

Chilean Student Movements: Sustained Struggle to Transform a Market-oriented Educational System

Cristián Bellei
University of Chile

Cristian Cabalin
University of Chile

During the last decade, Chilean society was shaken by sharply critical and powerful student movements: secondary students led the 2006 “Penguin Revolution” and university students led the 2011 “Chilean Winter.” This article describes and analyzes these student movements to illustrate how students can be highly relevant political actors in the educational debate. First, we explain the main features of the Chilean educational system, including its extreme degree of marketization, which provided the institutional context of the movements. Next, we analyze the key components and characteristics of the 2006 and 2011 student movements to describe basic features of the two movements and identify common elements of these movements, especially from an education policy perspective. We mainly focus on the link between students’ demands and discourses and the market-oriented institutions that prevail in Chilean education. Finally, we identify students’ impact on educational debates in Chile and examine general implications for policy-making processes in the educational arena.

Introduction: Youth Apathy to Activism

One of the most important changes in the Chilean political system in recent decades was the establishment of automatic registration and voluntary voting in 2012. A political objective of this project was to increase youth participation in elections, which has been low since democracy was restored in 1990. Indeed, the lack of political participation in elections among youth was explained during the 1990s as an expression of general apathetic behavior. These young people were considered “the ‘whatever’ generation” (*La generación “No estoy ni ahí”*) due to their supposed apolitical attitudes and limited motivation to be involved in public affairs (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011; Moulián, 2002). Despite this distance from electoral and partisan politics, there is evidence that Chilean youth have profound criticisms of society (Duarte Quapper, 2000) and a high level of interest in public and social problems, especially those related to inequity and arbitrary discrimination issues (Schulz et al., 2010).

This characterization of apathy among youth may have contributed to the deliberate process of de-politicization and demobilization that started during the first democratic administration after Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship (De la Maza, 2010). In fact, since 1990, citizen mobilizations had scarcely accompanied the democratization process in Chile. This situation began changing in 2006, with youth, specifically students, playing a crucial role as protagonists of massive demonstrations. Although students represent only a part of youth movements, social movements related to education have historically had a powerful impact on political and socio-cultural structures (Gill & DeFronzo, 2009).

Education has been the major field where Chilean youth expressed their malaise. During the last decade and especially over the past seven years, Chilean society has been shaken by two sharply critical and powerful student movements. Students' demands, which have been echoed in civil society and the political field, have questioned some of the Chilean educational system's structural elements. Since Chilean education improved some basic indicators of coverage and outcomes during the last decade, one might wonder why student protests have been so intensive and sustained during the same period. We analyze this issue, linking students' demands with the institutional features of the educational system, which was restructured by a comprehensive neoliberal reform in 1980.

In the first of the students' movements, in 2006, secondary students were in the streets for more than two months with massive marches and protests (Domedel & Peña y Lillo, 2008). This was called the "Penguin Revolution" because of the black and white uniforms worn by high school students. They struggled against the neoliberal character of the Chilean educational system, attracted strong political attention and paved the path for the next big movement led by university students beginning in 2011. The *New York Times* called this second movement the "Chilean Winter" because it occurred around the same time as the "Arab Spring" revolutions against some regimes in the Middle East (Barrionuevo, 2011). For seven months during 2011, university and secondary students shook the country with a movement that democratic administrations had not seen for more than 20 years. Strong popular support, charismatic leaders, and a powerful critique of educational inequalities were some of the characteristics of this movement.

In this article, we describe and analyze these student movements in order to illustrate how students can be highly relevant political actors in educational debates. First, we explain the main features of the Chilean educational system, including its extreme degree of marketization, which provided the institutional context of the movements. Next, we analyze the key components and characteristics of the 2006 and 2011 student movements: we describe basic features of the two movements separately and then identify key common elements of these movements, especially from an education policy perspective. Thus, we mainly focus on the link between students' demands and discourses and the market-oriented institutions that prevail in Chilean education. Finally, in order to evaluate the efficacy of the students' movements in the educational policy arena, we identify their impact on Chilean educational debates and examine some general implications for policy-making processes. Since the students' movement is an ongoing process, we emphasize the provisional character of this last section.

