

Subtle Tortures of the Neo-liberal Age: Teachers, Students, and the Political Economy of Schooling in Chile

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Introduction

"The fundamental aim is to attend to the needs of the individual in the different stages of his life and to the communities in their struggle for development ... ' For us every society must be a school and school must become an integrated element of that big school which is society. Schools must be open to pressures important to the community."

(President Salvador Allende, Popular Unity government, 1970-1973)

"It is imperative that we change the Chilean's mentality ... the government of the Armed Forces intends to open a new phase in our national destiny, giving way to new generations of Chileans who have been shaped in a school of healthy civic habits.' The political recess can only be ended when a new generation of Chileans formed in accordance with nationalist ideals is able to assume the direction of public life."

(General Pinochet, Military Junta (1973-1989))

On December 10, 2006 former military dictator of Chile, Augusto Pinochet died. His passing marks an end to a chapter in Chilean history, and was met by celebration by many and tears by a few. He died never having served time in jail for the many crimes of which he was accused, namely - treason, murder, and embezzlement.

The legacy of the dictatorship remains imprinted on Chilean culture and institutions in many ways. The economic reforms of the "Chicago Boys", put in place in the years directly following the military coup did effectively re-form the entire Chilean infrastructure. Chile was the first country in which the economic theory of neo-liberalism was put firmly into place. We are now all too familiar with neo-liberal economic policies; privatization and structural re-adjustment recommendations, almost anything that allows for 'free trade' and the ability of capital to flow unhindered between nations and corporate and personal financial interests to maximize profits. Accompanying these structural changes have been various austerity

programs aimed at finding the most cost effective ways to continue to meet the needs of various public sector services, such as in the realm of health and education, within newly defined economic realities. These changes are all driven by an ideology that is firmly grounded in a suspicion of government and a belief that democracy is best developed and supported by the "invisible hand of the market."

In the late 1970's following a military coup, Chile, with its population brutally suppressed, became the first testing ground for the changes that now define neo-liberal recommendations by international funding agencies such as the IMF and World Bank. The changes were dramatic and extensive. The population could not negotiate the terms of change. Once the basic neo-liberal economic framework was laid, the model was applied to all sectors of society - health, housing, social security, fisheries, agriculture, transportation and of course - education.

The following discussion will present a case study of the Chilean experience. Though the historical context of Chile is unique, Chile is the country where neo-liberal reform - in all of its instantiations - was first brought to fruition. Detailed examination of this legacy presents a unique opportunity for all scholars who continue to question and debate the plausibility and possibilities offered by neo-liberal policy in education. Chile gives us a retrospective on policy implementation and fallout, and prompts several questions: Exactly what neo-liberal education reforms were initially put into place? What were the results of these changes? And, what are some of the current challenges educators in Chile face as they continue to negotiate the subtle and not so subtle fallout of 25 years of neo-liberal policies?

In the years since "re-democratization," following the plebiscite of 1989, successive Center-Left governments have attempted a series of education reforms in an effort to improve education in Chile. These reforms which formally began in 1997 and have continued to develop through the mid-2000's, arose out of and are also a reaction to, the logic of the neo-liberal market which has become, in essence, the logic of schooling in Chile. However, despite such far-reaching and ongoing efforts to re-infuse resources into a decimated public system, and a National commitment to education, the system remains tied to the neo-liberal structure that was put in place during the dictatorship. There is much evidence to suggest that this remaining underlying structure severely hampers even the most progressive and egalitarian

reforms from breaking through organizational and ideological limitations that keep education in Chile from reforming in a way that will allow for flexibility, creativity and equal access for all Chilean students. The political conditions which enabled the drastic changes to the educational system during the dictatorship in Chile were unique - a brutal 17 year military dictatorship which came into power after the coup d'etat that toppled the world's one and only democratically elected socialist government - but the lessons we can learn from the Chilean experience are vast.

Historical Overview of Chile's Educational Legacy

Chile is one of the countries in Latin America with a traditionally strong public education system. This system was founded and maintained throughout the years with a well-articulated emphasis on the bond between the educational system and democratic principles. Early versions of the Chilean constitution clearly recognized the link between public education and democracy. Chile was the first Latin American nation to formally establish a system of public instruction in 1842. Before the turn of the century, Chile became the first Latin American nation to admit women into the university and permit women to practice the liberal professions (Collins & Lear, 1994; Fisher, 1979; Farrell, 1986). This is in contrast to other Latin American nations where, access to a relatively sophisticated level of education was (and sometimes continues to be) more or less restricted to only certain members of elite society. This is due to a variety of historical circumstances. For example, in many Latin American countries a traditionally strong bond between the Catholic Church (traditional providers of education) and various elite interests limited the access of non-wealthy individuals to education.

In Chile, and examples in other nations can certainly be found, some citizen rights - including education - were often limited to land owners; Non-European/indigenous peoples or slaves were traditionally excluded from schooling and feudal-type economic systems inhibited a broad development of public sector infrastructure - including public schooling. It is certainly true that historical and contemporary Chilean society was not and is not completely free of these "backwards" elements, but early in the history of the Chilean government, policy was implemented ensuring support for developing a far-reaching and complex system of public education, something not necessarily echoed in other Latin American countries. The

development of public education in Chile from national independence up to the 1970s was clearly linked to and defined within an ideology that recognized the importance of schooling and national social, civic, and economic development.

Chile's first normal schools were founded early in the 19th century. They provided sites for the training of teachers as well as for secondary education (Farrell, 1986, Austin, 2003). Part of the program of the early national Chilean educational system included the founding of the highly regarded national school of education. Thus, through extensive government support, and coupled with the outstanding accomplishments within the field of education nationwide, teaching grew into a very respected profession, offering middle class stability and mobility. Chilean teachers within the national system were free to move among schools located throughout the country as their seniority increased without facing decreases in pay or benefits. The professional status awarded teachers in Chile and the encouragement and support for innovations in education was instrumental in fomenting 'activism' among teachers. This activism has taken the form not only of auto-advocacy - as in unionized power aimed at preservation of the teaching profession in material and cultural terms - but also in professional and academic/scholarly activism. Chilean teachers have traditionally taken an initiative in striving to modernize and make improvements in teaching.

Hence, looking at these many achievements as the fruit of the partnership between the Chilean government and the educational system it so strongly supported, we can argue that historically, Chile represents a strong case illustrating a functional and successful partnership between government and schooling. From its inception in the early 19th century up through 1973, we see a very dramatic and continual expansion of the educational system. Between 1935-1973 the coverage (percentage of people with access to education) of formal education grew from 23 to 53 percent of the population under 24 years of age. Four-fifths of these students were served by the public schools (Echeverría, R., 1982).

Reforms before the 1973 coup (the governments of Frei and Allende)

The presidency of Eduardo Frei (1964-1970) initiated one of the most active periods in Chilean educational reform. It was in fact during this period that Paulo Freire

worked in rural Chile on adult literacy campaigns (Williamson, 2000). The political and social environment of Chile provided a rich terrain where varied political parties flourished. Several leftist parties vied for power with moderates (such as Frei's Christian Democrats) and more conservative elements (Gil, et. al., 1979). There was a plurality of thought and a richness of debate concerning public policy - with educational issues receiving paramount attention. Due partly at least to the strength of leftist parties and popular organizations, issues of equity dominated the discourse of educational reform. During the presidency of Frei the number of University students increased 85%, and under the leadership of the Ministry of Education with the participation of the highly regarded national educational system, there were many experiments within the normal schools and in classrooms across the country aimed at improving educational methods. From the 1960s to 1973 these governmental programs had significantly increased access to higher education, making universities a space where members from all walks of society could be found, and not just the havens inhabited by the wealthier segments of society. By 1973, nine percent of those enrolled in universities were the sons and daughters of blue-collar workers.

With the election of Socialist Salvador Allende in 1970 many of the educational reforms begun by Frei were continued and amplified. During the three years of the Popular Unity government, university access increased 89 percent and elementary education was further extended to the blue-collar sectors. By 1973 almost all youngsters were enrolled in school.

