

Experts, neoliberal doxa, and the rollback of high-stakes school rankings in Chile (2006-2024)

Gabriel Chouhy*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6875-8406>

Introduction

The political economy literature has long underscored the paramount role ideas played in the global shift to market-based reform since the 1980s (Blyth, 2002; Hall, 1993; Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009; Prasad, 2006; Somers and Block, 2005). Using Chile as a case study, this paper takes up this classical thesis but focusing instead on the momentous retrenchment of market-fundamentalism: the moral, ideological, and scientific controversies over reforming the so-called “market model” of education that resulted from the outbreak of two waves of mass student protests in 2006 and 2011. Specifically, I examine the rollout, exponential growth, and partial rollback of test-based, high-stakes school rankings as a paradigmatic tool for fixing market failures in education. In Chile, test-based school assessments have been in use since the 1980s, but only became ubiquitous after 2006, when the student movement began to publicly challenge the so-called “market model” of education. Within a decade, the subject and grade coverage of high-stakes nationwide tests expanded significantly, but then it quickly lost momentum and began to decline in 2016. Though punitive assessments remain legally in force, the emerging consensus among education experts calls for a paradigm shift away from high-stakes accountability.

* Universidad Central de Chile, Santiago, Chile.

Combining analyses of administrative data of public allocation of research funding with in-depth interviews with education stakeholders, policy documents, congressional debates, and session minutes of regulatory agencies, this paper argues that the relative sway of ideas about the utility of high-stakes accountability regulation as a solution to market failure shapes the policy's oscillating trajectory. It shows that, though the initial wave of student protests explicitly denounced the embeddedness of testing in the "market model" of education, policymakers refused to engage in a politics of market reversal. Instead, they fully embraced the institutionalization of performance-based management as paradigmatic solution to market failure. The toughening of the testing regime, however, only provoked new grievances. Growing discontent with its punitive logic created opportunities for challengers to further attack high-stakes accountability as constitutive of the market model. Once the anti-market frame mustered enough political support to splinter elite consensus, the politics of rollback finally gained traction. Underlying the paradigmatic clash, I argue, was the state-sponsored development of a specialized field of education experts, equipped with enough cognitive tools to challenge the epistemological dominance of economics over education policy.

The historical-sociological account of the rollout, exponential growth, and partial rollback of the testing regime in Chile builds on recent scholarship that combines social movement, political, and economic sociology to conceptualize markets (in my case, education markets) as strategic action fields (Fligstein, 1996; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012) that become destabilized and transformed as a result of struggles between incumbents and challengers. Per this theory, social actor's accumulation of skill plays a critical role. I contribute to this scholarship by theorizing the mechanism linking field transformation to the accretion of cognitive and intellectual resources by challenger actors. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977) classical formulation, I call this mechanism *doxic erosion*, i.e. the protracted depreciation of tacit assumptions about the range of solutions at policymakers' disposal. In Chile, I contend, the contentious dynamic opened by burgeoning student unrest gradually undermined the ideational currency of regulatory tools such as quality assurance mechanisms, which incumbents initially foresaw as legitimate solutions to market failure. As the social movement for education grew in allies and successfully articulated an all-encompassing collective action frame (Donoso, 2013a, 2016; Snow *et al.*, 1986; Somma, 2012) policy instruments that featured at the core of the market model moved from doxa to orthodoxy. Concurrently, an alternative – heterodox – view of high-stakes testing emerged; one that framed it not as an impartial tool for market regulation but as a political instrument that, as such, plays a key role in structuring the education policy field in a market-like fashion.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section presents a stylized description of the phenomenon to be accounted for, namely, the shifting trajectory of test-based, high-stakes accountability policy in Chile. The following section further develops my analytical framework. A brief methodological section follows. The rest of the paper reconstructs the political process through which the student movement's claims for prioritizing public schools after decades of government-sponsored privatization led policymakers from across the political spectrum to reform the governance of k-12 education under the paradigm of market regulation through quality assurance. I focus on the aftermath of the first student revolt, specifically, the controversies leading up to the approval of two important laws: the General Education Law of 2009, which formally proclaimed "quality education" as a constitutional entitlement, and the Education Quality Assurance Law of 2011, which mandated the official use of test-based metrics of education quality to hold providers (schools) responsible to consumers (students). Then I analyze a grassroots campaign, *Alto al SIMCE*, orchestrated in response to the intensification of testing that followed the implementation of quality assurance regulation. I show how the second cycle of student protests of 2011 against market-based education created opportunities for young activist scholars in charge of this campaign to frame test-based accountability as a pernicious market technology. Finally, I examine policymakers' response to this challenge, which resulted in the partial rollback and softening of the accountability regime, accompanied with measures both to restrict the use of rankings for "exit" and promote "voice" as mechanism of quality improvement.

The rise and decline of high-stakes testing

For almost half a century, Chile has featured – and still does – as a prototypical case for the study of markets as sociopolitical constructions: a country wherein enlightened state technocracies have recurrently experimented with the theories and methods of economic science to perform – and even improvise – new market arrangement in myriad policy fields (Fariás, 2014; Montecinos, 1998; Silva, 2008). As early as in the 1980s, the Chicago Boys – sanctified by Hayek and Friedman, and backed by Pinochet's iron fist – turned the country into a world pioneer and epicenter of pro-market projects. Education was no exception. The central state transferred the administration of elementary and secondary schools to local governments, consecrated school choice as a constitutional right, opened the market to private providers (for- and not-for-profit), and offered them public monies through a voucher system of school financing. The military regime also invited economists and engineers from the Catholic University to create the *SIMCE* – *Sistema de*

Medición de la Calidad Educativa – a standardized test explicitly conceived as a tool to inform parental choice in the context of privatization and decentralization. Turned into a legal mandate, government's publicizing of average test scores aligned with a tacit agenda: to objectively demonstrate the superiority of private education (Benveniste, 2002).

As originally conceived, however, standardized testing covered only a limited number of grades and subject areas. Market-minded reformers assumed that granting full sovereignty to education consumers would create enough incentives for service improvement. The expectation was that competition for student vouchers would boost entrepreneurship and innovation, thereby measurably improving school quality. In the following fifteen years (1990-2005), the democratically elected administrations of the center-left *Concertación* coalition consolidated this model of public-private service delivery, only introducing pragmatic fixes in the form of compensatory funding and support. Moreover, they universalized vouchers as the single-most important source of school financing, and authorized voucher-funded private schools – popularly known as *colegios particular-subvencionados* – to charge copays to families. Meanwhile, the state began using test scores to target resources to underperforming schools, award bonuses to teachers in high-performing schools, set curricular benchmarks, and account for the effectiveness of public investments (Falabella, 2015; Falabella and Zincke, 2019; Parcerisa and Falabella, 2017). As enrollment in voucher private schools expanded and municipal schools faced heightened competition, league tables comparing SIMCE scores averages across schools began to circulate in mainstream media. Eventually, the release of the yearly test results became a matter of public conversation.

The SIMCE grew in uses and purposes as reformers gradually shifted away from the paradigm of consumer sovereignty and moved towards top-down accountability. Still, standardized testing for high-stakes accountability purposes became pervasive only after 2006, when a wave of occupations and mass street protests by high-school students openly challenged the so-called market model of education. Within a decade, the number of grades being tested annually rose from one in 2004 to six in 2014 (see Figure 1). In that same period, the coverage of mandatory tests implemented in a single year increased from two to fifteen. Nevertheless, the rapid expansion and intensification of testing quickly lost momentum. In 2016, the center-left government downsized national testing to only three grades, totaling between eight and nine tests in a year. New legislation prohibited the Agency of Education Quality (AEQ), in charge of the SIMCE, from publicly reporting test results disaggregated at the school level, thereby limiting the circulation of league tables. Importantly, that year the AEQ began implementing a high-stakes classification of schools into four

performance categories. Per the legal mandate provided by the Law of Education of Quality Assurance (LEQA) of 2011, the performance categories produced by the so-called “School Ordinalization Methodology” (SOM) are required to include “other indicators of quality” not captured by cognitive achievement tests. Even more importantly, the test scores used for this classification must be adjusted by student SES to, allegedly, achieve fairness in the responsabilization of schools.

As shown in the summary list of milestones compiled in Table 1, attempts to dismantle high-stakes accountability policy have gained even more traction in recent years. In October 2019, in the wake of the largest street protests in Chilean history, the Senate began considering a moratorium on government prerogatives to close underperforming schools, virtually abolishing the high stakes originally built into the SOM. In August 2020, the bill favorably passed the Senate, with the votes of all opposition parties, and against the will of the conservative government and its parliamentary coalition. The Covid pandemic altered the legislative agenda so the anti-accountability bill never made it to the House. Still, as everywhere, testing was suspended while schools remained closed. When schools reopened in 2021, the NCE rejected government plans to expand testing once again. The renovated Left coalition that won the elections in the aftermath of the *estallido social* fully embraced the anti-testing narrative, including the elimination of the SIMCE as we know it. Though the defeat of two constitutional proposals in national plebiscites and the return of politics as usual that followed ended up halting the government’s reformist agenda, high-stakes testing seems to have lost the strong consensus it enjoyed back in the day.

