determinant of educational outcomes (Matear, 2007), which adds to schooling and geographic segregation (Bellei et al, 2010; Contreras & Macías, 2002). Neoliberal policies have been unable to overcome inequalities; rather, they have intensified them.

### **Neoliberal Policies and their Consequences**

The discussion about Chilean education policies has been characterized by the tension between the right to education and freedom of education (Oliva, 2010). This distinction entails a political difference in the idea and value of education in society. Beginning in the nineteenth century, Chile designed a national education system in order to help in the nation-state construction. This involved the assumption that the state was responsible for providing free education and

recognizing education as a right (Oliva, 2008). At the same time, conservative and religious groups promoted freedom of education to guarantee their influence over parental choice in education. Thus, public and private schools have comprised the Chilean schooling system since 1872, when freedom of education was enacted by the government (Oliva, 2008).

Public schools were the central element in the national educational project, and Catholic and other private schools provided education to certain groups – principally those associated with the elite. Public education was part of the developmental strategy in the mid-twentieth century, playing a crucial role in Chilean society until the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. The socialist government of President Salvador Allende (1970-1973) attempted to establish national free public education, whereas the military regime imposed a neoliberal system (Oliva, 2010).

On the pretext of expanding schooling coverage, the dictatorship implemented a reform that meant the incorporation of the free market in education. As Contreras and others indicated, 'In 1979, there were 1,846 primary schools and in 1982 - only years after the reform - there were 2,285 schools, the majority of them were for-profit' (Contreras et al, 2011, p. 5). This trend has continued during the last three decades with the same pattern: private education is growing while public education is decreasing. Today, enrollment in subsidized and private schools are educating more students than public schools (Contreras et al, 2011). Fostering competitiveness, the dictatorship created the conditions for the proliferation of for-profit educational institutions, converting education into a commodity (Mönckeberg, 2007).

The Concertación accepted this educational structure and tried to implement policies to reduce inequalities, but they have been ineffective. However, the democratic administrations have considerably increased the number of people with secondary education, achieving 90% in 2008 (Contreras et al, 2011) and 37.7% in tertiary education in 2003 (Cox, 2007). This advancement was accompanied by the eruption of not-for-profit and for-profit private schools and universities. On the other hand, public education, which is administered by municipal governments, reduced its presence and importance in the education system. Between 1990 and 2008, the quantity of public schools was reduced to 7.1%, whereas, not-for-profit private schools increased their numbers to 35.6%, and for-profit private schools augmented to 95.9% (Contreras et al, 2011).

Access to education has been the main objective of educational policies in the last two decades, but social integration and social justice have been forgotten. Several studies have shown that Chilean education is stratified and unequal (Matear, 2007; Mizala & Torche, 2012). The democratization process has been unable to recover the social cohesion destroyed by the dictatorship (de la Maza, 2010). The schooling system was supposed to have helped with this, but neoliberal policies generated more segregation and stratification. According to the Duncan index that measures segregation levels, the Chilean educational system presents high levels of segregation (Bellei et al, 2010). In 2008, the index for the poorest 30% of students was 0.54 for the fourth grade (the middle of primary education in Chile) and 0.50 for secondary level; these data are considered representative of 'hypersegregation' (Bellei et al, 2010).

This situation was confirmed by the OECD through its analysis of the data from the PISA test, which showed that Chile has the most segregated educational system among the countries that form this organization (OECD, 2011). In the case of Chile, segregation means that poor students are in schools with peers from the same socioeconomic background and with the same cultural capital. Even though neoliberalism promises freedom of choice in education, poor students do not have the opportunity to choose their education in reality, because their economic conditions only allow them to attend poor public schools which are situated in their respective neighborhoods. On the other hand, privileged students attend private and exclusive schools with their peers, while middle-class students attend voucher schools with other middle-class students. Therefore, the Chilean neoliberal system reproduces inequalities and does not generate social integration (Oliva, 2010).