In the final year of the Popular Unity government, Allende's educational ministry put forth a new plan for education in Chile. The plan - never fully implemented - was known as the *Escuela Nacional Unificada (ENU)*. This comprehensive plan mainly continued the reforms started by Frei, while further enhancing programs such as technical education, rural educational development, and others aimed at further increasing educational coverage throughout the country. The theoretical framework informing the *ENU* and the language by which this educational plan was articulated, was firmly imbedded within the context of a socialist ideology. At this point in Chile's history various segments of society were highly politicized. Actors on all sides of the political spectrum were well versed in the material and ideological ramifications inherent within any given political plan. This was especially true within the working

class sectors of society where social and class-consciousness as well as a heightened sense of political entitlement legitimized political participation within these previously marginalized sectors of the population. Unfortunately, the *ENU* became the target of one of the most divisive and propagandized debates to take place in Chile in the months before the coup. The intensity of the negative propaganda spread throughout the media (much of it financed directly by anti-socialist interests in this country) concerned about the dangers of "the Communist plot to take over the minds of our children." (Farrell, 1986) The ideological fear mongering surrounding Allende's education plan was seized upon and further fomented by various media elements looking to increase public discontent before the coup. During the brief tenure of the Popular Unity government, the fruits of a strong national focus on raising educational levels, school access and literacy rates through all sectors of society were visible - most notably in the educated, literate, and politically engaged working class. This set the stage for the pending social unrest, and the end of Democracy in Chile, it also contributed to the urgency with which neo-liberal reform in Education was put in place by the dictatorship.

End of Democracy: Clearing the Way for Neo-liberal Policy

On September 11, 1973, following months of civil unrest marked by shortages, strikes, middle-class mobilization, and massive media propaganda, a group of senior military officers, headed by Augusto Pinochet, stormed the Moneda (the central presidential government building) in Santiago. By the end of the day President Allende was dead and thousands of people throughout the country, loyal to the Popular Unity government, were incarcerated or worse. Few Chileans were prepared for the brutality and precision that would mark the end of Chile's long history of relatively peaceful pluralistic electoral governance replaced by the years of oppression that followed.

The scope of this operation was almost unimaginable (Hojman, 1990). Within minutes of the beginning of the bombardment of the Moneda in Santiago, government functionaries, union members, teachers, professors, and members of various leftist political parties were rounded up and held in major sports arenas. These actions simultaneously occurred from the northernmost mining regions of the country to the rural southern regions bordering Antarctica. Many of the people first detained were

later shipped off to concentration camps throughout the country - if they survived the first rounds of interrogation. Thus began the 17-year reign of terror, as the military junta effectively removed from public circulation virtually every single member of any opposition group. Even many working-class neighborhoods, whose residents were known to have been active in various leftist political parties, were occupied by the armed forces. Those who somehow avoided the initial round up were systematically harassed, imprisoned, assassinated, "disappeared," or forced into exile.

By clearing the field of both governmental and popular opposition, these repressive acts created a special set of circumstances, which was apparently ideal for some economic theorists looking for just the right site in which to implement their particular methods for improving the efficiency of economies throughout the world. Milton Friedman and Arnold Harberger, prominent economists known for their neo-liberal economic theory,[1] had been mentors to several Chilean students at the University of Chicago who were appointed to prominent positions within Pinochet's government after the Coup. Shortly after the fall of democracy in Chile, the new ruling junta sought to design an economic plan for the country (Friedman, 1962). Milton Friedman was invited to visit Chile - fertile ground to test his economic and education theory - and did so for the first time in March of 1975, in midst of some of the harshest years of oppression. In Chile, Friedman and his "Chicago Boys" found a country "reeling from several years of Socialist planning" (Collins and Lear, 1995) and crying out for neo-liberal salvation. To this day, it is common to find that the analyses of the successes or failures of the Popular Unity Government's economic plan and the subsequent "successes" of neo-liberal reforms put into place during the dictatorship in Chile ignore the effects that the overt and also the many covert actions taken to destabilize the Popular Unity government had on the economic conditions in the country at the time. The "Chicago Boys" launched into their plan to revitalize Chile's place in the global economy (Lavin & Larraín, 1989). Given the conditions preceding these policies, and the conditions that existed for 17 years in the country that enabled and maintained these policies - serious scholars of economics must rethink their analysis of the "Chilean Free-market Miracle."

Foundations for the Free Market - Political, Economic and Educational: 1973-1980

In the years immediately following the coup-but before 'formal' education reforms were put into place - the military government embarked on a series of actions that cleared the way for the pending neo-liberal reforms. Following years of massive public participation in the education system, strong teacher professional identities and a highly educated and politicized population - it should not be surprising that so much initial repression was aimed at the educational sectors of society: students, teachers, professors and other educational activists.

Repressive acts created an environment of widespread censorship -both internally and externally applied, and were felt harshly within the universities and the larger educational community. The universities in Chile, as in much of Latin America, have a long history of student and professorial activism. In the turbulent times before the Military coup, educational institutions often became the social and political center of community and student activism. For this reason the Military Junta paid special attention to the educational establishment directly after the coup and in the years to follow (Brunner, 1977; Palomo, 1981; Teitelboin, 1988). Hundreds of professors and students were rounded up and detained. Many were tortured. The stimulating and intense discussion of issues - political or otherwise controversial - which had for years marked a rich culture of socio-political participation, was silenced. Debate and the free expression of opinion were now considered dangerous and subversive, and were dealt with as such. Students, teachers, and staff seen as not supporting the junta were removed from schools and universities and imprisoned, "disappeared," or exiled. Those who survived were blacklisted. Testimonies reveal that many teachers and students believed their classrooms to be monitored by undercover informants. One colleague described how, the day of the coup, several of his students came to the *Universidad de Concepción* in their military fatigues, thus signaling their military sympathies and roles as informants. They proceeded to denounce and assist in the arrest of hundreds of their former *compañeros de carrera* who were subsequently detained, with many tortured and disappeared. Military officers were appointed presidents of the universities (not until 1982 was a civilian appointed to head a university). Curricula were also "cleaned up," especially the social sciences which

virtually disappeared. Within education at all levels, any discipline, which traditionally encouraged an analysis of social-economic critique, was suppressed. Special courses on "National Security" or "the Doctrine of the Military regime" became required. These courses presented new 'revised' history, omitting or distorting the recent past, and highlighting heroes from the military.

These purges - or perhaps we could call them 'non-formal' reforms - effectively removed any potential opposition to the pending neo-liberal agenda. As such, they function as important precursors to the reforms of the 80s, preparing the country for the systematic changes to follow. As one considers the precise enactment of neo-liberal policy in Chile, consider the similarities and differences in the experience of various sites around the world. It is interesting to note the many parallels between the specific structural changes that were enacted in Chile, as well as the accompanying ideologies concerning the role of education in society. In comparative perspective, each educational and economic system that has undergone neo-liberal reform absolutely does so from within the context of its own unique social and historical specificity. Despite this, the specific structural policy changes that now define neo-liberal education reform as first implemented in Chile, as well as the ideological foundations that support these drastic changes, are the standard face of neo-liberal reform throughout the world.

Characteristics of Neo-liberal Reforms 1980-1989

Formal neo-liberal restructuring of the Chilean economy and several public sector domains began during the 1980s when the ruling military junta directed the country and all of its institutions firmly toward the global marketplace. This mapping of "market logic" extended onto an educational system whose mandate had previously been firmly rooted in ideas of equity and opportunity rather than efficiency and competition. (Puiggrós, 1996). Key ideologically weighted concepts used to promote and legitimate these changes fit into two categories:

- 1) Public or popular concern, (often articulated in terms of individual rights/freedom to choose and control interests, "local control," "choice," etc.)
- 2) Economic concern, (linked in interesting ways to the previous point but using market means with which to achieve desired results,

"efficiency/decentralization," "competition" - using standardized measures as a measure of 'excellence' - and privatization). It is within the scope of these arguments that the foundational ideology of economic reforms such as those championed by Milton Friedman - excellence through competition, and the power of choice in the free market - find fertile ground in their translation into the realm of education.

In 1980 the government passed two decrees that drastically changed the nature of Chilean education. Collectively known as the LOCE, *Ley Organica Constitucional de Educaci3n*, they remain a key element of popular discontent and continue to inspire yearly public demonstrations of outrage from students and teachers across the country and educational spectrum. Decree # 3,063 - began the municipalization of K-12 schools, and #3,476 - created government subsidies to private and public schools for each student enrolled, creating a "voucher" system for schools level K-12 (Collins 1995). The municipalization of kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools was complete by 1986. And the national subsidies or voucher system established in Chile divided the Chilean system into basically three types of schools: 1) municipal ("public"), 2)"private subsidized", and 3)"private paid".