The Context: Chile's Market-oriented Educational System

Chilean education in general—and specifically secondary education—has frequently been presented and is seen by many as an exemplary case within the Latin American context. This image, which certainly has deep historical roots, has rested in the past decades on diverse aspects emphasized by international organizations and policy makers. In this way, Chile has occupied an important role in debates on educational policies and comparative analysis, since it initiated institutional reforms in the 1980s. These reforms included administrative decentralization, funding per capita, public support to private schools, the implementation of universal academic achievement tests, and evaluation systems and monetary incentives for teachers. Since the mid-

1990s Chile has also been very active in implementing innovative, large-scale policies on educational improvement, including the introduction of computer technology, increased school hours, curricular reform, and diverse forms of teacher education (OECD, 2004; Cox, 2003). Moreover, during the last two decades, both secondary and post-secondary education levels have rapidly increased their coverage, and 15-year-old Chilean students significantly improved their performance on reading skills tests between 2000 and 2009 (OECD, 2011).

Thus, at first glance, one may wonder why Chilean students protested so vigorously. In our opinion, the key to understanding what triggered student protests is to observe the way in which Chilean education has been organized as a market-oriented educational system, and the consequences of that institutional arrangement. Although there is no single version of what constitutes organizing the educational system as a market, reviewing the academic and educational policy literature we can identify three key elements: school choice, competition among schools, and privatization of education (Friedman, 1955; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Howell & Peterson, 2006). From a market-framed perspective, schools should compete for families' preferences and families should have the freedom to choose a school for their children. Ideally, families should be aware of the "quality" of the different options and use such information when making their choices, in this way rewarding the best schools and forcing the worst ones to either improve or leave the market. Finally, schools need to be able to distinguish their offerings and accommodate families' preferences; in order to do that, schools should enjoy high flexibility (i.e., few government regulations) in the dimensions of curriculum and management. Market proponents encourage the expansion of private schools precisely because they expect private schools will be able to react more productively to market pressures, thereby improving both quality and efficiency in education.

Market proponents also think public schools should be radically restructured to be competitive, giving school administrators the freedom to manage schools in a business-like manner. In the educational policy arena, market-oriented reformers also promote *vouchers* as the public funding mechanism of schools. In their view, parents should be free to use the vouchers in the schools where they prefer to educate their children; by operating in this way, educational vouchers simultaneously promote parental choice, competition among schools, and privatization of school (for reviews of empirical evidence of these proposals see Ladd, 2003; Levin & Belfield, 2006; Witte, 2009). Although these ideas have been intensively discussed by educational experts and policy makers around the world for many years, they have been implemented only in highly restricted ways in a few countries. From a comparative perspective, Chile is one of the countries where market-oriented reforms in education were implemented more drastically.

In Chile, since the early 1980s, the driving force for the expansion of K-12 and post-secondary education was left to supply and demand dynamics in a market-oriented fashion: minimum requirements were set for the creation of new institutions and for receiving public funding; public and private institutions had to compete for families' preferences; and a universal voucher system (a state subsidy paid according to the student's monthly attendance) was established for funding private and public schools on equal terms. Also, in order to produce local market competition, public school administration was transferred from the national Ministry of Education to local municipalities. Since then, from the Ministry of Education's perspective, there has thus been no difference between a public and a private subsidized school.

Although some relevant changes were introduced during the post-dictatorship period, the structural elements of the marketized system have been deepened, rather than modified. For instance, in 1993, a family fee-charging mechanism was designed, creating what is called “shared funding,” a co-payment system that allowed (and encouraged) private schools and secondary public schools to charge a tuition fee without losing access to the state subsidy. As a consequence, secondary education in Chile is compulsory but not free of charge, and subsidized private primary schools also charge tuition fees to families. Additionally, *vouchers* continue to be the fundamental mechanism for financing schools; the amount has steadily increased. In 2008 an additional voucher was created to target the poorest 30% of students, making them more attractive for private sector institutions. Both the co-payment system and the additional voucher for the poorest students were seen by Chilean policy makers as policy instruments to enhance market dynamics within the educational field.

As mentioned, a key criterion that oriented Chilean educational policies and regulations throughout this period was the establishment of “equal treatment” by the state of both for-profit and not-for-profit academic institutions. This meant that private schools had access to the same public resources, including funds for supplies, equipment, and infrastructure development (Bellei, González, & Valenzuela, 2010).

