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Chile: The Evolution of Educational Policy, 1980–2014[1]

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This chapter describes and interprets the evolution of educational policies applied in Chile from 1980. The first section analyses the market reforms of the 1980s; the second, the 'improvement' programme strategies at the beginning of the 1990s, while the third considers the educational reform in the second half of the same decade; the fourth looks at the crisis that erupted in 2000 around the impact of the reform and its consequences; the fifth examines 'the new architecture of Chilean education' built around stronger accountability instruments, and the final section considers the current agenda of educational changes.

Our general conclusion is that this has been a period of great activity in the field of public educational policies, with a strong rupture with the past and a complex evolution over more than three decades, in which different policy approaches have attempted to define a more relevant role for the State, within the framework of a market-oriented educational system. In fact, as a result of recent massive student movements, Chilean educational policy faces complex choices about how to abandon market logic as the basic mode of regulation.

8.1 Market reform (1980–1989)

During the 1980s, Chile began one of the most radical experiments in educational policy found anywhere; to reform its educational system across the nation so that it would function according to the logic of the market. This reform had an enormous impact: in only a few years it ended the educational system based on the 'Teaching State', which the nation had built since the middle of the nineteenth century (Bellei and Pérez, 2010).

First, it ended the provision of education by the Nation State transferring this responsibility from the Ministry of Education to the municipalities. This brought

with it a major decentralization of educational administration. Second, it promoted the expansion of education by private entities – institutions or individuals, for-profit and non-profit – levelling the access to state funding on equal terms with public schools, and with minimum requirements to open schools and so gain access to public funds.

Third, it encouraged competition among schools so as to be able to attract families by preferences, principally by the implementation of a voucher funding system on a national scale (a per capita subsidy for each pupil attending a school). A national standardized system of assessing students' academic achievement (SIMCE) was created, so that families could be better informed and make comparisons about schools.

Finally, it liberated schools from several obligations; for example, deregulating the teaching profession by ending their special employment status and loosening the national curriculum, leaving spaces for schools to differentiate their 'offers', creating heterogeneous educational programmes.

Each one of these changes would have been, on its own, a huge policy innovation for any traditional school system; all together, they were a revolution for the Chilean system, perhaps only possible under the exceptional conditions of a military dictatorship (1973–1990).

The basis of the idea of introducing the market as the mechanism that regulated school education by supply and demand rests on the institutional criticism of the state provision of education as a public service. For the promoters of this view, public schools cannot develop the characteristics of effective schools because they are drowning in State bureaucracy and varied policy conflicts among opposing interest groups (Chubb and Moe, 1997).

Market-based educational reform was promoted not only as a device for educational expansion – in fact, primary education had achieved almost universal coverage and secondary education had been experiencing rapid growth since the 1960s – but also for improving its efficiency and efficacy, that is to say, its quality (Bellei and Pérez, 2010).

The rationale of the argument is simple, though with an enormous transformative potential; families should have the greatest possible freedom to choose their children's schools; the schools, too, ought to compete openly to obtain the greatest number of students; schools that are unable to attract families would become financially unviable and either close or react by improving the quality of their service and so becoming competitive in the school market. This virtuous competitive dynamic would, in the long run, produce an improvement in educational quality and increase the efficiency of school management.

Note that, taken to the extreme, there is no concept for 'educational quality' in this scheme apart from that imposed by the dynamics of supply and demand; quality is what most families prefer. This tautological idea of quality does not accept external criteria because it trusts in the wisdom of the market's self-regulation and family preferences.

From a certain point of view, the reform of the 1980s was a huge success; it quickly and significantly increased the participation of private providers in the Chilean educational system. While in 1980, private schools educated 22 per cent of children and youth in primary and secondary schools, in only a few years it had reached 40 per cent, and by 2013 it had become more than 60 per cent – so that today the great majority of Chilean students attend private schools (Mineduc, 2014).

However, the evidence available about their impact in terms of students' learning – the concept of quality that most policy makers and academics have – is unsatisfactory. The general quality of the school system does not appear to have increased as a result of these reforms. On the other hand, private subsidized schools have not demonstrated on average that they are more effective than public schools in terms of their students' reading and maths achievements (Hsieh and Urquiola, 2006; Bellei, 2009). All this took place in the context of the low general quality of the Chilean educational system. Finally, there is evidence that shows that the application of this market model has increased socio-economic segregation of schools and educational inequality (Hsieh and Urquiola, 2006; Mizala and Torche, 2012; Contreras et al., 2010; Valenzuela et al., 2014).