Organizational streamlining based on neo-liberal logic became a perceived panacea for low performing schools in Chile, a concept currently well known in the US and elsewhere. This logic points to the need for more "streamlined bureaucratic efficiency," and "choice/competition," as means to fix failing schools (Parry, 1997; Ramirez, 1994; Echeverria, 1981; OAS, 1982).[2] With funding tied to student enrolment, and student enrolment influenced by test scores, and test score results influenced by multiple factors, and semi-private and private schools able to cherry-pick high scoring students and deny entrance to others, Municipal schools faced (and continue to face) declining enrolments as the vicious cycle of marginalization plays itself out. This "competition" has "widened the gaps" between rich and poor neighborhoods as wealthy areas have been better able to supplement government per-student subsidies from parents, businesses and other municipal revenues. Since the implementation of these reforms, schools in low income sectors, and Municipal schools in general, have become run down, many forced for economic reasons to adopt abbreviated school days and eliminate entire subjects from the curriculum which in turn, has affected the morale of teachers within these institutions. Thus, the wealthy schools have been better able to attract 'star' teachers with higher pay, making

'elite' schools more appealing and helping some private schools become profitable. Within the municipal schools, these changes led to great discrepancies in teacher pay between wealthy municipalities and working class municipalities, further exacerbating problems of attracting strong teachers to low-income areas of the country. Though we now have over 30 years of data from which to analyze this data, and many of these problems remain entrenched, many of the recent education reform efforts are attempting to reverse many of these negative consequences of neo-liberal reform[3].

Changing Role of the State

Ideologically and structurally, neo-liberal reforms lesson the role of the State, or National government, leaving market mechanisms as sole regulators of goods and services. In education, as well as elsewhere, this is manifested as a shift from the Public to the Private, and a steadily decreasing role for centralized/government oversight, control, and financial support. "local control" is a common buzz-word that masks the realities of this perspective, which translates to less government investment in education and redefines government's role in education to the narrow realms of setting national standards (and with this a fairly comprehensive national curriculum) and testing. In 1983 the Chilean government initiated nationwide testing of fourth and eighth grade students. The results of this testing have consistently indicated significant gaps between student performance in the three types of schools: municipal public, subsidized private schools, and private private ie. non-subsidized schools. However, test results reveal that the most significant differences are not between types of institutions - public vs. private subsidized or private - rather between these institutions in richer and poorer neighborhoods. In other words, the quality of primary and secondary schools depends more on the resources of the community, material and otherwise, than whether or not the school under question is public or private. None-the-less, the perception of the superiority of private education, buoyed by slick advertising, cherry-picking the "good" students leading to comparatively higher test scores, and an entrenched classism in Chile, has consistently led to a steady decrease in matriculation in public schools. This in turn leads to a decrease in government per-student subsidies to municipal schools, leaving only that population unable to afford private (and semi-private) schooling in the Chilean public system.

These findings suggest several important issues regarding the relationship between education and neo-liberal reforms. The first issue can be described as - the logic of the market place versus the logic of education: If the "invisible hand" is supposed to improve the quality of services provided - especially those freed from the oppressive bureaucracies which supposedly were constricting the effectiveness of their operations - then schools freed from these inefficient structures should respond to these market pressures with increasing quality, a better product. The market should be providing effective, educational opportunities for those who are able to take advantage of them (either by means of economic resources or cultural resources - i.e. knowledge about where the good quality education can be found). And this increasing excellence in one sector should spur all institutions on to higher returns. All schools should be improving. Though classroom based research provides some evidence that the quality of education doesn't seem to be much different between the public and private schools with similar economic resources (Pinkney Pastrana, 2000), in general, people still seem to prefer to send their children to private schools. This is evidenced by the figures showing growing enrolment in private institutions. What does this point to? Probably a combination of the conditions of historical classism in Chile, "snob appeal" which is directly related to this classist mentality, and the power of the market to maintain its own profit-driven institutions through advertising (Chitty, 1983). What will happen to the future of education where the widespread belief in the superior quality of private schools continues to flourish unchallenged? Even for many policymakers and people intimately tied to the newest round of educational reform begun in 1997, the superiority of private schools over public remains a naturalized assumption. At the time of this research there was not a single regional Minister of Education or official in the Ministry who had their children enrolled in the Municipal system.

Another interesting aspect concerns the importance of financial resources in education. It seems that there have been various claims - regarding efficiency, that it is not more money that is necessary rather better organization. Again, this reinforces a mythological faith in efficiency. If money is not the problem it is easy to legitimate huge decreases in educational spending that obviously exacerbates the problems faced by schools in poor neighborhoods (Puiggrós, 1996). Part of the struggle to improve educational quality and access to underrepresented populations requires that we face

the myths of the market head on. Such figures pointing to the marginal power of money to influence educational quality, and the dubious quality of education when subjected to purely market-driven forces, illuminates some of the problems encountered by a blind faith in the market. Arguments made that negate the importance of money in creating good schools should be roundly critiqued on many levels, but it is highly suspect that the individuals whose political and economic interests tend to be represented by such claims also willingly pay high fees for the formal and extracurricular education of their own children.

Fallout from the Reforms, 1989-1996:

In 1989 the people of Chile voted in a plebiscite to remove General Pinochet as head of the country, although he still remained head of the military until March 1998. Within the constitution drafted by the military junta, Pinochet created the title, "senator for life," which remained intact despite Pinochet's detention for 18 months in England while awaiting extradition to Spain to stand trial for 'crimes against humanity'. On March 3, 2000, England's Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw decided that Pinochet was medically unfit to stand trial. Pinochet was returned to Chile for humanitarian reasons. The military and other supporters throughout Chile received him with jubilant fanfare. In August 2000, Pinochet was stripped of all diplomatic privileges within Chile. The Chilean justice system began its slow, systematic investigation and processing of numerous counts against the General Pinochet and various members of his family. These charges ranged from human rights abuses, crimes of murder, and torture, to theft and embezzlement. On December 10, 2006, International Human Rights Day (and birthday of his wife, Lucia), Pinochet died in the Military Hospital in Santiago. Amidst the celebration of the crowds on the death of the dictator, the words of Mario Benedetti were scrawled poignantly on a building on the *Alameda*:

"La muerte le gana a la justicia"[4]

(Mario Benedetti, 12/10/2006)

Neo-liberal fallout - Teaching

There is no arena in which the logic of the marketplace clashes with the ideals of education as dramatically as teaching. In Chile we have extensive evidence that policy recommendations articulated in terms of economic efficiency, accountability, and excellence, when divorced from the realities of classroom practice create an aberration of all that schools have been envisioned to be. As one scholar put it recently, "It's very easy to become efficient and reduce overall educational costs if you simply cut teacher's salaries and increase class sizes" (Schugurensky, 1997). This drop in pay experienced in Chile as part of this efficiency plan has necessitated that most teachers now must work several jobs, usually at several different school sites, in order to make ends meet. Thus, the term "taxi teachers" has been coined referring to educators who travel from school to school by taxi to complete their working day[5]. Teachers are now paid by the "chronological hour," for each 60 minutes of time spent in a class, rather than the "pedagogical hour" which is equal to 45 minutes. This means that teaching four 45-minute classes is only worth three hours pay with prep time and homework not considered part of the financial compensation of the teaching profession.

There has been some improvement in this area, many private schools continue to pay per "chronological hour," but it is no longer true for some semi-private and municipal schools. Though there are federal minimum limits for all teacher salaries, these are unacceptably low. Teachers now have become part of the "flexible" work force with "indefinite contracts," and they can be fired for no stated reason in most municipalities, though *La Reforma Educacional* has been trying to mediate and improve this condition. One example of an "efficient" use of these indefinite contracts occurred in 1987 when, to lower costs and compete against their neighboring schools, the municipalities fired 8,000 teachers - most received zero severance pay having been classified as recent hires since the schools where they taught had been recently municipalized.

Under the old nationalized system, teachers were able to transfer to other regions or schools while preserving their seniority and rate of pay. There were also many provisions under the nationalized system that enhanced teacher status. Continuing education for teachers was supported by the national system and there were many

professional development opportunities available. In contrast to many countries in Latin America, ongoing in-service professional development was a normal part of the Chilean teaching profession in the years preceding the coup. With the municipalization of education, these opportunities had virtually disappeared. Many regions are simply unable to offer such professional development because of fiscal and resource constraints. Even among private institutions, such teacher development and encouragement of innovation has disappeared behind the demands of fiscal responsibility. Innovation and professional development are unnecessary when the work force is seen as just that - workers not professionals.