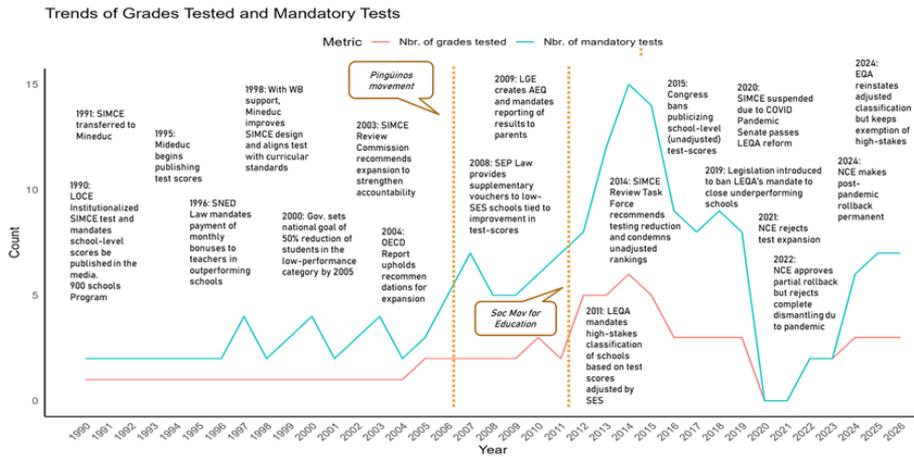
TABLE 1
A brief history of the testing regime in Chile

1988	Three-years agreement between Mineduc and PUC to develop SIMCE
1990	LOCE institutionalizes SIMCE in Mineduc and mandates publishing of school-level results “900 Schools” Program targets assistant to low-performing schools
1991	Transfer of SIMCE administration to Mineduc
1995	Mineduc begins publishing results
1996	Sned Law ties teachers salary bonuses to school average scores
1998	Supported by WB loan, Mineduc creates special Unit for SIMCE administration to enhance comparability and align test with curricular standards

2000	Administration sets national target of 50% reduction of students in the low-performance category by 2005
2003	SIMCE Review Task Force upholds publication of school-level data, recommends increase in testing frequency and grade coverage to enable value-added accountability as well as development of performance standards to ease teachers' use of results
2004	OECD report positively evaluates SIMCE and recommends expansion in accordance to 2003 Task Force
2008	SEP Law (Preferential School Subsidy) ties means-tested supplementary voucher to effective implementation of improvement plan measured by progress in SIMCE scores. Supplementary funding to be used to contract ATEs (private educational services). High-performance schools are allowed to sell educational service in the marketplace.
2009	LGE creates autonomous Education Quality Agency in charge of SIMCE, and grants the National Council of Education binding consultation prerogatives on: National curriculum standards National assessment plans
2011	Law of Education Quality Assurance: - Mandates Education Quality Agency to create "School Ordinalization Methodology" based on SIMCE but including other indicators of quality and adjustments by SES
2014	SIMCE Review Task Force recommends against publication of unadjusted league tables and advocates for reduction in testing frequency and grade coverage
2015	2015: NCE rejects suspension of reading test in 2nd grade
2019	Bills introduced to suspend school closures mandated by LEQA and ban diffusion of unadjusted league tables
2020	SIMCE suspended due to Covid pandemic and replaced by voluntary formative assessment. Senate passes LEQA reform.
2021	SIMCE suspended due to covid pandemic and replaced by voluntary formative assessment. NCE forces government to downsize the new National Evaluation Plan, explicitly invoking potential unintended consequences of testing, and celebrating the new voluntary formative assessment.
2022	NCE forces government to keep part of National Evaluation Plan but endorses partial rollback, including temporary suspension of high-stakes.
2023	Government declares intent to reform LEQA to completely scrap national tests.
2024	Government announces high-stakes ordinalization will resume in 2026, once three years of consecutive assessments are completed. School closure due to recurrent underperformance remains suspended till then. LEQA reform still pending.

FIGURE 1

The rollout, exponential growth, and partial decline of high-stakes standardized testing in Chile



Source: Author's calculations based on data retrieved from National Evaluation Plans as well as administrative resolutions modifying said plans issued by the Ministry of Education and the National Council of Education. Policy milestones were selected from analyses of legislation, executive orders, and regulatory decisions by different agencies.

Education policy, strategic action field, and the erosion of *doxa*

What explains this oscillating policy trajectory characterized by the rollout, exponential growth, and partial decline of high-stakes standardized testing in Chile? A great deal of the answer to this question, this paper contends, lies in the shifting influence of market-fundamentalist assumptions linked to quality assurance as an effective regulatory paradigm. The test-based high-stakes accountability system instituted in Chile is, by all accounts, a market device: a policy tool purported to fix education market failure. Like many policy tools, the adoption of quality assurance regulation was technically grounded in economic style of reasoning (Berman, 2022; Hirschman and Berman, 2014): it was the most efficient way to fix ill-conceived market incentives. But notwithstanding its alleged “apolitical” character, it underwent politicization. What originally appeared as a neutral, technical solution to market failure was increasingly framed by challengers as a morally dubious policy that simply served the perpetuation of unequal market outcomes. Politicization of testing and its framing within the broader conflict over the market model of education affected the policy paradigm’s ideational currency.

To understand how this happened, I draw on Fligstein and McAdam’s (2012) theory, conceptualizing education policy as a “strategic action field”. Specifically, I look at how state and non-state actors engage in strategic struggles to organize fields

or policy domains. In constructing a field, or in struggling for its transformation, actors come in differently endowed with resources and skills. In “normal” times, incumbents tend to disproportionately wield the material and symbolic resources necessary to dominate the field, an advantage that grants them definitional power over the field’s organizing rules. Challengers typically occupy subordinate positions and have incentives to conform to the rules of the game, but they can also bring in alternative interpretative frames about how the field could be differently organized. In critical junctures, these competing frames are more likely to gain currency.

Crucial to the challengers’ ability to enact field transformation is the accumulation of social skill, i.e., an increase of collective capacity to analyze, interpret, and communicate what is at stake in the field, articulating an alternative vision of it, and mobilizing resources and people accordingly. Such a process is normally driven by institutional entrepreneurs, who are strategically positioned to build new coalitions of disparate groups and engage in forms of collective action that overflow the established order. In settled fields that strongly depend on codified institutional norms, incumbents normally have control over rulemaking. The changes introduced to the rules of the game therefore tend to reinforce the incumbents’ position and reproduce their power. Major transformation thus typically ensues from the irruption of outsiders with looser adherence to the existing rules and dominant frames. But field encroachment by challengers does not automatically translate into overarching change. Rather, it triggers an incremental process by which challengers bring new allies into their coalition as they accrue the skills necessary to wield enough power to rewrite the rules of the game.

This paper theorizes the specific mechanisms that both fuel and funnel the accumulation of skill. Though Fligstein & McAdam’s fielded perspective provides an insightful conceptual toolkit to understand continuity and change across myriad sociopolitical and economic domains, it tends to overlook the specific role of experts in mobilizing the knowledge necessary for the emergence and diffusion of alternative policy frames. If some ideas come to matter enough to induce policy change, it is because certain groups of experts manage to successfully carry these ideas from academic to bureaucratic and political fields. Experts are crucial actors in political struggles, since they best poised to make authoritative knowledge claims about the world. Recruited into politics, experts translate demands into sound technical knowledge, thus speaking to and for different constituencies in policy language (Mudge, 2018). What type of expert comes to command legitimate authority to make public interventions is therefore critical (Eyal, 2013; Eyal and Buchholz, 2010).

Conceptualizing “expert terrains as part and parcel of political life” (Mudge, 2020, p. 372), I propose a series of mechanisms to theorize cross-field effects among

the education research field, politics, and the techno-bureaucratic apparatuses in charge of governing education markets. In a nutshell, I argue that the encroachment of the so-called “Social Movement for Education” on the political arena triggered a series of events that, following Mora (2014), can be analytically classified into three distinct mechanisms: boundary spanning networks, transposition of resources, and use of ambiguity and boundary work.

First, to address growing discontent with the market model of education and the legitimacy crisis provoked the irruption of the student movement, political incumbents sought to expand the technocratic knowledge employed in policy formation, going beyond traditional reliance on economics and psychometrics. Thus, expert categories such as “accountability” or “value added” filtered into the education policy debate. Social movement categories such as “social rights” or “quality education” were also taken by experts and policymakers to frame causal stories about policy failure. Finally, the agents involved in the policy controversy strategically exploited the ambiguity of the emerging categories and concepts to engage in boundary work. Elite actors conveniently used concepts such as “accountability” and “quality assurance” with enough ambiguity to favor workable compromise. But challenges also brought in new categories to draw boundaries between incommensurable policy paradigms, i.e., the market vs. social rights.

Overall, these three processes contribute to an overarching mechanism that I here call, in a lack of a better word, *doxic erosion*. For Bourdieu (1977), *doxa* refers to the set of fundamental beliefs and values so deeply ingrained that appear self-evident and natural. Doxic assumptions are, by definition, taken for granted, thus shaping dispositions and practices. Because it originates in power relations, *doxa* tends to reflect dominant groups’ interests and perspectives. It also provides the normative framework for what is considered acceptable, appropriate, and legitimate within specific contexts. Hence it is generally resistant to critique. Yet in the rare cases it becomes challenged, *doxa* turns into *orthodoxy*. In policy, this shift takes the form of a protracted depreciation of unquestioned truths about the range of solutions at policymakers’ disposal, moving taken-for-granted categories and instruments to the realm of opinion. *Orthodoxy* can be openly contested and subject to critique by alternative positions, or *heterodoxy*. And this struggle makes paradigmatic change possible (see Figure 2 for illustration).