8.2 Educational improvement programmes (1990–1995)

The return of democracy in 1990 created a sociopolitical atmosphere not only of great expectations, but also of great tension and uncertainty. The main concerns of the authorities were national reconciliation and normalizing the functioning of public institutions. There was no room to plan for initiatives that implied major institutional changes to the inherited school system. A key consideration was the clear understanding that any agenda of educational institutional reform had the potential for an immense political conflict: the last democratic government had become involved in a bitter dispute about the Unified National School (*Escuela Nacional Unificada*, ENU) (Núñez, 2003); in turn, the modernization of the education of the 1980s (as it was called) was

conducted with the opposition of educators and political forces outside the government. Chilean education had accumulated two decades as a battlefield.

Definitely, to be able to undertake an institutional reform of the school system, there has to be the conviction of its need. However it became evident that the centre-left coalition government was divided internally. Some – the nearest to the tradition of the Teaching State – had expected that there would be a counter-reform reversing the hands of the clock which would re-establish the national system of public education. Others, who can be characterized as more liberal, valued some of the components that made up the new school system; municipalization of public schools was seen as a positive step of decentralization; the introduction of the per capita subsidy as an efficient mechanism of resource distribution; and the promotion of private schools as a source of innovation for the school system (Picazo Verdejo, 2013).

The lack of conviction about the need for greater institutional reform, combined with the transitional climate regarding the pacification of society, determined that the status quo would be maintained. The only feature during this period that underwent a structural change was the promulgation of a new Statute for Teachers which established special labour and professional regulations for them, particularly in public schools. In fact, for more than five years, the term 'educational reform' was avoided by Chilean authorities and policy makers and only 'continuous improvement' referred to.

It was in this context that the programmes for quality improvement and educational equality emerged. Of course programmes for improvement are much more than an exercise in educational policy pragmatism. They also responded to a new conviction: if the heart of the teaching–learning process rests in the school, then it is there that educational policy should place the emphasis.

The first improvement programme, launched in March 1990, was the 900 Schools Programme (P-900) with the target population being those schools in urban areas attended by poorer students and which had obtained the lowest academic achievement. Then, in 1992, the programmes MECE-Primary (*MECE-Basica*) and MECE-Rural were begun. The MECE-Rural focused on isolated multigrade schools in which students from different grades shared teaching hours in the same classroom. The MECE-Primary was more complex in design and with greater scope than the former, combining targeted and national coverage interventions. MECE-Secondary (*MECE-Media*) began in 1994 and gradually covered all secondary schools in Chile. This was later complemented by 'Secondary schools for all' (*Liceo para Todos*), which concentrated on those secondary schools attended by the poorest school populations and the lowest

results with its major objective to reduce dropout rates (García-Huidobro, 1999; Cox, 2003). This is not an exhaustive list but it does allow an appreciation of the Ministry of Education's enormous capacity for innovation in the design and implementation of school improvement programmes during the 1990s.

The educational improvement programmes were diverse, not only in terms of their targeted populations but in many features of their objectives and intervention strategies, including the times and actors involved. However, it is possible to identify some of their common characteristics that in a way define the novelty, the specific contribution of this type of educational policy.

The first characteristic has been already mentioned; for those interventions that involve school work, the central unit of change is the school. The programmes contain proposals for teachers' work, a new form of pedagogical relationships and, more generally, the management of pedagogy in primary and secondary schools. The programmes did not change the rules, norms or the institutions – rather the idea was to modify the day-to-day school experience of both teachers and students.

A second characteristic was that the programmes would create methods of collective work in schools, designed to give greater weight to reflection, pedagogical design and technical management. The most common strategy was to establish regular workshops for teachers, seeking to promote peer learning and become a way of helping teacher professional development.

A third characteristic that can be identified was the emphasis placed on the diversification of learning resources in primary and secondary schools; the struggle against the monopoly of 'chalk and board' and direct instruction based on teachers' presentations was almost a crusade for these improvement programmes. The introduction of different learning resources into the work of the school had broader goals than the simple diffusion of new technologies, because it referred to the diversity of learning styles and student motivations. It is also linked to a more complex notion of the curriculum and the attempt to develop higher-order thinking skills.

There is evidence that indicates the improvement programmes were quite effective in creating some school change processes that they promoted, such as installing collective teaching practices, equipping schools with new learning resources and diversifying teaching methods, particularly by the use of these resources in the classroom (Bellei, 2003; Sotomayor, 2006). The evidence regarding their impact on student learning outcomes is less clear and conclusive. While, in general, participating schools improved when compared to similar schools, the impact was relatively small and rarely sustainable (Chay et al., 2005; Bellei, 2003). These programmes do not appear to have had a positive and

cumulative large-scale effect, for the national-level indicators of students' academic achievement remained stable for almost a decade.