Indeed, decentralizing and privatizing the educational system has significantly affected the professionalism of teaching. Teachers, once highly respected, remain yet another sector of workers lacking in job security and even such minimal guarantees (once enjoyed by all national employees) of due process and defense against accusation. Until the passage of the *Estatuto Docente*[6] by the Concertación government in 1990, teachers were not even regular municipal salaried employees (like school janitors), but "workers" under contract of the municipality's education corporation (Marin, 1990). As in the case of teacher pay, the security afforded teachers varies by type of school and municipality. Generally speaking, municipal schools offer marginally better job security and benefits followed by the semi-private and private institutions. Teachers remain one of the more marginalized and exploited populations in the neo-liberal Chilean market.

Dramatic evidence of market pressures destroying teaching and learning is also abundant when market measures of excellence are put into place. When excellence is measured only in terms of the results of standardized test scores, and a reward system - including job security, pay and other market "incentives," is similarly linked, teachers have little reason to explore the potential of student centered learning, constructivist methods, or critical thinking, practices that may veer away from the focus of state exams. The focus becomes getting information that will appear on the test to the students as quickly as possible. This type of "efficiency" leads to a narrowed curriculum and teaching to the test, something now endemic to the schools of Chile.

Local Control

There seems to be a general consensus among educators that municipalization was one of the key factors responsible for the downfall of Chilean education. In workshops with teachers and principals from the 9th Region, a Region that is politically conservative and was the only Region in the country to support the dictatorship in the plebiscite of 1989, all these educational actors overwhelmingly expressed negative sentiments toward the decentralization of education in Chile (Pinkney Pastrana, 2000). Teachers and principals routinely referred to the municipalization of education in Chile as '*alcaldización*.' This refers to the transfer of authority in schooling away from the general national regulations coming from the National Ministry to the mayors - *alcaldes* - of each municipality. The mayors of these municipalities, almost without exception, are not educators and have a limited understanding of the lives of teachers or students and families in municipal schools yet they hold authority over many important educational decisions related to teachers, including pay scales, hiring, and tenure policies within each district. These drawbacks are over and above the obvious political conflicts that can arise when teacher or other staff members find themselves in differing political camps from the mayors. The complete breakdown of even the erroneous supposition of the 'neutrality' of schooling happened in Chile after the coup when the ruling military junta appointed every mayor in the country, giving them complete control over the nation's schools. Mayors were not democratically elected until 1992. Even with democratic elections, the legacy of direct political control over the schools manifests itself in the cultural realities of disempowered education communities.

Issues of 'local control' may hold emancipating potential when removed from an authoritarian context. Elitist or separatist desires to maintain control of the educational institutions to which they entrust their children are pursued with the interests of maintaining their class privilege, or perhaps for reasons due to racist or classist prejudices. However, local control also suggests the possibility of creating democratic, oppositional spaces in which the socially reproductive aims of status quo educational organizations could be contested. The *Reforma Educacional* begun in 1997, coupled with the current entrepreneurial atmosphere, which is very much a part of neo-liberal culture, has created an environment in Chile where geographically -and

ideologically - different municipal plans must be allowed to proceed. The efficiency perceived in decentralized organizations and the faith that competition via parental choice will inspire schools towards 'excellence,' as measured on national standardized exams, has left educational establishments freed from the tedium of controlling regulation. Perhaps this potential for re-forming democratic spaces will be realized in some independently organized schools in Chile.

We can see an interesting relationship between politics and education contextualizing the processes and outcomes of the educational reforms of the past 24 years within the political and economic reality of Chile. Chile nicely illustrates the inextricable linkages and the complex interplay and interdependence of politics, economics, and education. This poses a challenge to theorists in all fields who tend to hold on to paradigms that present positivistic, ahistorical research and policy decontextualized from social and cultural realities, and that therefore fail to adequately problematize the idea that the political system, the economic system, and the educational system somehow function autonomously. The intersection of the public's demands of education, the political atmosphere, economic conditions and the economic logic which drives these conditions creates an environment in which educational reform (and the semiotic logics embedded in the discourse of its legitimating rationale [Hargreaves, 1994]) is both a product of, and a producer of operating educational systems and their acceptance among the various actors in society.

Education in "Re-democratized" Chile

Este Estado de carácter subsidiario ha modificado profundamente los objetivos mismos de la educación de nuestro país, concibiendo al educando básicamente como consumidor. De este modo, se ha ido transformando el concepto de calidad del educación, reduciéndose a una capacitación eficiente para generar los diversos tipos de capital humano que esta sociedad requiere para us desarrollo productivo, así como a la formación de un ser humano competente para ser buen consumidor en esta sociedad de mercado. (Colegio de Profesores, July 1999)[7]

Education policies favored by Right Wing political parties in Chile mirror those of the military government, and include none of the improvements (however small they may be) offered by *La Reforma Educacional*. During his tenure as Minister of Education, programs begun by Ricardo Lagos contrasted dramatically with those of previous officials in the Ministry of Education.

... The solution of Maria Teresa Infante and Alfredo Prieto (superintendent of Education in 1979, and minister of education, December 1979 - April 1982, respectively). and others before the plebiscite, to low performing schools was to close them down. Lagos comes into the Ministry and creates the program of 900 schools to improve the educational situation for the worst schools in the country. This represents a drastic change in policy and in national goals for education. It is also an indication of the differing impressions various government ideologies hold concerning Chilean students. (Ministry of Education presentation detailing the MECE Media to faculty from the Universidad de la Frontera, July, 1998)

In 1989 after the plebiscite symbolically removed General Pinochet from power and began the process of "re-democratization," the newly formed *Consertación* coalition of center and left-of-center representatives began the process of negotiating their ascendancy to the formal power structures in government. One of the requirements for "re-democratization" agreed upon by the fledgling *Consertación* coalition, was to respect the Constitution of 1980 (Flores & Varela, 1994; Martinez, 1993; Petras & Levia, 1994). The current Constitution was drawn up by the Military Government and is designed to uphold the role of the military in Chile's development, and reinforce and support the current economic model as well as the socially conservative tenets of its authoritarian foundations (Collins & Lear, 1995).

In much the same way that political annalists portray the relationship between the actual policies of Third Way politicians and their "kinder, gentler" rhetoric, Chile's educational reforms post-re-democratization often appear to offer progressive potential without addressing the structural problems that are inherent to and responsible for the downfall of the Chilean education system. The policies regulating decentralization, vouchers, and privatization, called by some, "post-welfare reforms" (Guari, 1998), are embedded in the Constitution and the *Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza (LOCE)*. It is the neo-liberal framework that supports the Chilean educational system that is ultimately responsible for the "crises in education" which the reforms such as the recent *Reforma Educacional*, at once attempt to remedy and continue to aggravate. The neo-liberal tenets that were put into place during the military regime have been facilitated by and are dependent on:

- (1) the flexibilization of the labor practices including the absence of standards regulating the working conditions of teachers
- (2) the continued encouragement and requirement for competition between schools for students in order that the subsidies not leave the site

Most reform initiatives thus far have not significantly challenged or attempted to change any of these conditions. In fact, current reforms increase competition between schools through new market incentives such as "bonus" incentives recommended within the reform, e.g. merit pay, teaching awards for excellence, etc. One of the primary goals of *La Reforma Educacional* (1997-present) evident in all of its four major areas of concentration is the creation of a professional teacher/school culture better able to successfully administrate learning within the structural confines of the decentralized system (MINEDUC 1998, Pinkney Pastrana 2000).

The *Estatuto Docente* in 1990 (Historia de Ley, 1992). briefly addressed the working conditions of teachers. This law granted teachers a degree of job stability, and recognized that teachers were not ordinary private sector workers by establishing a body of law specifically to govern their profession. It raised the national minimum of teacher salaries in public/municipal and semi-private schools, established a graduated pay scale based on years of service in the public/municipal sector, created a fund to pay for professional development, required that all position openings be submitted to public competition, and limited the reasons for which municipal teachers could be fired (Guari, 1998). The *Estatuto Docente* did not address the issues of wages to the extent the teacher union - *El colegio de profesores* - had hoped but these changes represented a significant improvement in guaranteeing that the work of teachers would not be submitted to as harsh a neo-liberal reality as that established by the military regime (Gauri, 1998, pg.89).

Several years later however, a high level commission on the modernization of education appointed by then president Frei, found the changes codified by the *Estatuto Docente*, to be responsible for lowering incentives for teacher performance (*Diálogo Nacional Sobre la Modernización de la Educación Chilena*, 1995). In fact, the report called the effects of the *Estatuto Docente* "catastrophic" and called for merit pay, hiring flexibility at the school level, and the transfer of subventions directly to schools so that the high-performing establishments within a municipality would not

continue to subsidize those performing poorly. Hence, we find more evidence to support the claim that even within the years of "re-democratization" the ideology of neo-liberal, competition/market based education policies remains unchallenged.