In Chile, the indictment of the market model gradually undermined the apolitical status of regulatory tools such as test-based accountability, which incumbents had envisioned as a solution to market failure. As the student movement grew in allies and successfully articulated an all-encompassing anti-market frame, policy instruments such as standardized testing moved from *doxa* to *orthodoxy*. An alterna-

tive – heterodox – problematization of high-stakes testing slowly gained currency: instead of an impartial tool for market regulation, testing was framed as a pernicious market-enhancing technology.

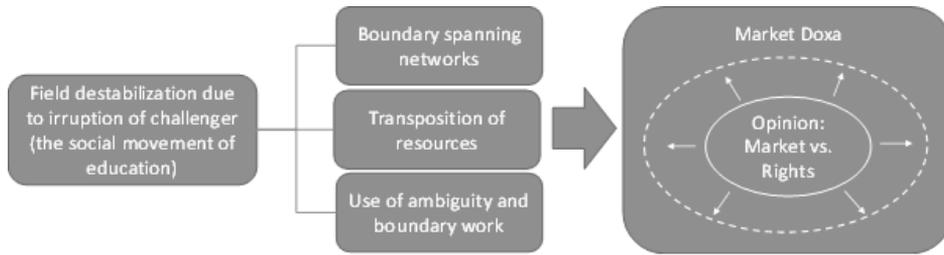
Methods and data

The analysis undertaken in this paper is based on four bodies of data. The first is a set of historical records collected through a public information request to the Ministry of Science, which evinces the trends in funding received by different social sciences during the period of interest. I complemented this analysis with information available on *Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo's* (Anid) website.

The second source of data is an archive of legislative acts, policy documents, official minutes, public statements, and reports I collected and sorted chronologically from 2006, when the first wave of student protest broke out, to the present. The archival research also included the profuse body of documentation (session minutes, resolutions, and policy documents) produced by the specialized institutions that, by law, have regulatory oversight over the accountability system. I examined all this material to trace the origins and evolution of key categories such as market failure, education quality, or school value-added within the education policy regime, identifying the main actors who participated in these debates.

Thirdly, I analyzed and systematically coded transcripts of 57 in-depth interviews I conducted in Chile in the summer of 2014 and the fall of 2015, in the context of my dissertation research. Interviewees, selected through strategic and snowball sampling techniques (Maxwell, 2012), include members of the anti-testing campaign, leaders and grassroots members of the student movement and the teachers union, and leftwing lawmakers supporting the student protests in 2011. In the pro-market camp, I interviewed school principals and owners of state-subsidized private schools, CEOs of educational service companies that offer test prep and data management tools to schools, and rightwing lawmakers. Additionally, I conducted interviews with numerous experts who hold (or have held) key positions in the governance structures of education, in think tanks involved in education policy networks, or in the most prestigious university centers of educational research. Other interviewees include administrators and principals of public school districts, and members of progressive and conservative think tanks, representatives of the Education Vicarage of the Catholic Church (the largest single owner of private voucher schools), and lawmakers of the current (2014-2018) government coalition. Together, the interviews covered political and expert positions from across the ideological spectrum somewhat involved in the design and implementation of education policy. The

FIGURE 2
The mechanism of doxic erosion



interviews sought to map the range of moral, ideological, political, and technical opinions about different pieces of legislation and policies enacted (or in process of enactment) to regulate education markets in Chile. Although here I use only a few interview quotes and only for illustration purposes, a great deal of the analysis is based on information provided by many of my informants.

Finally, I complemented these three data sources with the cataloging and systematic reading of newspaper articles and websites covering educational issues in Chile. This source provided context for my analysis and helped me identify the stances and trajectories of key actors over time.

Education experts and the cognitive infrastructure of anti-market frame

The paradigmatic clash of policy paradigms that drove the shift from unregulated market to quality assurance, and then to a soft version of “participatory” accountability, was underpinned by the rise of new forms of specialized knowledge in education that competed with the prevailing social science of the day: economics. As Figure 3 suggests, concurrently with the legitimacy crisis galvanized by the irruption of student protests, the Chilean state began to sponsor the development of a specialized field of education experts. Measured either by the number of R+D projects (left panel) or by the total funding allocated to said projects (right panel), the evidence points to a sharp increase in the support for education-specific research relative to the total support provided by the Anid in recent decades. Meanwhile, government funding of economics research, relatively more important in the 1980s, declined and remained stagnant in the following decades. The divergence is especially salient in the late 2000s, precisely when political controversy over education policy took center stage.

These data suggest the hypothesis that, as education-specific knowledge production grew relative to other social scientific fields, especially economics, education experts likely became increasingly influential in policy debates. Indeed, the 2000s

FIGURE 3
The emergence of the education research field



Source: own and analysis based on publicly available data from Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo (<https://github.com/Anid-GITHUB>).

were the development of new research centers specialized in education housed in the most prestigious universities. In 2007, the state launched a new program specifically aimed at the creation of “Advanced Education Research Centers”. The *Centro de Estudios de Políticas y Prácticas en Educación*, housed at the *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile*, and the *Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Educación*, affiliated with *Universidad de Chile* were launched with funding from that program. In the following year, many other education research centers proliferated in other

universities thanks to government largesse. Some of these centers, such as the *Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación* at *Universidad Alberto Hurtado* and the *Centro de Políticas Comparadas de Educación* of *Universidad Diego Portales* developed a critical stance against the market-oriented policy regime, including test-based accountability. And they competed with other research centers housed by conservative universities and mostly staffed with economists and political scientists that firmly defended the market model, such as the *Centro de Políticas Públicas* at *Universidad del Desarrollo*. Several academics from these centers served as advisors to the Ministry of Education or in think tanks of different political persuasion. They also actively participated in the intense legislative debates over education reforms that followed the outbreak of the student movement. Critically, many junior scholars that would later become active organizers of the anti-testing campaign did their first experience in educational research in the abovementioned research centers.

All in all, the qualification of policy controversies instilled by the increasingly influential education research industry eventually steered policy change. Though the entering of new experts did not go far enough to seriously undermine the epistemological superiority of economics (Fourcade, Ollion, and Algan, 2015), it did provide crucial authoritative knowledge to advance anti-market frames.

From protests to the right to quality education

But how did the anti-market frame originate? In 2006, hundreds of thousands of high-school students took to the streets and occupied school buildings across the country (Donoso, 2013). Although the students' petitions were initially circumscribed to practical issues, the movement eventually advanced a systemic critique of the neoliberal regime. In particular, they demanded the abolition of the Constitutional Organic Law of Education – known by its Spanish acronym “Loce” – that Pinochet had enacted the day before he left office in 1990. Caught by surprise, the center-left government of Michele Bachelet first ignored the protests, then repressed them, and finally, as the movement gained momentum, coopted some its leaders, offering only minor concessions. Exhausted and divided, the students demobilized and returned to class, but only after the president appointed a large advisory council commissioned to address what the students deemed as their “long-term agenda”: a full-fledged reform of the education policy regime.

The so-called Presidential Advisory Council for the Quality of Education comprised eighty-one members including lawmakers, education experts, academics, priests and bishops, representatives of indigenous peoples, and representatives of parents, teacher organizations, private and public providers, and authorities of private

and public universities¹. Since its launch, the speakers of the high-school student movement complained that their organizations and, more generally, the so-called “social bloc for education” – a coalition comprising the national confederation of university students, the teachers union, and parents organizations – held only a minority of seats. For five months the Council deliberated amid continuous attack from both the social bloc, suspicious of the government’s commitment to intra-elite, technocratic-oriented consensus, and the rightwing opposition, jealous of the free-market status quo. Few days before the release of the final report, the student organizations gathered at a national summit in which they voiced their disagreement with the reports’ conclusion and formally withdrew from the Council. Other delegates of the social bloc followed suit.

The student summit’s public statement² denounced the so-called “subsidiary role of the state”, a state-sponsored market model of “such levels of social stratification and segmentation” that produced “unequal levels of quality and prestige”, perpetuating “the process of social reproduction of existing social inequalities”. Crucially, the students defined education in the language of social rights: a “social, secular, public good”, the quality of which should not “be different for some than for others”. The causal attribution was transparent: What ultimately made the fulfillment of this right impossible was the existence of an “education market where those who have enough resources can access quality education, and those who have not can [only] choose between a collapsed municipal system and a private voucher system [...] in which state subsidy, instead of contributing to quality improvement, goes directly to the owner’s profit”.

Market-oriented education, the student contended, was locked in by constitutional provisions that elevated “freedom of education” (*libertad de enseñanza*) over the “right to education” (*derecho a la educación*). Stretched far beyond conventional notions of academic freedom and curricular diversity, freedom of education in Chile encompassed also private persons’ right to open and run educational institutions, as well as parents’ right to opt out of the public sector. The state’s responsibility, as defined in the constitution of 1980s, and later ratified by the Loce, was thus circumscribed to the protection of this all-encompassing conception of freedom, and tacitly operationalized as the state’s duty to subsidize private provision through

1. A few of Council members, including the education expert in charge of coordinating the writing of the final report, have been interviewed in the context of this research. Many of them currently occupy important positions in the governance of education and policy networks.
2. See Resoluciones I Congreso Nacional de Estudiantes Secundarios at http://www.opech.cl/bibliografico/doc_movest/resoluciones_congreso_nacional_de_estudiantes_secundarios.pdf, retrieved on 19/01/2017. Author’s translation.

educational vouchers, à la Milton Friedman. An unacceptable status-quo that, per the students, was characterized by “a complete freedom of enterprise and deregulation of the educational duty a nation must have to its youth and the people in general”.