Seen in hindsight the educational improvement programmes of the 1990s touched issues of quality and educational equality through a combination of investment and strategies with the intention of re-establishing the State's active role within the market system, which had been organized in the 1980s – a kind of 'third way' in education (Cox and Lemaitre, 1999). Although the programmes improved many schools, they were not able to achieve an impact on the whole school system in a significant way. Certainly, these programmes had limitations in their design and implementation – for example, the lack of clarity as to how to transfer the new pedagogic approaches to the classroom, and of being relatively standard and rigid – and in the amount of resources allocated to them (Mena and Bellei, 2000; Raczynski and Muñoz, 2007). However, their effectiveness was limited because they operated within institutional contexts that they were unable to modify and which were often a force against the required changes. Among them, we can mention the quality of teachers' working conditions, the organization and management of schools, the confusion of responsibilities among actors and the dynamics of segregation and competition that 'damaged' some schools, especially those serving the most vulnerable students (Mena and Bellei, 2000). In fact, the same policies began to attempt to modify more structural aspects of the school system: the time for educational reform had arrived.

8.3 Reform to educational quality and equality (1996–2005)

By the middle of the 1990s Chile had begun to look more to the future than the past and education, therefore, took centre stage. It consisted of an ambitious policy agenda that would prevent the repetition of Chile's experience of the previous century as a 'case of frustrated development' (Pinto, 1971). These diagnoses pointed to educational modernization as playing an undisputable role.

In 1994, the first year of the second democratic government, the President convoked a National Commission for Educational Modernization, with representatives of different sectors including, among others, the Teachers Union, business-people, the Church and public and private school administrators, that delivered a set of ambitious and diverse proposals for educational policy, which, when taken together, valued education as significantly more important than previously. The recommendations were brought by the Minister of Education

into the political arena, achieving a widespread agreement with all the political parties represented in Congress for these ideas; the Minister of Finance declared that, from this moment on, education would be 'the definite first priority'; and, in his annual Message to the Nation of 1996, the Chilean President announced the beginning of the Educational Reform. It was the time to be ambitious.

The Educational Reform consisted, basically, of four 'pillars' as they were called (Cox, 2003). The first was a prolongation, expansion and strengthening of the school improvement programmes, which had been the signature of the previous government. Those programmes moved from the margin to the centre of educational policy.

The second included a heterogeneous package of support measures for teachers but without an integral, coherent and long-term policy (Ávalos, 2003). A programme to strengthen teacher training was created, which distributed funds to the universities to improve their infrastructure and equipment, and renew the curriculum and academic personnel. There was a massive programme to upgrade teacher competencies, using traditional course methods, to acquaint them with the new curriculum and an intern programme for teachers to study abroad. Finally, the Ministry of Education provided monetary incentives for teachers, which included a monthly bonus for up to two years salary for those who worked in schools located in the upper quartile of educational performance (comparing schools working with students from similar socio-economic backgrounds). This was measured by SNED, a school performance index mainly based on student results measured by the SIMCE tests (Mizala and Romaguera, 2002).

The third pillar of this educational reform in the 1990s was that most commonly associated with an educational reform – the reform of the curriculum (Gysling, 2003). Based on the agreements reached by the 1994 National Commission, the Ministry of Education proposed to, and gained the approval of, the Higher Educational Council for the new curriculum in primary (1996) and then secondary education (1998).

The implementation of this new curriculum was through new study plans and programmes for all courses at both levels, which were gradually applied between 1997 and 2002. The new curriculum placed greater emphasis on the acquisition of higher-order skills; the use of new technologies, especially ICTs; the expansion of common curriculum, including the first ten years of education; the increasing importance of specialization, mainly for vocational education in grades 11 and 12; and the updating of the objectives and contents of all subject matters. Although innovative in its content and approach, the curriculum reform was, however, conservative in terms of the structure of the curricular organization. For example,

it did not modify the duration of primary (8 years) and secondary education (4 years); the separation between general and vocational secondary schools;[2] and in general the list of subject matters was not significantly reduced as initially intended.

The fourth and final dimension was a radical increase in school time, with the implementation of a universal regime of the full school day (Cox, 2003). The growth of education had resulted in a school system operating with two shifts. This was regarded as a constraint for the implementation of the new curriculum and improvement programmes, and a source of inequality when compared to élite schools (as many operated on one shift with a longer school day) – and a disadvantage internationally.[3]

The magnitude of this change was huge. First, total school time increased, with the obligation of making room for only one group of students per school, by distributing hours between morning and the afternoon. Second, it increased teaching time by 232 hours per year for third to sixth primary grades, 261 hours for first and second secondary grades, and between 145 and 174 hours for the rest of the grades. To have a better idea, this implied an average increase of approximately 27 per cent in class time.