Market-oriented reforms in Chilean primary and secondary education have been evaluated in terms of their effects on both equity and quality. Although the literature on this issue is abundant and highly complex, in general the conclusions are not positive for market proponents (Valenzuela, Bellei, & De los Ríos, 2013; Bellei, 2009; Hsieh & Urquiola, 2003; Carnoy & McEwan, 2000; Gauri, 1998). The evidence shows that market-oriented reforms have increased educational inequities, in terms of social and academic segregation; social inequality of academic achievement; and school discriminatory practices (OECD, 2004). Additionally, no significant gains in the overall educational quality have been associated with market-oriented reforms in education.

Market dynamics have also prevailed over the expansion of post-secondary education in Chile since 1980, but more so during the last decade when coverage at this level really exploded (Meller, 2010; Brunner, 2009; Ginsburg, Espinoza, Popa, & Terano, 2003). “Traditional” universities, which existed before the neoliberal reform of 1980, have had to operate under self-funding logic, which includes charging students increasingly higher tuition fees. Students whose families cannot afford the cost of this higher education have access to loans that are highly subsidized by the state. On the other hand, the growth of post-secondary enrollment mainly occurred through the creation and expansion of private institutions. These institutions do not participate in the public admission system—based on academic records and admission tests—and charge students or their families the entire cost of the education provided. Since the mid-2000s a system of state-guaranteed loans has been administered by private banks with high interest rates for students who attend these private institutions. This regulatory and policy framework has slowly evolved into a higher education market, greatly differentiated by types of institutions and highly stratified in relation to price, quality, and the social composition of the student body (Meller, 2010; Brunner & Uribe, 2006).

As we will discuss, the 2006 and 2011 student movements contended with this market-ruled educational system; students demanded a more active role of the state in education, especially to guarantee an acceptable standard of quality and reduce inequities. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the market-oriented educational policies described above were only part of an extensive neoliberal reform implemented by Pinochet's dictatorship during the 1980s, in which privatization policies were seen as instruments to reduce state power and eliminate welfare state institutions (Cavieres, 2011; Moulián, 2002). In this sense, students' push against neoliberal educational policies has crystallized the main criticism leveled against the broader neoliberal social and economic policies in Chile: high degrees of inequality between a privileged minority and the majority of the population (Sehnbruch & Donoso, 2011; Orellana, 2012). In fact, according to World Bank 2013 indicators, Chile has one of the most unequal income distributions in the world (see <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI>).

The 2006 Secondary Students' Movement

In May 2006, thousands of students aged 15 to 18 were in the streets. They generated the "Penguin Revolution," in which education became both a political and public issue (Domedel & Peña y Lillo, 2008). This movement—which soon received the support of university students and teachers' union organizations—was the most significant set of demonstrations in Chile since the return of democracy in 1990. In the first stages of this movement, the demands were for providing free transportation passes for students and eliminating the fees associated with the university admission exam. However, the student struggle subsequently shifted to focus on the poor quality and high inequality of Chilean education in terms of attainment, quality, resources, and opportunities. In the political arena, the students' target was the Constitutional Law of Education (LOCE), the legal foundation of the educational system enacted by the Pinochet regime in 1990. The market-oriented institutions in Chilean education exist within a very complex legal framework that includes LOCE, the Chilean Constitution (also imposed by Pinochet's regime), the voucher law, and several other specialized regulations. LOCE, in particular, reduced the state to a subsidiary role and promoted privatization in education. LOCE was strongly opposed even during the dictatorship; university students and professors had been unsuccessfully calling for its repeal since the return to democracy.

More generally, although their discourse evolved over time and became manifest with diverse emphases, the students' critique consisted of four key elements: 1) the demand for free education, 2) the defense of public education, 3) the rejection of for-profit educational providers, and 4) the elimination of schools' discriminatory practices. As a whole, the ideals of this Chilean student movement represented a rejection of the rule of market dynamics in education. First, students *demand free education*, which implied a rejection of the co-payment system at the school level. Indeed, the fact that Chilean government-funded public and private schools are allowed to charge tuition fees to families has been a highly controversial issue, since compulsory education is formally "free" in Chile. International organizations, such as UNICEF and UNESCO, have also expressed doubts about the consistency of these practices with international treaties on the matter. Moreover, at the level of higher education, Chile is the country with the highest private spending and fees in relative values among all of the OECD member states (OECD, 2011). Thus, Chilean families—not the state—have paid for the accelerated expansion

of post-secondary education in recent years. The high private cost of post-secondary education was a key concern shared by both high school and university students.