In proclaiming the “supremacy of the right to education over freedom of education”, the student movement explicitly embraced a return of the so-called “Teacher State”, morally obliged to guarantee quality education “irrespective of the social, economic, and cultural origin of the Chilean children and youth.” A “national service” of public education, capable of “elaborating and planning education policies, and directly financing and administering public schools”, was to embody this revival of state dirigisme. Mechanisms of budget appropriation were to substitute for unfettered competition for voucher holders as to prevent massive exit from public schools under the “fake premise that the private voucher sector has a better quality”. Moreover, the students called for close state oversight of the state-subsidized private sector, demanding the prohibition of for-profit voucher schools, the abolition of academic screening for school admissions, and the end of the so-called “shared-funding” – *financiamiento compartido*, monthly tuition charged on top of the voucher.

Eradicating “the deep segmentation of the education supply according to the class origin of children and youth” also required a “common and flexible national curriculum”, pertinent to the student’s “social and cultural context”, and that guarantees “minimum learning achievements”. In this respect, the students proposed to “enrich the indicators of quality” through a complete revision and reformulation of the Simce, which found “complete coherence” with the “basic principles” of the market model. Standardized testing worked not as a tool for “formative” evaluation but as a “punitive” one, since it was used “for raking schools based on their scores, stigmatizing those that obtain low results, mostly in the public sector.” Functional to “the imposition of a privatization logic”, the SIMCE did not “take account of the particularities within schools”, nor did it consider “cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences”. All this notwithstanding that “variation in students’ educational outcomes depends on what happens within schools only in a marginal percentage (no more than 30%), and on greatest percentage on extra-school variables such as children’s socioeconomic, cultural, and family background (more than 70%)”.

Quality assurance as the leitmotif of market regulation

Much of the students’ insightful critique of market-oriented education was acknowledged by the final report. Yet, in substance, the Council fell short of expectations, failing to recommend dismantling the core components of the market model.

Rather, it embraced a market regulation paradigm that became more and more watered-down as intra-elite negotiations progressed. While the Report³ agreed to the urgency of reform, it recognized lack of consensus on the virtue of market vis-à-vis state institutions. Competing causal narratives to account for policy failure provided justifications to opposed ideological stances (Somers and Block, 2005).

Council members that were most critical of the market model explicitly advocated for “positive discrimination” in favor of state education, arguing that it “better fulfills the function of cohesion and social integration”, and considering that “the majority of the poor attend the public system” (*Idem*, p. 17). Per this group, schools failed due to an institutional design that fully delegated to consumers the pressures for quality improvement, whereas empirical evidence showed that academic criteria played only a minor role in parental choice. State prerogatives over school accountability were largely insufficient. To promote quality education, this group proposed to transition to a mixed funding system for public schools that privileged “budget stability” over competition for vouchers, which made funding too dependent on student attendance. For “competition has not improved education quality, the school system is not more efficacious, and the market has proved useless for regulating the entry, permanence, and exit of bad providers” (*Idem*, p. 31).

In contrast, pro-market members advocated for “equal treatment for all providers regardless of whether they are public or private”, “positive discrimination in favor of vulnerable students in the form of subsidy to demand”, and “an efficient system of quality assurance” (*Idem*, p. 17). They attributed quality deficits not to market mechanisms themselves but to the ways different market incentives had been designed and allocated. On the one hand, market failures like incomplete information had not been correctly addressed: “since education quality is not observable, a system of subsidy to demand requires developing a system of quality assessment the results of which are reported to families” (*Idem*, p. 113). On the other hand, the allocation of a uniform voucher for all students, who depending on family background were “cheaper” or “more expensive” to educate, had worked as “an incentive to exclude lower-SES students” (*Idem*, p. 114). An additional subsidy to low-SES students could compensate schools for the extra cost of admitting these students, making quality improvement through “cream-skimming” a costlier strategy.

Whether more state or more market was necessary was not consensual, but at least all Council members agreed that education in Chile was “far from having the

3. See Informe Final de Consejo Asesor Presidencial para la Calidad de la Educación at <http://unicef.cl/web/informe-final-del-consejo-asesor-presidencial-para-la-calidad-de-la-educacion>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017. Author’s translation.

quality required and demandable in today's world", nor did it "reduce the remarkable inequities of background with which children begin their educational experience" (*Idem*, p. 14). Consequently, education policy must incorporate "quality" as a basic principle for the regulation of educational provision. Seconding the students, the consensual diagnosis was that of "an asymmetry between freedom of education (*libertad de enseñanza*) and the right to education (*derecho a la educación*)" (*Idem*, p. 16). And the source of this asymmetry was that the right to education had hitherto been "conceived as a right to access a free system, without reference to its quality, and bereft of any guarantee" (*Ibidem*).

Thus was the adjective "quality" henceforth pegged to the right to education, which the state must guarantee by regulating the market: "there is no incompatibility between freedom of education – understood as the private person's right to start an educational establishment and parents' right to choose the type of education preferred for their kids – and the right to a *quality* education" (p. 16, author's emphasis). The right to a quality education (*educación de calidad*) implied that the state create mechanisms to define, assess, and enforce quality standards. It also entitled citizens to demand of the state that provision be of a "previously established minimum quality" (*Ibidem*). It was then among the state's duties to a) provide the financial resources such that free-tuition education meets acceptable standards of quality, b) set more stringent entry requirements, c) assess educational processes and outcomes as to certify quality properly, and d) define criteria to support, intervene, and exclude schools that do not meet the standards (*Idem*, p. 17).

This was the consensus reached by the Council, no less, no more. As citizen consumers, parents were constitutionally entitled to choose quality educational providers. Private agents, in turn, also preserved their right to operate educational institutions under public subsidy. And the state had the mandate to ensure that both consumers and providers exercise their rights without conflict, "assuring that the schools met certain minimum standards [...], much as it now inspects restaurants to assure that they maintain minimum sanitary standards" (Friedman, 1955, p. 89).

The advisory Council's final report made "quality assurance" the official leitmotif of the regulation of the school market. Dismantling the market model was no longer on the table. In March of 2007, the World Bank released a report supporting policymakers' choice for a moderate reform pathway (World-Bank, 2007). The report identified Chile as the only country in the world that thoroughly relied on market competition with negligible state involvement as a mechanism of quality improvement. It also stated that, though this "market model" had been crucial for universalizing access, it had failed to assure quality education across the board, especially compromising the educational opportunity of socioeconomically vulner-

able students (p. 9). And yet, the bank deemed “unlikely that a return to a system wherein funding does not ‘follow’ the student will produce the desired improvements regarding education quality and equity”, a goal that could instead be achieved by “strengthening the quality assurance functions of each participants of the Chilean education system” (p. 16).

Towards the qualification of quality

In the years that followed, through different legislative acts, lawmakers significantly reformed the education policy field, redefining the role of the state as the guarantor of equity, now understood as quality for all. The Law of Preferential School Subvention (Feb 2008) partially institutionalized class-based, means-tested accountability, granting supplementary vouchers to vulnerable students, and demanding that schools serving these students implement “quality improvement plans” that were to be evaluated based on SIMCE scores. The General Law of Education – LGE (Sept 2009), moreover, consecrated quality education as a constitutional right vis-à-vis freedom of (state-sponsored, private) education. Finally, the Law of Education Quality Assurance – LEQA (Aug 2011) completely reorganized education governance, creating a system of specialized institutions with different roles and regulatory competences: the Agency of Education Quality (AEQ), the National Council of Education (NCE), the Superintendence of Education, and the Ministry of Education (Mineduc).

Still, tensions and contradictions regarding what quality is, how should it be measured, and what the stakes tied to poor quality should be, remained largely unresolved throughout this very active period of institution building. The LGE seconded the Council’s early warnings that measurable concepts of quality should make “emphasis on student’s integral development, and not only on the achievement of learning standards”. Quality education should encompass “competences, knowledge, and values based on democracy and solidarity”⁴. Declaration of intent notwithstanding, it did not reduce the risk of instrumentalizing education quality as measurable traits of academic achievement.

The conceptual and metrological delimitation of quality now became a matter of dispute between pro and anti-market stances. While lawmakers generally agreed that the definition, evaluation, and enforcement of quality standards were major tasks to be commissioned to new regulatory agencies, they could not legislate without writing at least elemental guidelines and criteria into the law. Lawmakers’ need to set parameters to regulate supply meant that quality assurance, as a specialized

4. See preamble of the General Law of Education (<https://www.leychile.cl/Navegar?idNorma=1006043>).

activity that as such requires objective rules designed in conformity with scientific convention, also entered the domain of controversy.

Narrowing quality to test-scores adjusted by ses

The transformation of the quality controversy into a matter of technical expertise stemmed from the clash between more and less market-fundamentalist positions, represented, roughly, in the opposition and government coalitions, respectively. The first draft of the LEQA the progressive government sent to Congress did not include any specific provision as to how school quality ought to be measured. Indeed, the bill was not, *stricto sensu*, a quality assurance law; nor was it named thus. It just created a Superintendence of Education tasked with overseeing schools' compliance with standards and regulations. Though the procedures and criteria for assessing school quality were absent, the bill established new mechanisms of bureaucratic recordkeeping and monitoring, focusing mostly on school processes, not on outcomes. Severe sanctions for non-complying schools, which included government takeover of school operations and, eventually, school closure, were also defined. Accountability was thus explicitly construed as auditing of school management and finances, targeting the private voucher sector especially. The goal was to prevent these schools from cherry-picking the students most likely to succeed and returning a profit to their operators, both common practices the student movement had opportunely denounced.