Third, the monetary value of the public voucher was increased by between a quarter and a third (depending on the educational level), the greatest increase since its creation. Finally, there was a major investment in school infrastructure to enable and build new facilities; this was the most important public investment in educational infrastructure in decades and – extraordinarily – also benefited private subsidized schools.

The primary and secondary schools had ample autonomy to distribute the new time available and arrange hours to their interests and practical possibilities, the most important of which was the availability of teaching resources. So radical a change applied in so short a time and at the national scale was not without problems; many schools lacked teachers, had difficulties in organizing hours and could not rely on sufficient material resources to implement a far more challenging school day (including lunchtime). Above all, the great majority of participating schools took a few years to resolve these issues until the full school day became the dominant mode in the Chilean school system. A more complex issue had been to satisfy the expectations about school improvement, understood not only as more but better opportunities to learn for students, for together with the difficulties facing pedagogical change there were new phenomena, such as the difficulty of maintaining student motivation and discipline in an extended and more exhausting school day (DESUC, 2001 and 2005).

The expansion of the school day was an immense change to the school system, with such a high public profile that for the majority of Chileans, the 'full school day' was a synonym for the 'educational reform'. The evidence showed the full school day had an impact in primary and secondary students' academic achievement (measured by SIMCE) when compared to their peers who had not studied during the full school day, although the estimated impact was comparatively small (Valenzuela, 2005; Bellei, 2009b).

The relevance of education for the democratic governments is confirmed by the increase in public investment in schools – it increased threefold in absolute terms between 1990 and 2000. The greater expenditure was principally for the significant increase in teacher salaries and the cost of the full school day policy.

The school reform launched in 1996 combined changes in the structure of the school system – such as curriculum reform and the full school day – with policies to improve processes – such as the improvement programmes and teacher training. However it did not modify the basic components of the educational market system that had been organized in the 1980s. To the contrary – in various aspects it reinforced it. For example, democratic governments continued applying 'equal treatment' by the State to public and private subsidized, for-profit and non-profit, schools. Also, they promoted and facilitated the expansion of a system of co-payment by families among subsidized private schools (charging tuition without losing access to the state voucher), which reduced the proportion of free schools, created wide price discrimination and re-energized the privatization of education. Additionally, to make the school market more competitive and provide guidance to parents, SIMCE results – including school rankings – began to be widely published in newspapers. Finally, performance-based monetary incentives for teachers were introduced. In other words, during the 1990s the school system experienced a dual movement with greater protagonism in the role of the State through educational policies, and increasing the market dynamics in how the system operated.

8.4 'The Impact Crisis' and the reorientation of educational reform (2000–2005)

During the 1990s, educational policies, particularly in the period of educational reform, basked in the strong support of public opinion and politicians: they were a matter of 'State policy, not of a government'. Also, the authorities could show results to the country, particularly in that area defined as critical, student

academic achievement. SIMCE was like the GDP of education. Between 1988 and 1996, SIMCE scores for language and maths significantly increased among public and subsidized private schools. Seemingly, the objectives of educational quality and equality were being achieved. Nevertheless, this period of an 'educational bonanza' – to follow the economic metaphor – was to turn quickly with what might be called an 'impact crisis' of education reform, and one of its most noticeable effects was the loss of confidence in not only educational policy, but the school system as a whole.

In the middle of 2000, the SIMCE results for fourth grade primary students from 1999 were announced and that was seen to be the first national evaluation of the reform, since these students had been at school under the new curriculum and had been the beneficiaries for the greater part of the reform initiatives. The results showed that, compared with the 1996 primary fourth grade cohort, the students 'of the reform' had achieved similar results, both in reading and maths and that the majority had not achieved a basic level of performance. Later, the poor results of Chilean students on TIMSS and PISA deepened the negative diagnosis of education. Both results, at the national and international level, would mark a trend that followed the country for almost the whole decade. Between 1999 and 2007 the overall belief that came to predominate was that student learning outcomes had stagnated.