La Reforma Educacional

... las políticas educacionales iniciadas en 1990 han tenido dos grandes principios orientadores: el mejoramiento de la calidad de la educación y una mayor equidad en su distribución. El foco de las políticas respecto a la calidad ha estado en el mejoramiento de los procesos internos del sistema educacional y de sus resultados de aprendizaje. Asimismo, las políticas de equidad se han orientado de acuerdo al criterio de discriminación positiva, según el cual la igualdad de oportunidades educativas para grupos heterogéneos requiere asignar más recursos y prestar atención especial a los grupos más vulnerables del país. (MINEDUC, 1998, pg. 109)[8]

Given the political environment in which drastic neo-liberal reforms in Chile were initially couched, questions of legitimacy or debate on the changes in education that took place pose a moot point, as any opposition to change during the dictatorship was met with violent oppression. But today Chile faces a different situation. Since 1989 the country has been on the road to "re-democratization," again holding political elections open to candidates from a variety of political parties. In fact the past two presidential elections have resulted in the election of Socialist presidents running as part of the *Concertación* coalition[9]. The current education reform focuses its efforts on improving the education in Chile by stressing the issues of excellence, equity, and participation, as well as an innovative and impressively progressive emphasis on learning - *Aprender de Aprender*.

The *Reforma Educacional Chilena* officially commenced in 1997. It was originally scheduled to be completed in 2002, but the scope of this initiative is enormous and the timeline for its implementation has been extended several times. As mentioned above the three guiding tenets of the reform are *equidad*, *calidad*, and *participación* (equity, quality and participation). Within these three central foci exist all of the contradictions between the underlying structure of neoliberal reform and many of the assumptions held within its logic, and approaches to schooling that draw our attention away from market incentives toward a focus on human development with arguably progressive elements embedded within.

When implementation of the *Reforma Educacional* began in 1987, four primary areas of focus defined the outline of the reform. These are:

1) The *Jornada Completa*, the reform whose aim is to extend the length of the school day from 8am to 4pm, rather than allowing municipal and semi-private schools to carry two school shifts per day - the *jornada de la mañana* (8am-1pm), and the *jornada de la tarde* (2pm-7pm). This reform allows students three extra hours of classroom time per day, bringing the Chilean educational experience closer inline with that of most industrialized nations.

2) *Mejoramiento de la Calidad de la Educación (MECE)* projects consist of various types of initiatives that allow for some flexibility in their focus and implementation. *MECE* projects can focus on rural or urban sectors, elementary or secondary institutions. They are usually written from within specific institutional sites depending on their unique needs. They can include government funding for projects of infrastructure improvements (such as adding a second floor to an elementary school), projects that seek to develop curriculum for use in specialized populations (such as bi-lingual curriculum development in Spanish and the Mapuche language), projects aimed at making small rural schools more effective, etc. Perhaps the most celebrated and effective of recent *MECE* projects was the *Programa de Mejoramiento de la Calidad de las Escuelas Básicas de Sectores Pobres*, P-900 project[10]. Though begun before the current *Reforma Educacional*, this project, developed with technical assistance from Sweden, is widely seen as one of the most effective interventions for improving education in post-dictatorship Chile.

3) *Desarrollo Profesional de los Decentes* - teacher education programs. Universities across the country applied for and received funding from the Ministry to improve their teacher training programs. This money could be used for a variety of needs within the various programs, including the professional development of Teacher Educators in Universities.

4) *Aprender de Aprender* - This final aspect of the *Reforma Educacional* is specifically on diversification of the curriculum. Traditionally, instruction in Chile is very teacher centered, and lecture based. New government curriculum were developed that included suggested projects to encourage the use of constructivist methods and didactics. These projects also included funding for Teacher Professional development and in-service workshops throughout the country.

The following sections will detail how the *Reforma Educacional* articulated the three foci of the reform.

***Equidad* Reborn**

Virtually all Ministry publications detailing the *Reforma Educacional* express *Equidad* as a primary aim (MINEDUC, 1996a, b, & c; 1998). Equity has again been placed firmly into the public conversation. Equity issues, whether conceptualized in terms of educational coverage or social justice, had been one of the major forces in driving expansion of the education system and change in education policy, as well as defining the role of the state in education in the years before the coup, (Farrell, 1986; Fisher, 1979; Martin et al, 1982). In the years of military rule, arguments for equity virtually disappeared from all discussions (Collins & Lear, 1995). Today, calls for greater equity can mean several things[11] though with the advent of the current reform they usually result in increased funding of public education and investment in the infrastructure and development of specific programs aimed at improving the educational attainment of low-achieving, or traditionally marginalized populations, i.e., ethnic minorities, and poor/working class populations (as in the specific MECE programs, MINEDUC, 1998). Paradoxically, *La Reforma Educacional*, committed to equity, does not challenge in any way the institutionalized tracking system in Chile reinforced by the existence of *subvenciones*/vouchers.

The two-tiered system of *liceos humanístico-científicos* and *liceos técnico-profesionales* is the means by which two sets of Chilean youth are formed, one college bound and the other destined for the blue-collar sector. These two types of schools serve different sectors of Chilean society. It is extremely rare to find middle or upper-class children in *escuelas técnico-profesionales*. They serve as the educational track for poor urban and rural students (MINEDUC, 1995, 1996, 1997; Guari, 1998). They also generally represent a significantly lower level of academic quality or at least this is the general perception among teachers, and parents (Pinkney Pastrana, 2000).

The system of *subvenciones* continues to encourage the development of *escuelas subvencionadas*, semi-private schools that tend to exercise many of the flexible labor practices touted in the private sector and some degree of autonomy in curricular design. Chile, even with the rebirth of equity, does not break its commitment to the formation of "two Chile's" the workers and the "elite." The subvention system and ease of opening schools in Chile, has made education a profitable business for many

Chilean entrepreneurs. Not all subventions are alike however, and the average per month/per student payment varies depending on the type of school. The highest subventions are paid for students enrolled in technical-professional high schools, increasing the attraction for entrepreneurs to establish and apply for status as this type of school (MINEDUC, 1996-1998). Virtually all semi-private high schools fall under the technical-professional rubric. This situation in turn, decreases the pressure on these schools to become excellent academic sites, as their students are generally viewed as future workers, not college material.

The vicious circle continues in the competition for full enrollment, as advertising is invested in promoting the practical worth of technical-professional education, the scientific-humanist course of study reaping a lower subvention payment. The end result is that only a select class of students are enrolled in college preparatory schools. Very few working class students enter into this academic culture. Public, semi-private, and private schools in Chile do not fulfill one of the fundamental democratizing chores envisioned for public educational systems - that of providing a space where students representing many different cultural and social backgrounds can come together and learn from each other, socially and academically.

Social reproduction based on racist and classist assumptions of ability is a clear phenomenon in Chile. Several students (in one of the lower-ability tracks) at a scientific-humanist school, put it this way,

this school is racist and classist, if we all had European last names we would be in the "A" or "B" track. They put us in "C" because we come from poor families and we are troublemakers. If you look at the "D" track, it's full of only Mapuche kids" (Pinkney Pastrana, p.323).

Social reproduction is reinforced by a voucher system that pays more to schools who produce workers than those who attend to the 'educated class.' This is further aggravated within schools of all types by in-house ability tracking. This situation leaves one to wonder if the commitment to equity constantly referred to in the reforms is yet another means to legitimate a hyper-neo-liberal economic system and the schools conscripted to its service.

We find that today the "left" has a more active role in government. Many officials in the Ministry, both national and regional, are members of the socialist party. Chile can even point to its new president, the first female elected in Chile's history, Michelle Bachelet and former president Ricardo Lagos, the first socialist president since Salvador Allende, as proof of its "re-democratized" status. Despite these facts, and contrary to the continued cold-war, anti-socialist discourse still aimed at demonizing "the left," these official "socialist" parties in Chile represent the "Third Way" in leftist politics (Petras, 2000) and offer very little in critique of neo-liberal policy. Perhaps with the exception of P-900 program, there has been little effort made to refocus on educational equity in terms of democratizing educational experience by breaking down class barriers, nor in utilizing the democratizing potential of ongoing education reform.[12]

Calidad and Functionalist Measures

Educational quality is defined as education that is "pertinent and relevant" in terms of a "modern" curriculum (Pinkney Pastrana, 2000). Curricular objectives must meet the needs of a technologically changing world as well as take the initiative for renewing an emphasis on creativity in order that schools prepare students - "for a future they cannot imagine.[13]" These requirements of quality schooling are readily tied to the requirements of boosting Chile's commitment to global capitalist development. Though quality has traditionally been defined in terms of continuing to improve system coverage, graduation and national literacy rates, since neo-liberal reforms began, quality has been overwhelmingly conceptualized in terms of either increasing standardized test scores, and/or creating an illusion of improvement through global comparisons of educational achievement (such as recent and ongoing UNESCO studies that are used to rate educational quality internationally, UNESCO, 1998).