Government's push to tightly control educational supply alienated the pro-market coalition of private educational providers, neoliberal think-tanks, and rightwing lawmakers (Corbalán Pössel and Corbalán Carrera, 2012), who instead contended that regulation ought to focus on outcomes, not processes. The state, they argued, should provide adequate incentives to foster "genuine" quality improvement via facilitating the full exercise of school autonomy, and in light of the constitutionally protected freedom of education (Larroulet and Montt, 2010). Instead of command-and-control regulation, the legislation should confine the Superintendence's prerogatives to law enforcement (not school management oversight), transferring quality assessment and improvement to a specialized agency with autonomous regulatory authority.

Forced to gain bipartisan support to pass legislation, the government struck a deal that significantly downsized the command-and-control features of the original bill and incorporated many of the rightwing opposition's proposals, including the creation of a standards-based classification of schools⁵. The accords – monolithically construed

5. See Articles 42 and 49 of the alternative bill presented by the opposition coalition at <http://www>.

as doubtless signal of elite treason by the social bloc, and applauded by the private voucher schools, conservative think-tanks, and the parties on the right⁶ – not only secured congressional majorities to finally enact the LGE in place of the Loce. It also led to a complete redrafting of the Education Superintendence bill, now rebranded as LEQA, mandating the creation of a series of government-independent regulatory agencies, much like autonomous central banking. Thus was the AEQ removed from the Mineduc and transformed into a specialized entity charged with assessing the quality of all Chilean schools. Overall, the agreed legislation struck a balance between school accountability, tied to outcome-based quality assessments, and school autonomy, preserving private providers' ability to academically select students and operate for a profit.

But tying high stakes to school outcomes required objective, impartial, and therefore “fair” procedures of quality assessment. Education experts took the lead in warning lawmakers about the ethical dilemma of equating quality to outcomes – such as test scores – for which the school is, at most, only partially responsible. In particular, they exposed the complexities of comparing standards across schools with very different characteristics (student bodies especially), and pushed for factoring SES and, when possible, value-added measures into assessments of school performance. My chronological analysis of session minutes and congressional debates reveals that awareness of the issue of “fair responsabilization” was only marginal at the beginning of this move toward accountability through high-stakes quality assessment. What started as a technical debate confined to an epistemic community of education experts slowly gained legislative momentum; in the end, all parties to the debate had to engage with terms of procedural justice.

Already during the debates of the Advisory Council, one educational researcher from a prestigious university research center complained that the SIMCE was useless to measure quality, for its design did not allow for estimating value added (see July 6th meeting minutes). Later, at a meeting of the Education Commission of the Senate, another scholar from the same institution pointed out that the existing regime of standardized testing (SIMCE) did not help the cause of educational improvement,

brunner.cl/?p=734, retrieved on January 19th, 2017. See also the terms of the compromise incorporated in the History of the General Law of Education at <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadela-ley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4713/>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017.

6. See e.g., the Chilean Private School Association's public statement (http://200.6.99.248/~bru487cl/files/conacep_acdo.pdf) and the report prepared by three major neoliberal thinktanks (<http://lyd.org/temaspublicos/editora/Significado%20del%20acuerdo%20por%20la%20calidad%20de%20la%20educa.pdf>), retrieved on September 15th, 2017. See also <http://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/pais/2011/10/20/como-se-fraguo-la-traicion-a-los-pinguinos-en-el-gobierno-de-bachelet/>, retrieved on September 15th, 2017.

for it did not “consider the provider [school operators] as an agent whose performance requires evaluation”, nor did it “assess schools on other dimensions”⁷. Some other scholars voiced similar concerns both at the Council meetings and during early debates in Congress.

Experts’ claims that education quality was necessarily multidimensional and therefore could not be reduced to SIMCE scores gradually took hold. In the preamble to the revised version of the bill before the Senate Education Commission, the minister of education pointed out that “in order to improve the quality of education, it is necessary to control by those factors depending on students’ characteristics, in particular their socioeconomic level, those depending on the school, especially the classroom, and those factors related to the context, which involve political and structural variables”. Based on these criteria, this time the redrafted bill mandated the AEQ to implement the so-called School Ordinalization Methodology (SOM): an assessment device that classify all schools in the country into “four levels of performance” in “learning outcomes” that nonetheless consider “student characteristics and value-added indicators, on the basis of two or three consecutive measurements”.

Notwithstanding this provision, that the ordinalization of schools be based on measures of school effectiveness and not of average proficiency remained controversial. For instance, the president of the deans of education faculties warned the Education Commission of the Senate that, ultimately, even after adjusting by SES, cross-sectional tests such as SIMCE⁸ did not capture school quality. For him, assessing the value of a specific teaching methodology requires longitudinal, “pre-and post-test” measures of students randomly assigned to school conditions, an evaluation design impossible to implement when schools are free to manipulate admissions. Finally, he blamed the testing regime for significantly contributing to the socioeconomic stratification of the system, unnecessarily stigmatizing certain type of schools (public schools). This bill, he added, would just legitimize the existing stratification without really fostering quality improvement⁹.

In contrast, pro-market stakeholders contended that too much consideration of social context tacitly validated double standards. Thus, a representative of the Federation of Institutions of Private Education argued that the inclusion of “student

7. See *Primer Informe de Comisión de Educación, Primer Trámite Constitucional: Senado* in the History of the LEQA at <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017.

8. Census tests are standardized assessments implemented to all the students in all schools in a particular grade and subject. The SIMCE’s 8th grade reading test is an example of a census test.

9. See *Segundo Informe de Comisión de Educación, Primer Trámite Constitucional: Senado* in the History of the LEQA at <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on 19/01/2017.

socioeconomic characteristics” into assessments of quality “does not seem pertinent”, for the classification “must have an absolute reference; there cannot be ‘good schools for the rich’ and ‘good schools for the poor.’ Likewise, the speaker of the National Corporation of Chilean Private Schools contended that adjusting the ordinalization by family background “may lead to setting [different] learning goals depending on children’s SES, which would be unacceptable” (*Ibidem*).

Between proficiency and effectiveness

Disagreements among actors from across the political spectrum only worsened in the wake of the triumph, for the first time since the democratic transition, of a rightwing coalition in the 2009 Presidential election. Even as the new government announced its support to the Quality Assurance Law – still in Congress – to honor bipartisan accords, it implacably insisted on holding failing schools accountable to sovereign consumers. Therefore, in June 2010, the Mineduc, in charge of Chicago-trained economist Joaquín Lavín, released the 2009 SIMCE results and mailed them to every family in Chile along with a map in which all the schools of the district – including their kids’ – were colored, resembling a stoplight, in red, yellow, or green, based on average test-scores.

No doubt the alleged intent of “Lavín’s stoplights” – *los semáforos de Lavín*, as they became popularly known – was to inform parents about their potential exit choices, in line with market-fundamentalist assumptions that information, in a context wherein funding follows the student, will induce competition-based processes of school improvement. In practical terms, however, the stoplights reinforced common-sense belief that state-subsidized private schools provided better quality than municipal schools, a lure to persevere in privatization. For anti-market forces, quite the contrary, the stoplights simply confirmed that market mechanisms only reinforced the overlap between spatial and educational segregation (Álvarez and Peña, 2011).

Government’s readiness to publicize public schools’ low proficiency levels as unmistakable indicator of poor quality rather than concentration and seclusion of socioeconomically disadvantaged students inevitably generated suspicion that accountability was just another Trojan horse for privatization. Politicization of “hardcore” accountability fueled public requests for factoring social class into quality assurance. Once the newly elected Congress resumed negotiations to get the LEQA passed, a scholar from a prestigious private university center of educational research complained to the Senate Education Commission, considering “the publication of the maps with average SIMCE test-scores at the district level” to be a big mistake,

for “these results are for the most part due to other factors, such as SES or parents’ educational attainment”. Instead of contributing to quality improvement, he argued, this policy just created more “social segregation and stigmatization”¹⁰. Government use of the “stoplights” even alienated centrist incumbents of the former government, who had played a key role in moving bipartisan compromise forward. An influential senator of the major centrist party endorsed the abovementioned critical position. After reasserting the importance of standardized testing, he complained that the way test-scores were being reported “distorts reality”, insofar as parents were not informed that “65% of their results are due to socioeconomic factors”. He went on to warn that the maps could “produce a generalized stampede of students away from municipal schools” – an outcome that indeed privatizers expected and desired. He concluded by deeming the SIMCE “useless to classify schools”.

Backlash: from exit to voice and loyalty

As political compromise paved the way for reforming the policy field, new quality assurance mechanisms became the target of a spinoff movement campaign (McAdam, 1995) originating from within the same “social bloc” that had previously prompted elites’ shift to market regulation via accountability. The implementation of the SOM¹¹ not only implied that public categorizations of school quality would now be made official and legally binding; it also entailed making the SIMCE even more pervasive within schools.

The intensification and expansion of mandatory testing to more grades and curricular areas, enshrined in the Testing Plan of 2012, served the context of *Alto al SIMCE* (Stop the SIMCE). Members of *Alto al SIMCE* mostly comprised young educational researchers and graduate students trained in educational psychology and social sciences. Many of them had gained ample experience doing fieldwork research within school settings. Some were linked to the emerging research centers funded by government grants. Still others pursued postgraduate degrees in critical education studies at foreign universities thanks to government scholarships allocated to students from non-elite backgrounds. Overall, these young activists distanced themselves from the education research establishment dominated by progressive technocrats. For this emerging generation, the SIMCE, and all the policy knowledge it enables, undermined the transformational capacities of research (Parcerisa and Villalobos, 2021).