However, this dominant interpretation of stagnation and ineffectiveness of the educational reform was debatable. First, the comparative instruments and methodologies that argued for both the progress of the 1990s and the stagnation of 2000 were neither very robust nor rigorous, owing to important methodological changes in SIMCE during this period (Bravo, 2011). Further, the fact that the school system was in the middle of a curriculum reform potentially invalidates the conclusions based on student cohorts educated under different curricula. Finally, given the many dimensions of the policies and the frequent changes that occurred during the same period, the sole evolution of the national average of one test like SIMCE was not a valid indicator of the reform's impact. In fact, since 2006, PISA results showed a significant increase in Chilean students' academic achievement, a trend deviating from SIMCE test scores (Valenzuela et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, in 2000 neither public opinion nor politicians were ready for complicated analyses. Knowledge of national and international test results was a shock, triggering a public debate that put the educational reform under the crossfire. The truce was over – from now on the opposition from the left and right, and increasingly broad sectors of the governing coalition, distanced themselves from the reform. The right argued that this was a failure of centralized

state policies and proposed to deregulate the teaching profession, give schools greater autonomy and implement an evaluation system with greater consequences (Fontaine and Eyzaguirre, 2001). The Teacher Union called for the reform to be stopped, and advocated a drastic change replacing the market paradigm for a traditional system built around public education. The media concentrated on the public opinion that in spite of all efforts Chilean education was worse than it had been before. Since then, the dominant tone in the public arena toward education has been acid criticism.

The government that commenced in 2000 attempted to act with greater dynamism in public management and adopted an approach of impatience for the lack of results; so now was the time to 'bring the reform to the classroom'. Certainly, research showed that the reform had arrived in the classroom, although not always in the way its designers had foreseen (Bellei, 2003). Increasingly, the government expressed a sense of impotence, since the State lacked effective tools to 'require quality' from the teachers and schools, and to close chronically underperforming schools.

Thus, in order to guarantee the continuity of the educational reform, the new government was open to modify some of its plans and push for some of the changes demanded by the stakeholders. For example, an adjustment would be made for the primary school curriculum, which implied a change in approach by making objectives and content more explicit (Gysling, 2007). Also, educational policy would give greater emphasis to the external evaluation of students, strengthening and significantly expanding SIMCE and developing standards for learning. The coverage of improvement programmes that had demonstrated some positive impact would be expanded and complemented with new, more structured programmes, strongly focused on curriculum application in the classroom and the improvement of academic achievement. Finally, the relevance of school management and leadership was recognized (Sotomayor, 2006). Also, the government and the Teacher Union agreed on implementing a national obligatory system for the evaluation of teacher performance in public schools, the results of which would have consequences for promotion and employment stability, with obligatory training as well as salary incentives (Weinstein, 2006; Bonifaz, 2011). The public expenditure in education for this period continued to increase in real terms, but more moderately than in the previous decade, partly as a result of the economic crisis that affected the country.

Overall, this was a 'reform of the reform' regarded as a compromise solution to guarantee its viability, but also as a necessary adjustment to increase its

potential impact on learning outcomes. Henceforth, it was a 'blurring' of the educational reform that had started in the mid-1990s. A decade after it had begun, the educational field had changed noticeably. On the one hand the enormous investment in teaching resources and infrastructure had improved its material base and significantly increased the time available for school activities, and educational coverage increased in pre-school, secondary and tertiary education. Now the critical concern was to increase test results. On the other hand education was no longer the 'definitive first priority' for politicians; it had changed from an area of national consensus to one of disputes. Actually, in the 2005 Presidential campaign, education was practically omitted as an issue. But history had a surprise hidden up its sleeve and it would come from an actor who had played virtually no relevant role since the end of the dictatorship: the student movement.

8.5 The 'new architecture' of Chilean education (2006–2013)

The crisis at the beginning of the 2000s revealed fragility in the prior national agreements. Rather paradoxically, the opposition on both right and left called for greater institutional change though in opposite directions. The 'third way' attempted until then seemed to have reached its limits. In fact, at the beginning of the past decade, the country had accumulated knowledge and experience of the need to modify structural aspects of the school system's organization to trigger greater and more sustained improvement in educational quality and equality (OECD, 2004; World Bank, 2007). But politicians had not endorsed this approach.

In this context, a social movement enters the field and produces the tiebreaker; in 2006 the secondary students not only occupied their schools, but they also took the educational policy field. Seen in perspective, the student movement was able to break the inertia about an educational policy that had avoided questions on the structural changes required by the school system because of political stalemate.

The secondary school movement of 2006 (continued later by the 2011 student movement) has clear features of social transformation embedded in a dense ideological substratum; students make policy issues comprehensible for the great majority of citizens, creating widespread support and sympathy. Basically, the secondary students articulated a demand for equality of opportunities

around the idea of the right to quality education and identified the pillars of the pro-market institutions created by the military dictatorship as the Gordian knot that frustrated this aspiration. In concrete terms, they proposed to strengthen public education, to make education free, end public funds for for-profit schools, prohibit the school selection of and discrimination against students, and to replace the constitutional education law (which had been promulgated by the Pinochet dictatorship) (Bellei and Cabalin, 2013).