The global comparison of education also implies that curricular objectives and achievement can be readily monitored by national testing measures. It is common practice in Chilean schools today that students use instructional time to prepare for the standardized exams. Criticisms of national testing point to the dubious nature of such standardized measures, calling into question the class, gender, and race-based biases that are woven into the content and phrasing of standardized tests. Other criticisms point to the loss of instructional time for "real learning" that happens when weeks are

dedicated to practice tests, aimed at making students feel comfortable and literate in the task of "filling in the bubble" (Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Colegio de profesores, 1999).

In Chile the competitive backlash of *subvenciones*, as schools vie for student bodies in order to receive the funds needed for operation, furthers the complications related to standardized testing. "Choice" encourages parents to find the "best" schools for their children, but how does one judge the performance of one school over another? It is common in Chilean schools to find traditional authoritarian practices that create an environment where parents are virtually barred from the classroom - preventing parents from gaining a more intimate knowledge of classroom learning environments. Further, limited knowledge by many families leaves them without a critical understanding of issues regarding test scores - meaning possible contradictions between test scores and effective learning environments are never questioned.

Standardized tests offer readily comparable results published in all regional papers. This is a font of information utilized by savvy parents to inform the choice of a school for their children. It is a well-known common practice that many elite schools require their students to maintain a grade point average of 'B' or better. Those who fail to meet these requirements are expelled from the school. Often the students who perform well in traditional school settings come from social environments that closely resemble those found in schools and hence possess the "cultural capital" that facilitates success in school. It is these same students who usually perform well on standardized tests. Schools that are populated uniformly with students who fit neatly into the norms of traditional academic culture tend to score highly on standard measures. Similarly, there is evidence to suggest that often private, and semi-private schools spend more time on test preparation than some municipal schools (Pinkney Pastrana, 2000).

These practices create an inaccurate picture of the academic quality found in different types of schools, as well as supporting the myths concerning the differences in quality between municipal and private schools. The problems that arise from a dependence and reliance on testing measures have created less of a debate in Chile than that currently experienced in the United States today. Standardized tests are generally viewed uncritically in Chile, as good measures of the quality of schools and the level of knowledge held by students, and in fact, some prestigious schools define

themselves in very practical terms as being places where the entire focus of one's studies is to prepare for the college exam.

Participation, the Radical Potential

The ideal of opening up Chilean educational communities to more participatory practices represents the most radical element found in the Chilean education reform. Participation implies the possibility of agency, and agency implies that 'we can make history from the concrete conditions in which we find ourselves' (Marx, 1977). Participation suggests that communities come together and join forces around common interests to realize and create new social formations. The concept of participation follows logically in line with the tenets of curricular reform as expressed by both MECE projects and curricular renovation (MINEDUC, 1998). Namely, these reforms are founded on constructivist paradigms that point to the socially constructed nature of learning, and the importance of "communities of learners" in the learning process. It is impossible by definition to create community without its members engaged as participants.

In this curious and contradictory arena of Chilean education reform the concept of participation seems trapped between two different ideological visions. The first, the "progressive," (as it marks a retreat from the earlier social practices of the authoritarian dictatorship that insisted upon an absence of popular participation and exercised centralized decision making in all significant instances) though functional in vision, requires educators to become active participants in the technical necessities of schooling (MINEDUC, 1997). It is within this framework of participation that most of the teacher development projects are oriented as teachers and administrators are prepared, "*capacitados*," to undertake the projects of the reform (Pinkney Pastrana, 2000). This concept of participation seeks to empower communities toward realizing school autonomy within the decentralized structure of Chilean schooling. It assumes that the vision of schooling presented by the Ministry of education is ideal and in the best interest of Chile, and does not invite that "participation" be extended to include discussions questioning the problematic aspects of the reform (Colegio de Profesores, 1999). As we have seen, the reform acts as a "kinder, gentler" version of the educational reforms of the 1980's in as far as it does nothing to change the problematic structure of neo-liberal reform, i.e., decentralization and vouchers

founded in a market logic applied to the educational system (McLaren, 1995 & 2000; Puiggrós, 1996). It also does nothing to challenge the neo-liberal foundations onto which the reform was incorporated and as we have seen these challenges are often directly discouraged by Ministry officials (Cox, 1998).

There is another possible interpretation of "participation" that opens the potential for more radical change. The suggestion that broad community involvement be included, and welcomed as an equal partner in definitional and foundational decisions, actions, and design, and the ability of schools to design such proposals that allow for this type of participation, offers the possibility of a significant departure from neo-liberal logic, if not its unchallenged structure. This type of participation could include involvement in the social, cultural, and political process of schooling, and invites the potential of critical agency. In terms of the radical potential of teaching this type of participation invites that,

... the classroom ... be transformed into a hybrid pedagogical space where permission is not denied students who wish to narrate their own identities outside of marketplace identities and the politics of consumerism, a space where individual identities find meaning in collective expression and solidarity with cultural others, where mimetic, Eurocentric time recedes into the lived historical moment of contemporary struggles for identity. Here the imperatives of consumer culture and the hegemony of market identities are challenged by narratives of identity that are underwritten by a concern for liberation and social justice. (McLaren, 1996, pg.105)

Extending this possibility of liberatory, critical participation to the broader community can create spaces in which shared decision-making concerning school-centered and community-centered activities can be explored. This participation is based in relations of solidarity, and can include conversations concerning the very purpose of education and pedagogical practice. This type of participation invades spaces beyond the immediate classroom or school, and provides access to potentially transformative political and social action through the epistemological naming of the real conditions inhabited by the community members themselves.

This much deeper conceptualization of participation represents a shift from the purely technical, operational level of "symbolic" participation, to the more powerful and significant level of "radical" participation. At the level of radical participation we approach education as articulated by Paulo Freire (1970; also, McLaren, 2000), in

which education is at once political, creative, and educational, and cannot be realized in the absence of community solidarity and ontological activism. This is the level of pedagogical praxis, reading the word and the world, i.e. social and transformative literacy.

These two visions of participation, though clearly differing in potency, are not necessarily exclusionary, yet they can play out very differently depending on the context in which they find themselves. Though broad-based community participation remains a democratic necessity, the neo-liberal structural realities that frame the education reform also call for participation from school teachers, parents, and students, but not to radically change society, simply to grease the cogs of the capitalist development machine. The reorganization, or re-conceptualization of the organizational practices in schools - both within classrooms and in terms of administrative practices - is perhaps one of the clearest attempts to achieve not only the potentials of decentralization, but also it is here that the third goal of the reform - "participation" - is officially incorporated.

In order that the educational communities in Chile take full advantage of the many material benefits of the reform, the full participation of many actors within the education community is required. For example, in the programs MECE media, many projects, such as PME, Montegrande and others make large sums of money and a considerable amount of prestige available to teachers and schools. These market incentives have provided the basis for justifying neo-liberal education reform. The common sense view that 'competition creates a better product' is held by many and vigorously promoted internationally, though there is growing concern about its consequences (Fiske & Ladd, 2000; McLaren, 2000; Puiggrós, 1996). Of course in terms of the competitive nature of the Chilean school system, this makes consequences of national or local recognition for outstanding work much higher. Schools that have been recognized for their educational superiority (even if measured by the very faulty means of standardized tests) always represent public goods very much in demand. As we have seen earlier, virtually all, if not all, of the educational programs and awards associated with the *La Reforma Educacional*, require a high degree of actual or symbolic intra-institutional coordination. So that at least the conditions reflecting a collaborative and constructive, i.e. "participatory," school

culture appear to be met. This 'democratizing' impulse, spurred on by the desperation of fiscal necessity, when overlaid onto the competition for students and their vouchers, appears paradoxical. There are material incentives to create participatory spaces in schools. In some cases this may have a positive result. However, as the reform continues to develop it is common to find school communities, embittered and embattled over failed projects due to:

- distrust of administration
- lack of information concerning the many new possibilities offered by the Reform
- fear of the consequences of stepping out of traditional roles in school communities
- lack of capacity to mount and design innovative programs reflecting the needs of the community
- lack of practice in the democratic processes of opening discussions of innovation to voices and participants not traditionally included in these processes. (Pinkney Pastrana, 2000)

Thus, democratizing incentives collide with the traditions of exclusion, and favoritism and participation becomes a product of and support for the current 'neo-liberal' logics that drive the social reproduction of capitalist relations of power within schools and society.