Second, students *advocated for public education*. In fact, since the establishment of the market-oriented system in the early 1980s, public education at the secondary level had declined from 75% to less than 40% of national enrollment between 1980 and 2012. Similar declines have occurred at the primary level. These declines in the proportion of public education mark a reversion to the situation at the beginning of the Republic in the mid-nineteenth century. Importantly, the reduction in public education provision is not attributed to the superior quality of private education: evidence shows that, under equal conditions, student achievement is similar for public and voucher private schools (Bellei, 2009). Students' advocacy for strengthening public education implied a demand for increased state responsibility over public education, including the creation of a funding system that gives priority to public institutions and the end of municipalized primary and secondary school administration.

Third, students *rejected for-profit private providers of education*, especially when their profits were obtained from public funds. In Chile, since the creation of the voucher system, the fastest growing sector in primary and secondary education has been that of for-profit institutions, which receive state subsidies on equal terms with not-for-profit private institutions and public institutions (Elacqua, 2009). Even some private universities that are required to formally constitute themselves as non-profit institutions have engaged in business strategies that circumvent the spirit of the legislation (Mönckeberg, 2007), which further discredited profit-making in education in the public opinion. The pursuit of profit in education has been defended by neoliberal sectors as the engine that invigorates growth and leads innovation. In contrast, students saw it as the source of many undesirable practices in education, including discrimination against students from low-income families and students with low academic abilities, low quality education services, and the uncontrolled growth of low-cost undergraduate programs with low employability outcomes.

Finally, students pushed for the *elimination of discriminatory practices by schools* and the reduction of social segregation in education. Chilean schools apply arbitrary mechanisms for selecting students, both in the admission process and throughout students' academic trajectories. Primary and secondary schools select students based on past performance, prediction of future performance, student's behavior, family income, and other family characteristics. These selective mechanisms are especially prevalent in private institutions, including schools that receive state funding (Contreras, Sepúlveda, & Bustos, 2010; Bellei, 2009). Many of these practices have long been denounced by international organizations and human rights advocates as detrimental to students' right to education. Nevertheless, Chilean political and judicial institutions have defended the notion of "free enterprise" in the educational market, giving educational providers freedom to set their own rules to admit and expel students, arguing that the mere existence of public schools was enough to guarantee the right to education (Casas, Correa, & Wilhelm, 2001; Casas & Correa, 2002; Bellei & Pérez, 2000). These selection methods, especially those that discriminate based on family income, help explain the very high levels of socioeconomic segregation in Chilean schools (Valenzuela, Bellei, & De los Ríos, 2013), which place Chile's educational system as one of the most socioeconomically segregated of all countries participating in PISA (OECD 2010).

Traditionally, Chilean student protests and movements had been of two kinds. The first kind of protest was clearly motivated by political issues, a sort of student-level “reflection” of the political process carried out by adults. In such cases, the basic codes were those of the activist who is either against the government or defends it, and whose “program” was framed in the context of social transformation and ideological struggle. The other kind of student protests involved different, concrete demands and direct claims, and thus expressed a clear interest group perspective. In these cases, the list of demands emphasized benefits that the students, as stakeholders, hoped to get from authorities.

The movement led by secondary students in 2006 certainly had clear aspects of both traditions: it articulated a solid ideology on educational issues and it brought a significant list of concrete demands to the negotiating table. Importantly, beyond these two aspects, the movement generated strong and widespread support and sympathy from the majority of Chile’s citizens, according to public opinion surveys. In our view, this happened for two reasons. First, the student movement managed to formulate a demand for equal opportunity in education around the idea of the right to quality education. Second, they identified specific foundations of the market-oriented framework of Chilean education that had to be dismantled to accomplish that goal. In other words, for these 21st century citizens, access to the school system was not enough. To them, equitable access to quality educational content and processes was the essential criterion to apply when evaluating whether or not the right to education has been guaranteed.