After the strong secondary students' protests, all changes appeared to be possible. By mid-2006, the President convoked a broad Advisory Council on Educational Quality to discuss and propose policy directions to answer students' demands. The Advisory Council's report contained an enormous number and variety of recommendations that ranged from strengthening the right to free and quality education to the reform of the administration of public education and the creation of a new Teachers' Professional Career, although without a consensus within the Advisory Council to many of them (Consejo Asesor Presidencial, 2006). The maximalist position of the Advisory Council was a widespread expression of discontent with educational quality and equality: to move forward, the Chilean educational system needed a major institutional reform.

The Chilean President chose some of the recommendations and proposed what she called 'the new architecture for Chilean education', submitting an ambitious group of legal reforms to the Congress. However, these were strongly criticized by the right-wing parties. In order to make changes feasible, and after a complex process of negotiations, in 2007 the Government, the right-wing opposition and the Coalition governing parties reached 'Agreement for Quality Education', the main outcome of which was to be a new General Law of Education and later the creation of a Quality Assurance System (Larroulet and Montt, 2010).

The Agreement was a milestone for several reasons. First, the agreement implied that Pinochet's LOCE would be repealed. Second, in practice, it recognized that the sole dynamic of the market produced neither a competitive nor equitable education. In turn, it made the state responsible for ensuring the universal right to a 'quality education', through the creation of a Quality Assurance Agency that should evaluate both school processes and outcomes; also, a Superintendency of Education was established to oversee that schools are following the norms, including the rights of students and families. Third, the agreement established a 'standards-based reform' in Chile, including the definition of educational standards, external school performance evaluation and consequences associated to school performance. Fourth, the agreement prohibited academic selection during the school admission processes for

primary grades first to sixth, and also the expulsion of students on academic grounds. However, the co-payment system was not modified. Fifth, it increased the requirements for educational providers to have access to public subsidies; however, for-profit schools were maintained. Finally, the agreement created a schooling structure composed of six years of primary followed by six years of secondary education.

The Agreement also allowed for the approval of the Preferential School Subsidy Law (SEP), which significantly increased the value of the voucher for the poorest 40 per cent of students (previously the voucher did not adjust for different socio-economic conditions). Participating schools must design and implement a five-year school improvement programme, and define specific goals for student academic achievement (sanctions are applied for schools not attaining those goals); the law also provided funds for schools to buy external technical assistance to support their improvement processes (Weinstein and Muñoz, 2009; Muñoz and Vanni, 2008). SEP was presented as an alternative to the previous top-down improvement programmes.

Taken as a whole, the above-mentioned areas make up a highly demanding educational reform, the first of the twenty-first century in Chilean education. However, this new policy agenda omitted fundamental aspects for improving quality and equality in Chilean education, such as teachers' conditions, school management and the specific problems that face public education (Bellei et al., 2008). Actually, the new policy agenda is clearly unbalanced: greater emphasis has been placed on pressuring schools than on the development of teachers' and principals' capacities to respond to that pressure; greater emphasis on incentive mechanisms than on support tools; greater emphasis on accountability and control methods than on creating public school institutions capable of managing competently (Bellei et al., 2010).

There is a certain irony in that with all this agitated climate of discussion, mobilizations, and the perception of a school system in crisis, simultaneously, the results from international and national tests of Chilean student learning outcomes began to show clear signs of progress, breaking with the sense of 'stagnation'. Moreover, PISA results showed Chile to be the best-performing country in Latin America and one of the participating countries with the greatest progress.

Finally, in 2010 there was a new government made up for the first time in the past 20 years of an alliance of right-wing parties. Although the Government's programme would promise a 'revolution in education', the period can be characterized as one of important continuity in educational policies but with a greater emphasis on deepening market policies and the use of performance-based

incentives. Also, since 2011, the educational policy debate was severely affected by massive student mobilizations, but now led by higher education students.

Thus, in addition to organizing the new Superintendency and Educational Quality Agency, some relevant Government's initiatives were launched. First, SIMCE tests were expanded noticeably, both in terms of their frequency and their application to new grades and curriculum areas. Also, the Government created incentive programmes linked to test results for schools and high-school graduates willing to follow the teaching profession. Second, school leadership was strengthened by giving principals additional responsibilities and creating a massive training programme; the selection procedures for school principals were reinforced too. Third, sixty 'high schools of excellence' were created, which are academically selective high schools (admission is based on previous performance), with a strong focus on academic achievement. Finally, an important change to the curriculum was decided, emphasizing 'basic' subjects – language and maths – at the expense of other curriculum areas and time available for schools' priorities. In conclusion, although the government pushed forward multiple initiatives in education, it lacked a comprehensive and coherent vision of educational change, other than radicalizing standards-based reform (Berner and Bellei 2011).