In considering the radical potential for "participation" in the Chilean education reform we see a democratizing concept co-opted by the functional, market driven necessity of making de-centralized schools independently autonomous. Again, participation at this level will make the mechanism of school organization run smoothly, but it does not challenge assumptions of social Darwinism. It privileges a position that holds competition and survival of the fittest - the assumptions that translate into market logic applied to the educational system, and that sees the goals of economic development through education based on enactments of human capital theory, rather than democratizing conceptualizations of education - necessary social precursors for countries that wish to articulate themselves in the global arena.

This is quite different from participation grounded in solidarity among school communities on the basis of an ethical commitment to education as a human right and necessary foundation for democracy. The project for transforming education into a site of emancipatory praxis involving the participation of a broad popular sector is the

radical potential participation offers. In this ideal vision of education as facilitated by the *La Reforma Educacional*, the possibility of developing radical 'autonomous' schools exists, and so too the radical potential for counter-hegemonic, democratic social change.

Much of the impetus behind the current reforms is the recognition of the deterioration of the education system - especially the public sector that remains. *La Reforma Educacional* is in many ways an attempt to repair some of the damage that occurred prior to re-democratization. Yet, given the historical development of the reforms, and the plurality of thought which once defined Chilean socio-political culture - what appears to now be the widespread contemporary acceptance and indeed the ideological hegemony of neo-liberal reform (educational as well as otherwise) - may prompt one to explore other areas concerning the value and perception of reforms held by those both within the school system and the general population.

Schools, Privatization and the Market Place

The current reforms in education though far reaching and "progressive" do nothing to challenge the basic structural conditions that have created a free market mentality within the educational system of Chile. Within this neo-liberal structural gridlock the debilitating effects of market driven school policy collide with progressive curricular and pedagogical reform. Increased attention to professional development, a lengthened school day, and projects aimed at improving and democratizing the organization and management of schools and local ministry offices are restricted within the limitations they have inherited. Issues of local control and the right of parents' to choose the best schools for their own children can exacerbate the tensions between liberty and equity.

Widespread practices within private and semi-private schools, include the administration of entrance exams that screen for only the 'best' students, and the practice of 'teaching to the test' (in order to augment published results). Private schools routinely expel low achieving and otherwise problematic students. Hence, published test scores reflect only a superficial measure of the quality of schools. These conditions help to support assumptions of the inferiority of municipal education, contributing further to the drain of bodies and thus public money from the

municipal system. The business of education is very popular in Chile and *escuelas subvencionadas*, loosely regulated relative of Charter schools in the United States, can appear and disappear virtually overnight (SEREMI, *ibid.*). These semi-private schools offer crowded classrooms, horrendous working contracts for teachers, and often substandard facilities, but they remain popular with the consumer due to the low status of municipal schools. The ideology behind the free-market propaganda celebrating the virtues of the private sphere is imbedded into the social rhetoric of anti-activist and anti-solidarity individualistic classism. Given this environment one cannot underestimate the status attending a non-municipal school entails.

Colegio de profesores

Within the framework of neo-liberal education policy, "quality" is most often reduced to superficial measures that ignore the richness inherent in learning communities. The work of schools becomes focused on the ability of the system to produce the various types of human capital necessary for the productive development of the Chilean economy, as well as its ability to produce human beings as competent consumers within this market society. This is essentially the critique offered by the *colegio de profesores* (1999). One of the few well articulated critiques to ongoing educational reforms that do not attempt to change the underlying structures put into place during the dictatorship, it expresses the frustration of the teachers the *colegio* represents and especially reflects the discontent neo-liberal reform causes the teaching corp. It also articulates a critique of neo-liberal policies informed by 27 years of experience. According to the *colegio* Chile is in the midst of (and has been for some time) a "*crisis del sistema educativo nacional*" (Colegio de Profesores A.G., July 1999). Recent research upholds the claims put forth by the *colegio de profesores* and provides evidence that the reform is very much "more of the same" in terms of its refusal to address, or challenge the market-inspired structural foundation of the Chilean educational system (Pinkney Pastrana, 2000). This evidence challenges some recent accounts of the efficacy of Chile's neo-liberal legacy (Guari, 1998). Such ahistorical studies set up statistical measures to mount claims of the success of market-based, neo-liberal policies but fail to account for other factors operating at the same time, such as the significant re-investment in the public sector made after 1990. This same study also fails to consider the disastrous period of the military dictatorship

in which these neo-liberal policies were initially put into practice, where the results were clearly far from positive.

Finally, there are the activists best represented by the *colegio de profesores*, who reject outright the political and structural foundations in which the reform is set and militantly resist the reform in every way possible, often calling on and organizing national strikes. The sharp critique expressed by the *colegio de profesores* was not characteristically found expressed by the Chilean mainstream, until recently. In June of 2006 over six hundred thousand high school students took to the streets in protest of the conditions in Chilean schools. This *Revolución Puingüino* rocked the entire country for several weeks and has succeeded in placing education squarely on the list of priorities of the President. The primary focus of this strike was to demand that the government take action to undo some of the structural organization of the educational system in Chile, in other words, the protest was set squarely against neo-liberal policies. Specifically the demands included that the Chilean state revoke the *Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza (LOCE)*. This law was put into place one day before General Pinochet stepped down as president following the plebiscite of 1989. The *LOCE* establishes the primacy of private capital in education in Chile, now recognized as one of the most debilitating elements of neo-liberal reform - the privileging of private interests over public interests. Other demands included ending the municipal organization of schools, which as discussed earlier was one of the primary changes put forth under the banner of "local control." The *revolución pengüino* consisted primarily of students enrolled in municipal and semi-private schools throughout the country, though as the strike progressed, many students from private schools joined their *compañeros* in solidarity. The demands articulated closely mirror those traditionally held up by the *colegio de profesores*, though it is important to note that although representatives from the *colegio de profesores* publicly stated their support of the students, they never took on any type of leadership role in the strike.

Educational in Contemporary Chile

Education in Chile today is the scene of many contradictory visions and practices. The 'progressive' vision of the ongoing *Reforma Educacional*, noteworthy for its emphasis on constructivist pedagogies, a return to a discourse of equity, and a commitment to

the gradually improving the conditions of teaching, collides with a legacy of authoritarian practices and the structural foundation of the education system that prohibits many of the very tenets of the reform. Still, slow changes have been made since 1990 and many of the problematic conditions are beginning to show improvement.

Interestingly, in many parts of the country, the pay differentials between municipal and some semi-private schools have been actually decreasing since "re-democratization." Additionally, the working conditions in Municipal schools in terms of job security and benefits have become increasingly more favorable for teachers. However, the decades of the dictatorship and years of anti-State free market propaganda, combined with Chile's classist legacy and the subsequent "snob appeal" has left a lingering impression that any school is better than a Municipal one. The desire to enrol one's children in private or semi-private schools is so intense that virtually everyone who can possibly afford so does. This is despite the fact that in many cases the academic differences between the different types of schools are negligible. In fact if one controls for socio-economic class in an analysis of school effectiveness there is virtually no difference between the different types of schools.

In-depth classroom based observations in various types of schools (municipal, and semi-private, subsidized) indicated very little if any differences in instructional approach between the different types of schools (Pinkney Pastrana, 2000). In fact, the different educational institutions often share the same teachers, and teacher practices largely follow very traditional, generally non-'democratic' norms. There is evidence that authoritarian, and specific teaching to the test may be more common in prestigious private schools and subsidized schools where market forces, and the threat of job loss following low test scores, influence teachers to stick to the curriculum and employ traditional practices seen as most efficient in getting the students prepared for national standardized proficiency exams. In a free market, these schools, dependent on the market to stay in business, require reputations bolstered by the nationally published test results. Further, most private schools expel students who fail to maintain a high grade point average, again enhancing the appearance that they offer a superior educational experience.

In the 1980s Chilean education became - and continues to be - a business of competition between educational institutions. The comparisons between these institutions are often based on the most superficial yet easily recognizable standards. Schooling in Chile is a business, and a very profitable one for unscrupulous entrepreneurs who play on the desperation of a destitute system to entice families into committing their children and economic resources into painfully overcrowded classrooms staffed by overworked, underpaid, professionals. Meanwhile the public system, with its crumbling physical infrastructure left by years of neglect and no budget to invest in glossy ads, must also compete in this educational free market fiasco.