National and international standardized tests illustrate the differences between privileged and disadvantaged students. For instance, the results of the national Sistema de Medición de Calidad de la Educación (SIMCE) test in 2003 showed that in languages (secondary level) the average score was 227 in the low socioeconomic group, while the high socioeconomic group scored 306. The national average was 253 (Matear, 2007). In mathematics, the difference is equally large. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds scored an average of 216 points, and their upper-class peers obtained an average of 325 points. The national average in mathematics was 246 (Matear, 2007). In

the PISA test, the results showed the same trend in 2009. Upper-class students scored 109 more points in mathematics than poor students. Considering science, mathematics and reading, the difference between privileged and disadvantaged students was 97 points (OECD, 2009).

These inequalities have been reproduced along the whole education system. In tertiary education, only 20% of students who attend the university are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Students who graduated from elite schools obtained better scores in the national admission test, and the majority of them attended the most exclusive Chilean universities (OPECH, 2010). However, the increase in coverage has been significant, allowing for an enrollment of 967,672 students in tertiary education in 2010. Like the elementary and secondary systems, at this level, private institutions lead public institutions, with an 88% enrollment rate (Canales & de los Ríos, 2009). The proliferation of private universities occurred after the neoliberal reform in 1981. Despite being classified as non-profit organizations, most private universities created after 1981 yielded considerable profits for their owners thanks to subterfuge (Mönckeberg, 2007). Neoliberal policies have also converted some universities into multimillion-dollar businesses, where students must pay high tuition and other fees. In 2011 Chilean students protested against these inequities in the tertiary education sector. These protests would not have been realized without the groundbreaking efforts of the 'Penguin Revolution' five years earlier.

### **The Penguin Revolution**

On January 15, 2006, the Chilean socialist politician Michelle Bachelet won the presidential elections. She was the first female president in Chilean history. In May 2006, only four months after her election into office, thousands of students aged 15 to 18 took to the streets. They generated the 'Penguin Revolution', so-called due to the colour of the students' uniforms (black and white). During this revolution, education became both a political and a public issue (Domedel & Peña y Lillo, 2008). This movement was the first significant demonstration protest since the return of democracy in 1990.

Education and social movements have a close relationship. Indeed, in Chile, students have been the protagonists behind many important transformations (González, 2010). However, during the transition from dictatorship to democracy, students were not active political participants. In 2006, this situation changed thanks to secondary students who filled the streets and took over their schools, winning public support. While the early street protests only attracted about 1000 people, after three weeks there were more than 10,000 (Domedel & Peña y Lillo, 2008).

In the first stages of this movement, the demands were free transportation passes for students and an elimination of the fees associated with taking the university admission exam, but then the student struggle shifted to focus on the poor quality of Chilean education. The students fought against a system in which those with access to private education are afforded opportunities which are not available to those who study in public schools. The students' target was the Organic Constitutional Law of Education (Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza [LOCE]), the foundation of the educational system and one of the emblematic laws enacted by Pinochet during his time in power. This law had faced strong opposition from foes of the dictatorship, and university students and professors had been calling for its repeal since the return to democracy in 1990. In August 2009, President Bachelet signed the General Education Law (Ley General de Educación, LGE), which replaced the previous controversial law, but this new legal framework did not change the structure of Chilean education (Oliva, 2010).

Although the political victory of the 'penguins' was limited, this movement was the foundation of the most radical student movement that began in 2011. The 'Penguin Revolution' was spontaneous in nature, but it paved the way for future protests against the neoliberal system. Students also showed how new technologies can be a powerful political tool in the hands of young people. They maximized the use of new information technologies to draw in more supporters, and keep them informed about every step of the movement through social networks. In addition, they were also able to attract media coverage, which is important, since social media often neglect the coverage of social movements (Domedel & Peña y Lillo, 2008).

The protagonists of the events of 2006 were born in the late 1980s, a period which was characterized by the entrance of the Chilean economy into the global market. These students grew

up in an era marked by the country's high levels of economic growth (Ffrench-Davis, 2002). They also grew up with television and new digital media, and their own development has paralleled the development of technological tools. These characteristics were essential when it came to positioning themselves as protagonists in the public arena.

They changed the public and political agenda in education, achieving attention from the media. In the print press, in April 2006, when the marches were just starting, 368 articles were published on education; by May, after the protests exploded, the number rose to 639, and in June, it reached 961 (Domedel & Peña y Lillo, 2008). Educational policy makers debated how to respond to the demand for more social justice and less free market in education. The education discussion was focused on the guaranteed right to education, improvement of the quality of standards, an increase in the public subvention for the poorest students, and banning selection in primary schools, among other issues (Cox, 2007). Some of these were achieved, but the neoliberal nature of the system continued intact (Oliva, 2010).