8.6 Education as a social right; overcoming the market model? (2014)

The new election of President Michelle Bachelet at the end of 2013 (she served as the Chilean President between 2006 and 2010) brought with it a commitment to an ambitious educational reform, which aimed to reduce the marketization of the Chilean school system, changing the current paradigm by transforming education into a social right rather than a consumer good. This implies a major shift of direction compared to the approach followed by educational policies over the past three decades. To be sure, Bachelet's proposals are close to those of the student movements.

Schematically, in the first place, the government proposed to end public funding to for-profit private schools, also requiring that all public expenditure in education be spent on improving quality. Thus, for the government, the profit motive should not drive the management of subsidized private schools. Second, the government wanted to prohibit all forms of student selection by the schools, including academic selection. Also, Bachelet proposed to eliminate the co-payment, making all subsidized schools free. The objective is to reduce

schools' academic and socio-economic segregation, which are very high in Chile. Third, the government planned to strengthen public education, replacing the municipalities by new public institutions specialized in administrating public schools. Finally, the government proposed to improve teachers' working conditions and training, designing a new teaching career focused on professional development. In terms of allocating financial resources, a tax reform has just been approved (after a polarizing debate) with the largest proportion earmarked for financing the educational reforms.

According to the Government, the described educational policies include integral and structural changes that would bring the Chilean system closer to the prevailing practices of developed countries with educational systems of greater quality and equality. Nevertheless, the reforms announced by Bachelet face enormously complex technical, financial and even greater political challenges; particularly, because of the high expectations of the public linked to the sustained student movement and the considerable ideological differences across Chilean society with respect to the State and market role in education (which includes conflicting views on the right to education and teaching freedom). In fact, during the first months of the new government, private education stakeholders (including the Catholic Church, and for-profit private school owners), together with right-wing political leaders have been highly critical of the reform, arguing that it puts in danger educational diversity, freedom of teaching and school choice, without clear gains on quality improvement. Thus, the viability of Bachelet's educational reform remains uncertain.

8.7 Conclusion

Over the past thirty-five years the Chilean school system has been affected by profound transformations, pushed by State policies that altered its institutional base and changed its conditions and practices. In Figure 8.1, we summarize the main policies implemented during this period.

Until the middle of the 1970s, the organization and regulation of the Chilean public school system corresponded to what the literature calls a 'bureaucratic-professional' regime (Maroy, 2009), which is characterized by strong State power, centralization of school administration, with teachers' unions having an important influence and teachers having great autonomy over teaching practices. Private schools were not part of the public system and operated with autonomy, but marginal public support.