10. See Informe de Comisión de Educación, Tercer Trámite Constitucional: Senado <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on 19/01/2017.

11. For a detailed account of the expert controversies over the design of the SOM, see Chouhy (2021).

The first campaign of *Alto al SIMCE* soon counted with the endorsement of hundreds of artists, intellectuals, and renowned educational researchers, including three winners of the Education Sciences National Prize. It also enlisted the teachers union, the main student federations, as well as their popularly acclaimed former leaders – now running for Congress. During its first year, the campaign registered ninety-six participations in different media outlets. They also coordinated actions with high-school students, who organized more than fifty boycotts and walkouts on test day in some emblematic lycées of Santiago. This forced the conservative government to publicly defend the testing regime. Many experts with links to the test administration and the new quality assurance system published op-eds in major newspapers addressing some of the campaign's critiques, further spurring public debate. Likewise, the controversy also reverberated through the presidential campaign of former center-Left president Michele Bachelet, who expressing concern that standardized testing had "impoverished the concept of education quality" and enabled "practices as [academic] selection, exclusion, and teaching to the test", committed to promoting "a more nuanced and integral understanding of quality that recovers the meaning of educational work" (Yancovic, Vargas, and Barrios, 2016, p. 334).

Allegedly, the campaign emerged "in rejection of the standardization rationality and the effects of the measurement and quality assurance system", to which they opposed "a form of evaluation in concord with an education understood as a social right and not as a commodity."¹² Mobilizing the increasingly popular anti-neoliberal frame, *Alto al SIMCE* deemed testing and rankings as pernicious market technologies, indicting political elites for opportunistically usurping the claims of the *pingüinos*' movement of 2006 for the sake of their own neoliberal agenda:

The tactical play against the students was to capture their discourse saying "yes, this is a bad market, unregulated, so what we need to do...", and then they introduce all the standardization and accountability agenda that had been softer before. [This policy] intensifies the market with a state that is arbiter of the market, a state at the service of the market, of regulating it to defend the customer (*Interview with scholar collaborator of Alto al SIMCE*).

The dialectical path of market politicization, regulation, and re-politicization seemed now completed. Just as elites responded to the initial anti-market revolt by delivering more market solutions to protect consumers' right to quality services, so did the burgeoning anti-market coalition counterattack by decoding such policies through the "social rights vs. market education" collective action frame (Snow *et*

12. See *Alto al Simce*, <http://www.altoalsimce.org>, retrieved on September 15/09/2017.

al., 1986) that, since the long cycle of protests of 2011, wielded impressive levels of mass support (Donoso, 2013b; Salinas and Fraser, 2012). In this all-encompassing master frame, test-based rankings, whatever their calibration, amounted to mere instruments of commodification and competition, in consistency with the “survival of the fittest” morality that infuses the ideology of neoliberalism (Amable, 2011; Streeck, 2011).

Yet besides inscribing accountability into a broader anti-neoliberal frame, *Alto al SIMCE* also sought to expand and refine this frame by questioning the taken-for-granted impartiality of experts’ evaluation practices. Cognizant that “the belief that evaluation is by itself well done and objective is very hard to remove”, campaigners aimed to “dispute common sense” and “generate the idea that this [standardized testing] is not that true, neither that good, nor that valid.” This required challenging “an aseptic and hygienic vision of [education] research”; an altogether unrealistic enterprise in the context of heightened politicization:

One thing is to be a researcher of, say, bees; but if one is a researcher of education, which is a political subject matter... and whoever says otherwise doesn’t know she is being functional to something... especially considering what’s going on in Chile, with the persistence of a [market] model, with the weariness regarding a [market] model... (*Interview with scholar activist of Alto al SIMCE*).

Thus, by challenging the scientific authority behind the testing regime, campaigners sought to transcend the simplistic anti-neoliberal narrative, raising public awareness of the pervasiveness of auditing and data-driven governance (Rose and Miller, 2010) in advanced market societies:

The conversation was about profit, the market, the voucher, public education, everything, but the SIMCE was part of the landscape. It wasn’t talked about, it wasn’t problematized even in academic discussions [...] Decentralization was one of the arguments used to establish this quasi-market system of education. But, in reality, that didn’t happen either [because] the SIMCE [...] turns into a curriculum, a simplified one. [...] Now schools do not depend directly from the state. They only get funding indirectly. But they are anyway under central control. (*Interview with scholar activist and official speaker of Alto al SIMCE*).

Per this honed critique of neoliberal education, high-stakes accountability, and the evaluation practices it carries along with, serves a particular political project: not one of liberty, autonomy, and innovation, as predicated by the market fundamentalist creed; but one of top-down, heteronomous control – an education field made leg-

ible for, and held accountable to, the dominant groups in the economic field (Ball, 2010; Mangez and Hilgers, 2012). And the experts in charge of market-oriented social technologies like testing are just the agents of economic power:

To whom are accounts rendered? Accounts are rendered to de facto powers that use accountability to regulate the established order. Accounts are not rendered to the educational community, accounts are not rendered to the very students, accounts are not rendered to parents. Accounts are rendered to those powers that use education as a tool to preserve their privileges. (*Interview with president of the teachers union*).

The Taskforce for SIMCE revision

In March 2014, a new center-left coalition came to power, promising to significantly reverse market-oriented education policies. Their renewed efforts to address escalating social movement demands included revising the testing system among other programmatic commitments. To advance this agenda, the new leadership at the Ministry of Education (Mineduc) convened a diverse group of education specialists, led by progressive technocrats, to develop a report on possible improvements to accountability policy. From July to December, the “taskforce for SIMCE revision” held meetings amidst intense political turmoil sparked by yet another legislative attempt to tightly regulate private vouchers schools. Though *Alto al SIMCE* was one of the many stakeholders invited to the taskforce’s hearings, the final report did not support the proposal – backed by seventeen lawmakers, mostly from the government coalition¹³ – to suspend national testing for three years, halt the implementation of the SOM, and transition smoothly to a new evaluation system based solely on survey tests, complemented by formative assessments at the district and school levels (p. 28). Nevertheless, the report recognized testing’s mission creep and openly criticized the negative consequences of high-stakes accountability. Consequently, the taskforce majority recommended halving the number of mandatory tests and called for reconsidering the harmful misuse of educational statistics in accountability policy.

The taskforce asserted that “rankings and comparisons based on average test scores” merely reflect “socioeconomic advantage”, warning that such practices “can be experienced as partial and unfair, as they contribute to the prestige of schools in

13. See Declaración de parlamentarios respecto a aspectos legales del SIMCE (http://www.altoal-simce.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Carta_Parlamentarios_Cambios_Legales_al_SIMCE-Dic-2014.pdf), retrieved on 15/09/2017.

high cultural and socioeconomic contexts and stigmatize schools in more vulnerable contexts” (p. 48). Additionally, the taskforce proposed that new legislation should require regulatory agencies to “perform an active role in highlighting the limitations, errors, and effects generated by rankings and comparative league tables, especially when published by mass media” (p. 123). Finally,

The taskforce also stated the need to prevent the SOM from prompting exit as dominant response to underperformance (Hirschman, 1970):

Communicating in a fashion that induces parents to abandon the school instead of committing to it is inconsistent with fostering and investing in a successful improvement process. For when subsidy is reduced [due to exit], funding is at risk and families that do not transfer, presumably the most vulnerable, are left in a deteriorated situation (p. 120).

Hence the taskforce also called for replacing the name “ordinalization”, “semantically linked to the concept of ranking”, by a designation that better represent what the SOM does, namely, “classification, or categorization” (p. 118).

Much of the taskforce’s revisionist language and apprehensions about the SOM’s effectiveness as a policy device rippled through the AEQ, too. Indeed, the new majority of technocrats within the board swiftly realigned with the government’s softer approach to accountability. More vocal against market mechanisms, the AEQ’s board shifted away from the paradigm of consumer sovereignty. Hence the AEQ’s limitation of the publicity of rankings as tools of market assessment deliberately aimed at undermining comparability between schools, a commensuration practice necessary for an informed school choice:

This year, we sent information to more than three million parents. But with this [other] focus, different from previous years in which [the government] said “look at all schools, your school is in red in this stoplight, go for the greens”. Now the focus is on the school, in its trajectory, in how well it’s done over time, with the goal that this helps [parents] take part in the process of school improvement (*Interview with CEO of the AEQ*).

The quote speaks to two important changes in the way accountability was now understood. The first one concerned the downgrading of parents as primary target of information, in light of growing evidence that only a minority actually base their choice on performance rankings. Parents still had a role to play: they would receive a report, but now the information would be organized such that one single school compared only with itself over time. The goal of holding the school responsible remained, yet incorporating parents’ informed “voice” as a driver of improvement.

The deemphasizing of rankings suggests a second change: a shift from exit to voice *and* loyalty (Hirschman, 1970) as desired mechanisms through which accountability was supposed to drive school improvement. Parents were now expected to use data to monitor the school's trajectory, voice their concerns to the school if necessary, and collaborate in the organization success, not to leave the failing school and seek a better (possibly private) one. Encouragement of voice and loyalty was explicitly communicated in the AEQ's cover letter mailed to parents when releasing test reports:

The document that we deliver for you today is very important, because we want you to be informed about the children's achievement in your school, such that you can actively participate in the schooling process of your daughter or son, working together towards the improvement of education quality¹⁴.

The new preference for informed parental involvement was finally confirmed in the following national report of SIMCE results, which highlighted the importance of developing information systems that aimed at "the participation of families and communities in the management of school improvement, thereby strengthening processes of improvement as opposed to school choice"¹⁵.