The 2011 Higher Education Students’ Movement

On 28 April 2011, 8,000 university students marched in different cities across Chile. The following month, a second march doubled that size. These two protests were only the beginning of what would become one of Chile’s major historical student movements, producing an array of demonstrations that had enormous citizen support. This movement lasted for seven months, during which university students, united by the Chilean Student Confederation (*Confederación de Estudiantes de Chile, Confech*), organized 36 weekly massive marches (some involving around 100,000 people in Santiago), took over their universities, held assemblies, and changed the public agenda in education. Camila Vallejo, President of the Student Federation of the University of Chile (*FECH*), and Giorgio Jackson, President of the Student Federation of Catholic University (*FEUC*), were two of the most charismatic leaders of the movement. With the help of leaders of regional universities, they transformed the protests into a national movement that attracted international attention. Soon, students from non-traditional private universities and secondary students joined and actively participated in the demonstrations (Cabalin, 2012; Salinas & Fraser, 2012).

Initially, students demanded more resources for public education and free access to universities for poor and middle-class students. Subsequently, however, they called for free post-secondary education for all, arguing that the state must guarantee the right to education from early childhood to higher education in equal conditions for all social classes. President Sebastián Piñera’s administration rejected the demand for free education. However, in an attempt to placate the protesters, the government created new university scholarships to support students from the lowest socioeconomic quintiles. This did not appease protesters, because their main concern was

the high cost of tuition and other fees associated with loans held by the majority of students. In Chile, families finance 73% of higher education costs, a figure that greatly exceeds the 16% average for OECD countries (OECD, 2011). Funding their education was a major issue for students because tuition and fees at Chilean universities were some of the most expensive among OECD countries, in relative terms (OECD, 2011).

The university system reforms in the 1980s created the conditions for the proliferation of new private universities in the following years, many of them of very low quality. In addition, according to available indirect evidence, despite being legally defined as non-profit organizations some of these universities yield substantial financial returns for their owners, thanks to legal subterfuge. Students criticized the for-profit spirit in the higher education system. Moreover, their discourse reflected notions of social justice in education, by rejecting the subsidiary role of the state in education, promoting universal non-discriminatory access to free education, and requesting progressive tax reform to publicly fund education (Vallejo, 2012; Jackson, 2013; Figueroa, 2013).

To accomplish their goals, students organized a comprehensive political strategy, extending their collaborative networks and involving additional stakeholders, such as the teachers' union, workers' unions of various labor sectors, and several civil society organizations. Student organizations and some of the leaders of the movement published brief policy documents and disseminated information extensively through traditional and new media. Through these actions they contributed to the re-politicization of public discussion about issues related to education and social equality. The political strategy of the movement allowed for the integration of different social demands in a national movement for education (Lustig, Mizala, & Silva, 2012).

After months of public demonstrations, students became more than protesters in the streets: they became political actors with a clear agenda of transformation and a coherent discourse about justice in education (Cabalin, 2012). Consequently, leaders of the students' movement were recognized by policy makers as relevant players in the educational policy debate. For example, the Minister of Education negotiated directly with these leaders to create a first set of policies to answer their demands; then, the Chilean Congress invited them to discuss the 2012 National Budget Law.

Ideologically, the university students' movement criticized the neoliberal system of education, as the "Penguin Revolution" had done five years before (Orellana, 2012). Summarizing, students asked for structural changes, such as a stronger state role in regulating and controlling educational institutions, a new system of public funding for education, reinforcement of the public universities, and the effective exclusion of for-profit organizations as educational providers at all levels. All these issues became part of the educational policy debate in Chile, and both the Government and the Parliament have discussed different proposals to tackle them.

Characteristics of the Chilean Student Movements: A New Generation of Activists

It is possible to say that Chilean students are part of a new generation of political actors in education. From a sociological perspective, Chile is experiencing a transition from a passive generation to an active one. Karl Mannheim (1952) argued that traumatic experiences play a key

role in the production of a generational consciousness. For Chilean adults and policy makers, Pinochet's dictatorship was that kind of traumatic episode. Consequently, they incorporated the political compromises needed to end the indisputable reality of the military regime. Nevertheless, students who marched in 2006 and 2011 (most of whom were born in the era of new democracy) were not part of that story: they felt free to question the limits defined by the previous generation.

Edmunds and Turner (2005) offer a valuable explanation to understand the shift from a passive generation to an active one. For them, this change occurs when a generation is "able to exploit resources (political/educational/economic) to innovate in cultural, intellectual or political spheres" (p. 562). They conclude that a new generation is created when young people combine these resources and innovations with political opportunities and strategic leadership. Looking at the student movements from this perspective, Chile is experiencing the birth of a new generation. In order to deepen this idea, we identified four features that characterize the recent Chilean students' movements: 1) persistence; 2) combining short-term and more structural, long-term demands; 3) innovative forms of organization and communication; and 4) multiple mechanisms of coordination.