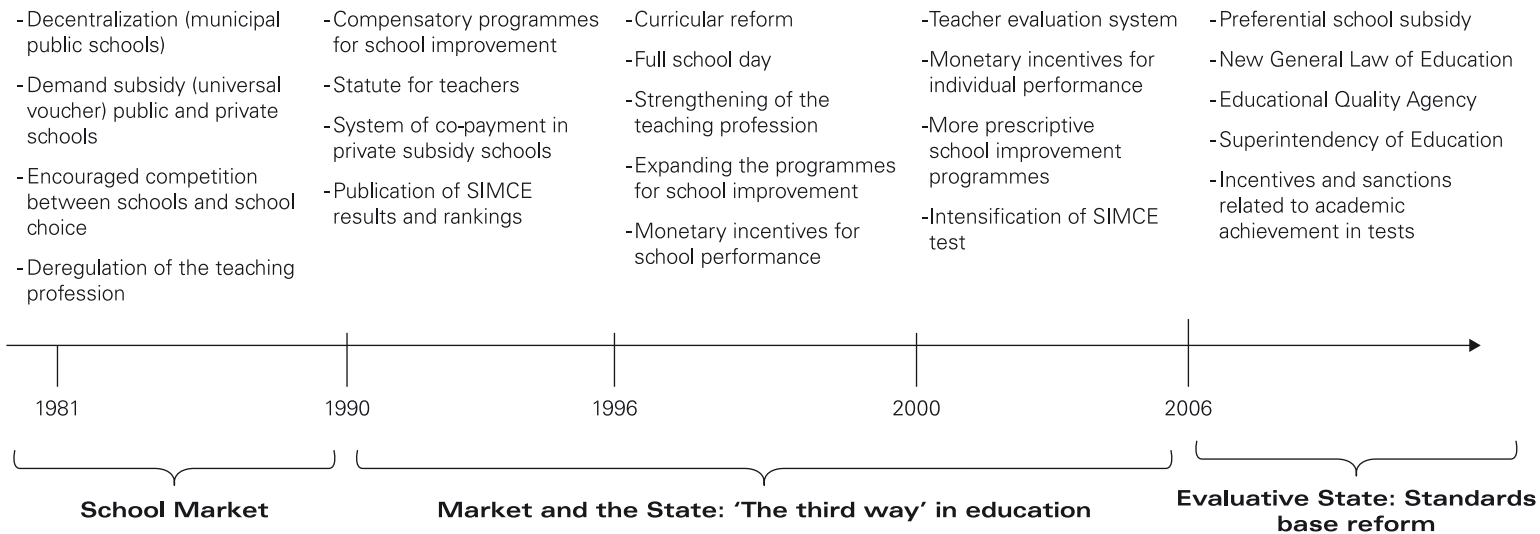

Figure 8.1 Main policies and approaches of education policy in Chile: 1980–2014 (see text for details).

In the first period, during the 1980s, policies were to limit State action in the educational system, finishing with the 100-year-old framework of the Teaching State, generating the conditions for schools and educational actors to behave according to market dynamics. This free-market approach was argued as a solution to the inefficiency of bureaucratic models and a system captured by interest groups, in particular teachers. Certainly, this was also part of a comprehensive neoliberal reform.

At the second instance, between 1990 and 2005, education policy restored a more active role for the State, while continuing and strengthening its organization by the market, but complementing it with the public authority as a promoter of quality improvement and equality for the system. We call this type of state/market combination in education a 'hybrid model' of regulation, which simultaneously operated with two policy approaches in continual tension: market competition and compensatory State action. This 'third way' in education began to show its exhaustion together with the educational reform that it had promoted ending up as a blur.

Then, since 2006, the evolution of the reform itself and – above all – the demands of the student movement, triggered a new period of institutional change in Chilean education. This time, it was not just a State supplementing the market with resources and incentives, but a State attempting to 'guide the market' with goals, regulations, assessments and audits. The State would produce quality assurance by establishing a greater degree of school accountability. These standards-based policies are associated to the model of school system regulation described as the 'evaluative state' (Neave, 1988; Maroy, 2009), which has grown from the ineffectiveness of the previous 'compromise' model and the urgent need to improve students' learning outcomes (Martinic, 2010).

While this policy approach – as implemented in Chile – strengthens the State role and reduces some market freedom in the school system, the market dynamics continue to have a critical role, which in some cases are contradictory to the new mode of regulation. So it is possible to call the result an institutional mosaic, which combines elements of the post-bureaucratic market model and the evaluative state – but this is likely to bring with it tensions and inefficiencies (Dupriez and Maroy, 2003). For by not introducing new institutional modifications, some undesired effects of the educational market, such as high school segregation and inefficient distribution of school supply, will continue to negatively affect Chilean education.

Finally, given the proposals of the new Government, the Chilean school system may be approaching a fourth period of reforms. According to this, the goal would be to protect the schools and educational institutions from the market and to

reduce the intensity of some of the most controversial mechanisms of the 'evaluative state', by placing greater emphasis on improving the professional capacities of the system and ensuring that education becomes a social right, i.e. to create a new normative framework (Salvat et al., 2012). In this sense, following the idea of *path dependence* (Page, 2006; Cox, 2012), we can say that as well as technical, financial and political complexities, we must add the cultural dimension, given how deeply rooted the logic of the market and the existing institutional rules have become in Chilean society, particularly among educational actors, policy makers and families. This makes change even more complicated in spite of all the identified problems of the current institutional arrangement of Chilean education.

Notes

1 Funding from PIA-CONICYT Basal Funds for Centers of Excellence Project BF0003 is gratefully acknowledged.

2 Chilean high schools have been separated between general and vocational tracks for decades; although both diplomas are formally equivalent, access to post-secondary education is significantly higher among students graduated from the general track. Certainly, low-income students tend to attend vocational high schools in higher proportions than middle-class students; also, vocational high schools are not articulated with vocational post-secondary institutions. For details, see Cariola, Bellei and Núñez, 2003.

3 This last statement is questionable because there is an enormous heterogeneity in this area. With this policy, Chile moved from around the halfway point in the range of OECD countries (955 hours) into the upper half (1,216 hours).

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