High-stakes accountability, however, did not come to an end. Certainly, parents were no longer expected to drive quality improvement via school choice. Voice and loyalty, instead, underpinned the alleged intent to "activate" schools as the primary subjects of change, much in accordance to the Third Way's ethos of responsibility and entrepreneurship in social service delivery (Amable, 2011). An ethos, moreover, of constant commitment to improvement, routinely actualized by the omnipresent surveillance of within-market classifications (Fourcade and Healy, 2013).

The advent of heterodoxy

In October, 2019, amid the largest social outbreak in Chilean history, and upon the imminent release of the fourth legally binding ordinalization, the Senate Education Committee began discussing a bill introduced by progressive lawmakers that derogates the LEQA's mandate to close every school classified four consecutive years in the Insufficient category. In their preamble of the bill that strips the SOM from its high-stakes¹⁶, the proponents reviewed the international evidence of the negative

14. See Quality Agency's *Report to Parents*.

15. See Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, Gobierno de Chile, www.agenciaeducacion.cl.

16. See Education Committee Report (Bulletin n. 12.980-04) <https://www.senado.cl/appsenado/index.php?mo=sesionessala&ac=getCuenta&iddocto=64215#>, retrieved on January 22nd, 2020.

consequences of school closures and warned about the pernicious logic of standardized testing, denouncing that public schools, not surprisingly, represent three out of four schools at risk of closure. Opponents of the bill, in turn, hotly defended the punishments and rewards associated with the SOM, arguing that adjustment by SES prevent socioeconomically different schools from being commensurate with the same metric.

In June, 2020, the center-Left opposition parties in the House introduced new legislation suspending testing on account of the covid-19 pandemic. In their preamble, the lawmakers recalled the public criticism that the SIMCE has received by diverse educational actors and denounce the segregation effects associated to the quality assurance system. The government moved quickly. After announcing that schools will be granted a one-year waiver should they decide to not implement the test, it accuses the opposition of seizing the opportunity opened by the covid-19 to dismantle the accountability regime. Still, a majority of lawmakers moved forward and approved the bill, yet without reaching the supermajority necessary to legislate on issues of exclusive initiative by the executive. Meanwhile, the Senate continued its debate on the school closures bill, passing it and sending it to the lower chamber in August 2020. The bill never gain traction in the House. The government, on the other hand, counterattacked. Upon reopening, in 2021, the it attempted to expand the SIMCE again, but the national evaluation plan was rejected by the NCE.

The renovated Left coalition that won the elections later that year embraced the anti-testing narrative. Though president Boric had campaigned on the elimination of the SIMCE, the defeat of its constitutional proposal severely restricted his reformist agenda. The SIMCE, notwithstanding, seems to have lost the strong consensus it enjoyed back in the day. Though high-stakes testing is scheduled to resume in the following years, its dismantling remains in the government agenda. The politicization of the testing regime appears irreversible, and its fate unpredictable.

Conclusions

Massive waves of student protests in 2006 and 2011 have turned market-oriented education in Chile into “the theater of a morality play” (Fourcade, 2013). Staging a protracted struggle over the moral limits of market society, student movements, political parties, education experts, and the public more generally have not only come to discuss openly what is good or bad, worthy and unworthy, right or wrong about profit, choice, or competition; routine practices and technologies of categorization and ranking, such as test-based assessment tools, have also come under scrutiny, turning into matters of ideological conflict and political intervention. For, in a quest

to quell burgeoning social discontent with market-induced, class-based school segregation, public authorities have systematically resorted to these and other market regulation devices as a justification for their efforts to protect “consumers” rights to quality education, in turn eliciting more and more controversy. This paper examined the process of enactment, politicization, and rollback of education quality assurance regulation in Chile, paying particular attention to how competing ideas over the role of market mechanisms in education shaped the technical construction and public use of official, presumably objective, and therefore fair, rankings of school quality.

In Chile, the student movement moved the market paradigm from doxa to orthodoxy, triggering a paradigmatic clash. But elite’s first response was to incorporate the anomaly – that market education produced inequality of educational opportunity – by construing it as market failure. Incumbents’ diagnosis tended to attribute educational inequities to the poorly designed incentives built into the market model, not to the model itself. Market failure required policy fixes, among which high stakes accountability featured prominently as a politically palatable policy. Such interpretation was followed by a programmatic change that readjusted and enhanced the use of existing instruments, such as standardized testing. But this move created more anomalies, as schools, teachers, and students faced heightened competitive pressures that only reinforced the punitive effects the challengers attribute to the market logic. If originally marginal in the movement’s critique, testing became a specific policy problem, vulnerable to debate and contestation.

As the paradigmatic challenge posed by the anti-market movement gained momentum, a new coalition advancing a specific program for policy change formed, soon finding expression within institutional arenas. In the process, testing was construed as a paramount mechanism organizing market education. Abolition of the testing regime naturally followed as most reasonable prognosis. Opposition to the market model reached a tipping point once challenger actors amassed the intellectual resources and skills necessary to advance an alternative frame that cast testing as part and parcel of the market logic. According to the challengers’ frame, high-stakes testing produced, following Bourdieu (1985) the generative “principles of vision and division of the social world” – in this case, a market world – and thereby amounted not just to a technical tool for assuring the quality of schools but to a political technology of market making. As attempts at policy rollback slowly gained political leverage, the fate of high-stakes testing became increasingly uncertain.

References

- AGENCIA DE CALIDAD DE LA EDUCACIÓN, Gobierno de Chile, www.agenciaeducacion.cl.
- ALTO AL SIMCE, <http://www.altoalsimce.org>, retrieved on 15/09/2017.
- ÁLVAREZ, Gabriel & PEÑA, Juan Cristóbal. (3 mar. 2011), “Las desigualdades sociales que desnudó el controvertido semáforo del mapa SIMCE”. *Ciper Chile*, <http://ciperchile.cl/2011/03/03/las-desigualdades-sociales-que-desnudo-el-controvertido-semaforo-del-mapa-simce>, retrieved on 19/01/2017.
- AMABLE, Bruno. (2011), “Morals and politics in the ideology of neo-liberalism”. *Socio-Economic Review*, 9 (1): 3-30.
- ARTICLES 42 AND 49, “Preguntas y breves respuestas sobre el Proyecto de Ley General de Educación presentado por la Alianza”. (18 Julio 2007), <http://www.brunner.cl/?p=734>, retrieved on 19/01/2017.
- BALL, Stephen. (2010), “New class inequalities in education: Why Education policy may be looking in the wrong place! Education policy, civil society and social class”. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 30 (3/4): 155-66.
- BENVENISTE, Luis. (2002), “The Political Structuration of Assessment: Negotiating State Power and Legitimacy”. *Comparative Education Review*, 46 (1): 89-118.
- BERMAN, Elizabeth Popp. (2002), “Thinking like an economist: How efficiency replaced equality in US public policy”. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- BLYTH, Mark. (2002), *Great transformations: Economic ideas and institutional change in the twentieth century*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. (1977), *Outline of a theory of practice*, vol. 16. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- BULLETIN N. 12.980-04, *Education Committee Report*, <https://www.senado.cl/appsenado/index.php?mo=sesionessala&ac=getCuenta&iddocto=64215#>, retrieved on 22/01/2020.
- CHILEAN PRIVATE SCHOOL Association's public statement, http://200.6.99.248/~bru487cl/files/conacep_acdo.pdf.
- CHOUHY, Gabriel. (2021), “The moral life of econometric equations: Factoring class inequality into school quality valuations in Chile”. *European Journal of Sociology*, 1 (62): 141-82.
- CORBALÁN PÖSSEL, Francisca & CORBALÁN CARRERA, Patricio. (2012), “El rol del think-tank. Libertad y desarrollo en la consolidación de la educación neoliberal en Chile”. *Profesorado*, 16 (3): 169-90.
- “DECLARACIÓN DE PARLAMENTARIOS respecto a aspectos legales del SIMCE”, *Alto al Simce*, http://www.altoalsimce.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Carta_Parlamentarios_Cambios_Legales_al_SIMCE-Dic-2014.pdf, retrieved on 15/09/2017.
- DONOSO, Sofía. (2013a), “Dynamics of change in Chile: Explaining the emergence of the 2006 Pingüino Movement”. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 45 (1): 1-29.