The result of the 'Penguin Revolution' was seen by students as a defeat, and malaise continued to grow within that student generation. The 'penguins' were the first monumental expression of rejection towards free-market fundamentalism in education, and the political system responded by trying to regulate the system, but without leaping towards more social justice. The General Education Law changed the antidemocratic educational law enacted by the dictatorship, but the system continued to work in the same way. Five years later, in 2011, most of the 'penguins' were attending tertiary education and realizing that their past struggle had not modified their educational reality. Many of them were also protagonists of the 'Chilean winter'.

### The Chilean Winter

The *New York Times* published the article 'With Kiss-Ins and Dances, Young Chileans Push for Reform' in August 2011 (Barrionuevo, 2011), in which the Chilean student movement was called the 'Chilean winter', in reference to the revolutions in the Middle East, known as the Arab spring. Demonstrations in Chile had begun in May, but they were winning power and presence by the following winter in Chile, with more than 120,000 students marching in the capital, Santiago, every two weeks. The movement was prolonged for 7 months, with 36 massive marches in total. University students demanded that public education be strengthened, with the end of free-market education, and better conditions for poor students. As in the 'Penguin Revolution', university students criticized the neoliberal system imposed in education.

Most of the students involved in the 'Chilean winter' protests had participated in the 'Penguin Revolution' five years earlier, but now they had a new opponent: the first right-wing democratic government in 52 years. Sebastian Piñera, a wealthy businessman and politician, took office in March 2010 and in his first cabinet included Joaquín Lavín as the Minister of Education. Lavín was owner of a private university and a member of the group known as the 'Chicago Boys'. Hence, students saw this duo as a threat that would further extend the neoliberal system in education. In May 2011, students took to the streets to demand an increase in public expenditure in education, that at that time accounted for only 4% of the gross domestic product (GDP), compared with 7% in developed countries.

At the beginning of the protests, the main concern was the high cost of tuition and other fees that the majority of students pay by obtaining overpriced loans. Ironically, universities in Chile are non-profit institutions, yet some private universities operate as businesses (Mönckeberg, 2007). Tuition and other fees in Chilean universities are some of the most expensive in the world, and the neoliberal reform passed this financial burden on to students and their families (Simonsen, 2011). Families finance 73% of higher education in Chile, a figure that greatly exceeds the average (16%) for OECD countries. In the tertiary sector in Chile, 7 out of 10 students are the first in their families to attend a higher education institution (Canales & de los Ríos, 2009), but 83% of those who drop out within the first year, principally for economic reasons, are the first generation in higher education (Castillo & Cabezas, 2010).

Students associated this financial structure with the for-profit spirit in education. 'Educate, don't Profit' (*Educar, no Lucrar*) was the slogan that led the struggle which had support from 80% of the population, according to the public polls (Anderson, 2011). Marches were accompanied

by the takeover of more than 200 schools and universities, and the national and international media put attention on the movement. The popular student leaders Camila Vallejo, president of the Federation of Students of the University of Chile (*Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Chile, FECH*), and Giorgio Jackson, president of the Federation of Students of Catholic University (*Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad Católica, FEUC*), became active participants in the public discussion about education. They demanded more resources for public education and free education for the poor and middle-class students. Piñera's government rejected free public education, because it considered education as a commodity. However, it offered more scholarships for the poorest students.

The 'Penguin Revolution' lasted two intense months, while the 'Chilean winter' has endured seven months of struggle, whereby students are attempting to change the structure of Chilean education. President Piñera presented a plan which included more resources for public universities, but the for-profit spirit in education could still be seen within it. During this time, students received the support of the population, while the support for the president was declining, making Piñera the most unpopular president in Chilean democratic history. Polls showed that 80% of the population supported students in their efforts, while the president, Sebastián Piñera, only achieved a 26% approval rating. The student movement was vigorous and popular.