The first element that stands out regarding the movements has been its persistence. In effect, the first series of massive protests took place in 2001 and was known as the "mochilazo" (demonstration with backpacks). The "mochilazo" was articulated around a demand for better conditions and pricing of public transportation, and also a greater presence of the state in terms of administering fares. A high level of support among students in Santiago got the government to consent to their demands after a complex negotiation process. The "mochilazo" not only broke the public silence of students in a post-dictatorship context, it also showed the emergence of new forms of student organization. This involved a combination of the traditional student council (strengthened by the organizational and participation policies of the mid-1990s) with less structured but strongly coordinated and highly motivating student assemblies. The "mochilazo" experience also made clear that government institutions did not know how to process these demands, and that the traditional form of political negotiation was not effective in this new scenario. Some of these key features of the "mochilazo" were direct antecedents of the 2006 and 2011 students' movements, which continued with less intensity during the years 2012 and 2013. Student organizations involved in those processes have been accumulating knowledge and refining their political action in the field for a decade.

A second feature of the student movements has been the ability to articulate not only short-term demands (e.g., transportation, quality of the school's equipment and infrastructure), but also a set of demands that aim to transform structural aspects of the education system. For instance, the students challenged the regulatory legacy of the Constitutional Law of Education—which was enacted on the very last day of the Pinochet government in 1990. The students also protested against privatization, tuition charges, and discriminatory practices in the selection of students. The "Penguin Revolution" of 2006 made clear that the student movement's discourse of protest and critique was becoming increasingly stronger and more systemic, going well beyond a simple list of student benefits.

A third element characterizing the student movements has been innovation in the ways students have organized and expressed themselves. Because of Chilean young people's general mistrust of traditional forms of political delegation and representation, students tried alternative ways of political organization. To be clear, political militancy and traditional forms of student organization have not disappeared, but they have been complemented, and in many cases exceeded, by new forms of participation, representation, and decision-making processes among students. For instance, in organizational terms, students used diverse assemblies and coordination agents with more horizontal and less mediated methodologies to deliberate and make decisions. When these organizations communicate to influence public opinion, student leaders act more like assembly "spokesmen" than an authority representing an organization. In both 2006 and 2011, student organizations also implemented sophisticated mass-media communication strategies, guided by leaders with outstanding and refined communication skills.

Finally, the coordination process has also changed, mainly through the intensive use of new communication technologies and instant messaging. These allow students to summon a group quickly, widely, and cheaply, and also to spread their ideas and protest outcomes through the mass media. Indeed, the media has not replaced but rather complemented the creation of various face-to-face initiatives, which gather representatives based on geographic (e.g., Santiago areas) or institutional (e.g., vocational secondary schools) criteria. Forms of public demonstration have also been diverse. This is particularly noticeable when looking at the 2011 student movement, during which students employed numerous forms of pressure towards authorities and also adopted a different range of strategies to spread their message to the general public. Strategies included traditional marches, strikes, and occupations, but also new forms of public demonstration, such as massive dances, carnivals, street debates, and videos and performances in public places.

Conclusion: Chilean Students as Educational Policy Stakeholders

The student movement is an ongoing process and some demands are still being subjected to political debate, but there has already been a tremendous impact on Chilean educational policy (Bellei, Contreras, & Valenzuela, 2008; Bellei, Contreras, & Valenzuela, 2010). The fact that a student movement strongly affected both the policy debate and policy decisions represents a significant change for Chilean society, and is of major interest from a comparative perspective on educational policy.

In fact, after the secondary student protests in 2006 all changes seemed possible. President Michelle Bachelet created an Advisory Presidential Council for Quality in Education to debate and propose policy guidelines for improving both quality and equity in education. After six months of deliberations, the Advisory Council presented a report that encompassed a wide variety of recommendations, including strengthening the right to access quality education free of charge; holding the state responsible for guaranteeing quality education; establishing quality assurance institutions in education; reforming the institutional system of public school administration; and significantly modifying the current funding system (Consejo Asesor Presidencial, 2006).