- DONOSO, Sofia. (2013b), *Reconstructing collective action in the neoliberal era: The emergence and political impact of social movements in Chile since 1990*. Oxford University, UK, PhD thesis.
- DONOSO, Sofia. (2016), "When social movements become a democratizing force: The political impact of the student movement in Chile". In: *Protest, social movements and global democracy since 2011: new perspectives*, vol. 39, pp. 167-96. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- EYAL, Gil. (2013), "For a sociology of expertise: The social origins of the autism epidemic". *American Journal of Sociology*, 118 (4): 863-907.
- EYAL, Gil & BUCHHOLZ, Larissa. (2010), "From the sociology of intellectuals to the sociology of interventions". *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36: 117-37.
- FALABELLA, Alejandra. (2015), "El mercado escolar en Chile y el surgimiento de la nueva gestión pública: El tejido de la política entre la dictadura neoliberal y los gobiernos de la centroizquierda (1979 a 2009)". *Educação & Sociedade*, 36 (132): 699-722.
- FALABELLA, Alejandra & ZINCKE, Claudio Ramos. (2019), "La larga historia de las evaluaciones nacionales a nivel escolar en Chile". *Cuadernos Chilenos de Historia de La Educación*, (11): 66-98.
- FARÍAS, Ignacio. (December 2014), "Improvising a market, making a model: Social housing policy in Chile". *Economy and Society*: 1-24. DOI: 10.1080/03085147.2014.881596.
- FLIGSTEIN, Neil. (1996), "Markets as politics: A political-cultural approach to market institutions". *American Sociological Review*, 656-73.
- FLIGSTEIN, Neil & MCADAM, DOUG. (2012), *A theory of fields*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- FOURCADE, M. (April 2013), "The material and symbolic construction of the Brics: Reflections inspired by the Ripe special issue". *Review of International Political Economy*, 20 (2): 256-267. ff10.1080/09692290.2013.779408ff. fhal-03473894.
- FOURCADE, M. & HEALY, Kieran. (2013), "Classification situations: Life-Chances in the neoliberal era". *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 38 (8): 559-72.
- FOURCADE, Marion; OLLION, Etienne & ALGAN, Yann. (2015), "The superiority of economists". *Revista de Economía Institucional*, 17 (33):13-43.
- FRIEDMAN, Milton. (1955), *The role of government in education*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press.
- HALL, Peter A. (1993), "Policy paradigms, social learning, and the state: The case of economic policymaking in Britain". *Comparative Politics*, 25 (3): 275-96.
- HIRSCHMAN, Albert O. (1970), *Exit, voice and loyalty: Response to decline in firms*. Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press.
- HIRSCHMAN, Daniel & BERMAN, Elizabeth Popp. (2014), "Do economists make policies? On the political effects of economics". *Socio-Economic Review*, 12 (4): 779-811.
- "HISTORY OF THE GENERAL LAW OF EDUCATION" / Historia de la Ley n. 20.370, *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile*, <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4713/>, retrieved on 19/01/2017.

- INFORME DE COMISIÓN DE EDUCACIÓN, *Tercer Trámite Constitucional: Senado*, <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on 19/01/2017.
- INFORME FINAL DE CONSEJO ASESOR PRESIDENCIAL para la Calidad de la Educación, <http://unicef.cl/web/informe-final-del-consejo-asesor-presidencial-para-la-calidad-de-la-educacion>, retrieved on 19/01/2017. Author's translation.
- LARROULET, C. & MONTT, P. (2010), "Políticas educativas de largo plazo y acuerdo amplio en educación: El caso chileno". In: *Fin de Ciclo: Cambios en la Gobernanza del Sistema Educativo*. Edited by S. Martinic and G. Elacqua. Santiago de Chile, Unesco.
- MANGEZ, Eric & HILGERS, Mathieu. (2012), "The field of knowledge and the policy field in education: Pisa and the production of knowledge for policy". *European Educational Research Journal*, 11 (2): 189-205.
- MCADAM, Doug. (1995), "Initiator and spin-off movements". *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*. (Eds. D. A. Snow, D. Della Porta, B. Klandermans and D. McAdam, 2013).
- MIROWSKI, P. & PLEHWE, D. (2009), *The road from Mont Pèlerin*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- MONTECINOS, Verónica. (1998), *Economists, politics and the state: Chile 1958-1994*. Amsterdam, Cedla.
- MORA, G. Cristina. (2014), "Cross-field effects and ethnic classification: The institutionalization of Hispanic panethnicity, 1965 to 1990". *American Sociological Review*, 79 (2): 183-210. DOI: 10.1177/0003122413509813.
- MUDGE, Stephanie L. (2020), "States, parties, and expertise". In: *The New Handbook of Political Sociology*. Edited by C. de Leon, I. W. Martin, J. Misra, and T. Janoski. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 353-83.
- MUDGE, Stephanie Lee. (2018), *Leftism reinvented: Western parties from socialism to neoliberalism*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- PARCERISA, Lluís & FALABELLA, Alejandra. (2017), "La consolidación del estado evaluador a través de políticas de rendición de cuentas: Trayectoria, producción y tensiones en el sistema educativo". *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 25: 89-89.
- PARCERISA, Lluís & VILLALOBOS, Cristóbal. (2021), "Movimientos sociales y resistencia al accountability en Chile: Estrategias discursivas, identidad y acciones de la campaña Alto al SIMCE". *Izquierdas*, 50, 16. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/s0718-50492021000100216>.
- PRASAD, Monica. (2006), *The politics of free markets: The rise of neoliberal economic policies in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States*. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press.
- PREAMBLE, GENERAL LAW OF EDUCATION (17 ago. 2009), Ley 20370, Establece la Ley General de Educación, Ministerio de Educación, <https://www.leychile.cl/Navegar?idNorma=1006043>.
- PRIMER INFORME DE COMISIÓN DE EDUCACIÓN, Primer Trámite Constitucional: Senado in

- the History of the LEQA, <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on 19/01/2017.
- ROSE, N. & MILLER, P. (2010), "Political power beyond the state: Problematics of government". *The British Journal of Sociology*, 61: 271-303.
- SALINAS, Daniel & FRASER, Pablo. (2012), "Educational opportunity and contentious politics: The 2011 Chilean Student Movement". *Berkeley Review of Education*, 3 (1).
- SEGUNDO INFORME DE COMISIÓN DE EDUCACIÓN, Primer Trámite Constitucional: Senado in the History of the LEQA at <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on 19/01/2017.
- SCHNITZER, Yael. (20 out. 2011), "Como foi forjada a traição dos pinguins no governo Bachelet". *El Mostrador*, <http://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/pais/2011/10/20/como-se-fraguo-la-traicion-a-los-pinguinos-en-el-gobierno-de-bachelet/>, retrieved September 15/09/2017.
- SILVA, Patricio. (2008), *In the name of reason: Technocrats and politics in Chile*. University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press.
- SNOW, David A.; ROCHFORD, E. Burke; WORDEN, Steven K. & BENFORD, Robert D. (1986), "Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation". *American Sociological Review*, 51 (4): 464-81.
- SOMERS, Margaret R. & BLOCK, Fred. (2005), "From poverty to perversity: Ideas, markets, and institutions over 200 years of welfare debate". *American Sociological Review*, 70 (2): 260-87.
- SOMMA, Nicolás M. (2012), "The Chilean Student Movement of 2011-2012: Challenging the marketization of education". *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements*, 4 (2): 296-309.
- STRECK, Wolfgang. (2011), "Taking capitalism seriously: Towards an institutionalist approach to contemporary political economy". *Socio-Economic Review*, 9 (1): 137-67.
- WORLD-BANK. (2007), *El diseño institucional de un sistema efectivo de aseguramiento de la calidad de la educación en Chile*. Unidad de Gestión del Sector de Desarrollo Humano/ Unidad de Gestión de Países para Argentina, Chile, Paraguay y Uruguay/Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe.
- YANCOVIC, Mauricio Pino; VARGAS, Gonzalo Oyarzún & BARRIOS, Iván Salinas. (2016), "Crítica a La Rendición de Cuentas: Narrativa de resistencia al sistema de evaluación en Chile". *Cadernos Cedes*, 36 (100): 337-54.

Abstract

Experts, neoliberal doxa, and the rollback of high-stakes school rankings in Chile (2006-2024)

What drives the rollout and rollback of high-stakes, test-based school rankings? Adapting the theory of strategic action fields to the Chilean case and mobilizing Bourdieu's concept of *doxa*, I look at market reform in education as the result of competing, cooperative, and conflictive relations among incumbent and challenger actors. While the formers dominate the field and thus wield definitional power over how the field should be organized and reformed, the latter vie for alternative ways of structuring the field. This fielded logic configures a contingent dynamic in which the field is transformed as challenging frames gain ideational currency. Based on this conceptual framework, I evince how competing ideas over the market-based education have shaped the technical construction and public use of school quality rankings. Implications for a sociology of reform follow.

Keywords: Education; Chile; School rankings; doxa; Bourdieu.

Resumo

Especialistas, doxa neoliberal e a reversão de classificações escolares de alto risco no Chile (2006-2024)

O que impulsiona a implementação e a reversão de classificações escolares de alto risco baseadas em testes? Adaptando a teoria dos campos de ação estratégica ao caso chileno e mobilizando o conceito de doxa de Bourdieu, vejo a reforma de mercado na educação como o resultado de relações competitivas, cooperativas e conflitantes entre atores titulares e desafiadores. Enquanto os primeiros dominam o campo e, portanto, exercem poder de definição sobre como o campo deve ser organizado e reformado, os últimos competem por formas alternativas de estruturar o campo. Essa lógica de campo configura uma dinâmica contingente na qual o campo é transformado à medida que quadros desafiadores ganham moeda ideacional. Com base nessa estrutura conceitual, evidencio como ideias concorrentes sobre a educação baseada no mercado moldaram a construção técnica e o uso público de classificações de qualidade escolar. Implicações para uma sociologia da reforma seguem.

Palavras-chave: Educação; Chile; Classificações escolares; doxa; Bourdieu.

Texto recebido em 04/07/2024 e aprovado em 11/10/2024.

DOI: 10.11606/0103-2070.ts.2024.226843.

GABRIEL CHOUHY is a sociologist and a member of the Faculty of Economics, Government and Communications at Universidad Central de Chile. He received his master's and PhD from the University of Pittsburgh. His current work combines economic sociology, the sociology

of markets, the sociology of experts, and comparative-historical sociology to understand the techno-politics of market-based calculative devices widely used for economizing and regulating the provision of public education such as accountability metrics or school enrolment algorithms.

Email: gabriel.chouhy@ucentral.cl.