The consequences of this movement are still uncertain. Due to this, it is necessary to study how the students' proposals will be introduced into the next generation of educational policies. However, the strong criticisms of free-market fundamentalism are the most important legacy of this movement. These students challenged the neoliberal 'social imaginary' in education. As Anderson said, 'Chile, more than any other country, represents the culmination of this neoliberal experiment, and the strikes and protests represent an important message that the rest of the world should take seriously' (2011, p. 1). Chilean education will change, and due to the efforts of the students, it will hopefully leave neoliberal practices behind.

## **Conclusion**

The implementation of neoliberal education in Chile has proven to be catastrophic for social justice purposes. Voucher schools receive public funding and compete with public schools, generating segregation and stratification. The introduction of for-profit interests and competition in education has not generated the higher quality in education that was promised. Indeed, private and public schools have similar effectiveness when the same resources and socioeconomic characteristics are measured (Contreras et al, 2011). Major differences are only seen when poor students are compared with rich students. National and standardized tests show that Chilean education reproduces social inequalities.

However, the 'commonsense' ideals that are imposed by neoliberal thinkers and institutions insist on fostering privatization and ravaging public education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). In Chile, there are smear campaigns against public educational institutions and their performance, while the private sector is growing and for-profit institutions are obtaining the majority of students. Subsidized for-profit schools have increased their enrollment by 113.4% in the last two decades, reaching 1,059,090 students in 2008 (Contreras et al, 2011). The neoliberal paradigm supporters claim that by introducing more privatization, schools will have to improve because they will have to compete for students, while also arguing that parents will have more freedom to choose the best school for their children due to this competition. However, the lower- and middle-class students cannot choose, because the system is private and elitist. This structure was designed during Pinochet's dictatorship, with the provision of neoliberal intelligentsia imported to Chile by the 'Chicago Boys'.

Free-market fundamentalism was converted into a magic prescription for the development of Chile. Education was conceived as a business, producing 'first-class' and 'tourist' students as if education were an airplane ticket. The 'first-class' students attend exclusive elite schools, obtaining better results on standardized tests, attending the most selective universities and concentrating on opportunities for their future. The 'tourist' students attend poor public schools, resulting in standardized test scores that are lower than the national average, and if they are able to attend college, they must finish their studies with expensive loans. However, the 'first-class' students only



obtain their high social position by inheriting it through their privileges within Chilean society, because when they are compared with their peers globally, their academic performance is mediocre (Donoso, 2005). Therefore, Chilean education maintains the historical social-structure hierarchy within the nation-state because free-market fundamentalism has only reproduced social inequalities.

Equity and equal opportunities are only slogans in Chile, because evidence shows that social inequalities are reproduced generation after generation. However, students in 2006 and 2011 rebelled against this structure and took to the streets to criticize the neoliberal system and its consequences in Chilean society - consequences that include urban segregation, educational stratification, unequal income distribution and elitist democracy (Gómez Leyton, 2008). Students, a new generation of Chileans who have forgotten the fears associated with Pinochet's dictatorship, have converted into political actors who have demanded more social justice in the first significant protest against the neoliberal paradigm. The neoliberal 'social imaginary' in education is now being challenged.

Students were transformed into political actors. Their opinions and discourses are part of the educational public discussion. Neoliberal 'common sense' is no longer the only paradigm in Chilean education. Furthermore, students recovered their historic position as protagonists of significant transformations in Chilean society. They changed their indifference to political action and have converted into critical citizens. As Sehnbruch and Donoso said: 'Perhaps the most important success of the protests has been that they have triggered debates on issues that have long been neglected by the political establishment, in particular tax reforms... and constitutional reform' (Sehnbruch & Donoso, 2011, p. 4). Student challenges are also representative mechanisms of social participation; due to their efforts, many public themes ceased to be taboo.

The student movements have had such a vital impact on the country that even the International Monetary Fund published a report calling on Chile to generate more social justice through tax reform (IMF, 2011). The same institution that promoted neoliberalism in Chile is recognizing the social injustices that are caused by this economic model. The 'Penguin Revolution' and the 'Chilean winter' should not be underestimated by educational policy makers, because both student movements gained strong popular support. The 'social imaginary' is changing, and these changes should be recognized by governments and supranational institutions.

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