President Bachelet embraced some of the Advisory Council's recommendations and proposed a "new architecture of Chilean education." She sent to Parliament an ambitious set of legal reforms, which included: a new General Law of Education that replaced the previously mentioned Constitutional Law of Education; the creation of a Superintendence in Education to control the legal aspects of the system; the creation of an Agency for Quality in Education; changes in the structure of educational cycles; and the reform of the administration of the public schools. Each of these reforms, except the last, was approved. In our view, the combination of a sense of emergency and social pressure from the student movement, with the consensus view generated by the Advisory Council, gave policy makers a new perspective, opened unexpected political opportunities, and resulted in a policy agenda focused on institutional transformation of the Chilean educational system.

The 2011 student movement's impact on higher education has also been considerable. President Piñera and his Ministers of Education disagreed with some of the most emblematic demands of the students, including free education, giving priority to public education, and ending public funding to for-profit providers. However, the administration implemented a new system of public funding that increased the proportion of students with higher education scholarships and significantly reduced student loan interest rates. The administration also passed a tax reform to fund new educational policies and proposed a major change in the accreditation system of post-secondary educational institutions, which is currently being discussed by the Chilean Parliament. Further, the Chilean Parliament created special commissions to investigate some private universities regarding potentially illegal for-profit activities (see Commission Report, 2011; Mönckeberg, 2007). Finally, the educational policy issues raised by the student movement have been intensively debated in the current presidential campaign in Chile.

In general terms, students framed their struggle within the "politics of meanings" in education. Thus, from an educational policy perspective, the student movements challenged public understanding of the education system because the students rejected the notion of the problem-solving approach supported by traditional policy makers. Certainly, students participated in defining educational problems, but students also participated in the discussion of policy implications. As political actors in the educational arena, students tried to be part of the contexts of influence, text production, and practice (Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 1992). These aspects of student participation extended the notion of the policy cycle beyond the diagnostic-design-implementation-evaluation cycle that characterizes the bureaucratic structure and technocratic process of educational policy creation (Reimers & McGinn, 1997). The student movements not only highlighted "new problems," but also new interpretations of those problems. Such interpretations implied the need for systemic changes in education, which were outside the framework of reference for Chilean policy makers.

From this perspective, the consequences of the student movements are also evident beyond the educational field. The debate about education in Chile has been linked to larger social concerns, such as Chile's unequal economic model and the country's lack of participatory institutional structures. Thus, as social movement, students can be considered "agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 163).

During the last decades, the design and evaluation of public policies in health, poverty, and education increasingly became technical activities mainly engaged in by professional experts. Consequently, students—like social program “beneficiaries”—have traditionally been excluded from the processes of engaging educational policies. The Chilean student movements showed the limits of this notion. Increasingly, policy makers, especially in matters like education, need to consider social and cultural aspects to design and evaluate policies; introducing participatory processes into the policy cycle seems to be the most appropriate way to accomplish this (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Reimers & McGinn, 1997).

The shift toward increased participation of local actors in the educational policy process goes in the opposite direction of the documented growing relevance of international organizations in the educational policy field. In fact, educational policies have become enmeshed with the new dynamics of globalization, where the main concern is to increase economic competitiveness. Within this context, supranational organizations—such as the World Bank and other regional banks, International Monetary Fund, UNESCO, and OECD—have created a network of interactions with public authorities, policymaking agencies, and transnational corporations that highly influence national educational policies (Ball & Youdell, 2007). This has been the case for Chilean higher education in the last decades (Ginsburg, Espinoza, Popa, & Terano, 2003). Nevertheless, since public policies can also express a collective will to solve social problems, the 2006 and 2011 student movements reminded Chilean policy makers that—despite a globalized policy field—they are still socially and locally accountable.

***Cristián Bellei** is an Associate Researcher with the Center for Advanced Research in Education and Assistant Professor in the Sociology Department, both at the University of Chile. His main research areas are educational policy, school effectiveness, and school improvement; he has published extensively about quality and equity in Chilean education. E-mail: cbellei@ciae.uchile.cl*

***Cristian Cabalin** is Assistant Professor of the Communication and Image Institute at the Universidad de Chile. He is a Ph.D. candidate in Educational Policy Studies / Global Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He holds a Master's degree in Anthropology and Development and a Bachelor's degree in Communication. His research interests include cultural studies in education, education policy, media, and journalism. E-mail: ccabalin@uchile.cl cabalin@illinois.edu*

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