Equity and Issues of Legitimation, Ideology and Hegemony in Education Reform

"... values that correspond to models of unattainable lives should not be fomented among the poorer sectors of society."

(ODEPLAN, *Informe Social 1984-1985*, p.21)

An often overlooked but disturbing element in the Chilean educational metamorphosis that took place in the years following the coup is the change of discourse regarding the purpose of public education. The issue of equity had virtually disappeared from reform discussion, until resurrected by *La Reforma Educacional*. Upon closer inspection however, this phoenix has arisen as a bland, non-threatening vision of equity, keeping in line with the aims of this current reform to increase the investment in education for the purpose of creating a workforce that will continue Chile's participation in the global economy. This view of education as a good "banking" investment was also one of the primary goals of the reforms that took place in the 1980s. We need to provoke a debate in which one must ask if education reform that does not reject all semblances of the current norm of neo-liberal tendencies can go far enough in creating real spaces where the controversial implications of achieving equitable educational practices can be recognized and dealt with.

Equity as articulated within the neo-liberal structures that remain in place in Chile, is practically unrecognizable when compared to the massive public attention and paramount importance given the issues of equity and the right to a 'good education for

all' that existed prior to the end of Chilean democracy in 1973. Educational goals aimed at broadening the representation of marginalized or working class students have been practically taboo in Chile until recently. And this marginalization continues to be exacerbated by neo-liberal policy. A government social report from 1984 called such goals "socialist" models of education and stated that such reforms, which enable all who desire to obtain more than a minimal education, put "fancy notions into the heads of the poor"(ODEPLAN, 1985). Though the rhetoric of *La Reforma Educacional* seems to challenge these classist attitudes, observations of the 'common sense' practices of teachers and the structure of schooling that supports such practices, suggest that the hegemony of classist discrimination still maintains a strong hold on the Chilean psyche.

The class-based stratification of elementary and secondary schools brought about by privatization as well the university education - now practically out of reach for working class students - means that the educational system no longer mixes together different classes. Because of this stratification certain professional attainments are now completely out of reach for poor students, and education in Chile no longer helps to reduce inequalities (Vallejo, 1993). This not only undermines the potential of education to contribute to the democratization of society by serving as civic pedagogue, but it also contributes to a new sort of 'legitimation crises' within the neo-liberal Chilean state, as the promises of equity and opportunity fail to materialize in the daily struggles of the poor (Boron & Torres, 1996). While the current reform seems at times to be dealing with the issues of improving education as a type of 'great equalizer,' there are not explicit programs to get children of working class families better qualified to attend universities or otherwise open up other economic potential outside of their "place" in society. Rather, polytechnic secondary schools proliferate as good options for children who need to leave high school with a title that enables them to enter directly into the workforce, at relatively low paying, low status jobs. There exists little or no debate concerning the very mediocre 'liberal arts' curricula offered at these schools and they are in fact part of the blatant tracking of working class children away from university eligibility.

The Legacy of Neo-liberal Reform

Beyond euphemisms, privatization of health, social security and education operated by neo-liberals has imposed a brutal rationale: depending on the amount of money you have, you will have so much health care, quality of education for your children and pension upon retirement. If you are privileged, you will have access to privileged services. If you are poor, you will have to make do with what the public system is able to give you. Fernando De Laire. "El discurso del 21 de mayo y los debates emergentes" Revista Mensaje, July 2002

The legacy that neo-liberal reforms in Chile bestowed to the country is fundamentally negative and anti-democratic. Schools were left physically deteriorated after years of competition and neglect, the teaching profession remains demoralized and severely underpaid, and the level of education (even as measured by problematic standardized tests) is only beginning to recover to the level seen before neo-liberal reforms were put into place. Researchers studying the effects charter schools and vouchers may ultimately produce (Wells, 1996) can reflect on the negative fallout of such schemes illustrated by the case of Chile. Schools in poor neighborhoods and serving populations traditionally excluded from the cultural capital offered by a 'good' education continue to suffer the negative effects of decentralization, *subvenciones/vouchers*, and "local control" disproportionately. The ideological fallout in terms of the fundamental assumptions concerning the purpose of education - including assumptions that define the best way of structurally organizing education systems - now format the mainstream conception of education in Chile. It is clear that despite the possibility of potentially progressive reform, the ideology and organizational structures of neo-liberal schooling is firmly entrenched and will prove difficult, if not impossible, to overcome.

Preparing working class students for jobs that fit the needs of their families and are appropriate to their presumed [low] 'abilities' corresponds to the logic of capitalist schooling. Neo-liberal restructured economies require an abundance of minimally skilled workers with no exposure to the possibly "corrupting" influences of a well-developed system of public education.

Both in Chile and in the United States opponents of unbridled neo-liberal capitalism must reemphasize local politics, while seeking to develop a radical global resistance, in order that we might build international links to work actively against neo-liberal trends in education and economic policy. We need to remember the radical call of Freire to *viver e lutar*, live and fight, through the continued emphasis on building

radical communities committed to pursuing the democratic potential of education. This vision reasserts a "critical utopianism" (Owen Daniel, 1997), as opposed to the vision of Chile's "utopic visionaries" whose anemic utopia is grounded within the constraints of global capitalism. Critical utopic visions of the left recognize that,

social justice is a latent social form within capitalist society that cannot attain real existence. As sustainable social justice is impossible on the basis of capitalist social forms, the drive to create social justice in capitalist society - fired by the anger of shocking social inequality - pushes at the boundaries of capitalist social relations, and against the limits of capital itself. (Rikowski, 2000).

Critical theorists, teachers, students, and policy makers must never relinquish the commitment to social justice. The obscenity of exploitation, globally and locally, demands action.

Significance of the Chilean Experience

In the struggle to re-create schooling towards more equitable ends as well as striving towards an unabashed re-commitment of the State in its support for public education as a necessary human right and the foundation of democratic society, educators must consider the contribution that the case of Chile makes to a critical dialogue that can inform the struggles underway in schools around the world. Not only does the case of Chile suggest flaws in current education policy trends, it suggests the need for a re-conceptualization of the State and economic development. An urgency to counter the deleterious results of 'free-market' development is surfacing as social activists from all sectors seek alternatives capable of challenging the hegemony of the current neo-liberal model. For this reason it is important to look more closely at the case of education in Chile, as it provides an example of not only the possible outcomes of market-based education reform policies but also the legacy of neo-liberal reform, which is instrumental in creating an hegemonic environment hostile to progressive change. The case of Chile, as viewed through the conditions experienced in the lives of its teachers, students, and other members of school communities, is the legacy of a 25 year socio-political project aimed at re-forming the consciousness of a country in terms of neo-liberal capitalist development and the social formations, as supported by the educational system, instrumental in naturalizing this form of exploitation.

What remains of Chile's public educational system is very much a space of marginalized populations. Widely considered inferior to the quality of education available at numerous private and semi-private institutions, public education remains the only option for families who have not benefited from Chile's economic 'boom.' The scope of and economic and intellectual resources invested in the ongoing *Reforma Educacional* are aimed at improving education, and depending on the interests involved in any specific articulation of ongoing reform, goals of improving education in Chile are indicative of many different things. There remains a residing faith in education's ability to provide a ticket out of poverty, and a commitment by socially minded policy makers to improve the conditions of "the other Chile" not touched by the "Free Market Miracle." Alternately, and in line with neo-liberal logic, education fulfils the needs of the marketplace for specific laborers.

In post structural re-adjustment Chile, improving education for marginalized populations is one means of legitimizing a political and economic system that has failed - despite many reports to the contrary - to alleviate poverty and further the democratic ideals of justice and popular participation. Whatever motivations inform and inspire education policy education policy in Chile today, the institutions of schooling remains tightly bound to a neo-liberal structure and its embedded logic. It is the portal through which the unseen children of inequity pass. It is a space of struggle, where issues of knowledge, power, culture, and privilege are too often 'disappeared' leaving schools oppressive spaces, reproducing class, race, and gender-based inequities. However, as evidenced in the recent *revolución pengüino*, public education also holds a potential to provide a space of critique where such naturalized assumptions concerning knowledge, power, culture, and privilege, may be interrogated, turned upside-down, and eventually dismantled.

CODA

En esta tierra
donde nacimos
me da tristeza
lo que vivimos
cuantas promesas
de nuevo dias
y la justicia

no se avecina
El Sol que viene
de amanecida
no lo vislumbro
con tanta herida
que sigue abierta
en la memoria.
esta de luto
toda la historia ... Illapú, "Por si algún día" 1998[14]

Chile has twice followed an extraordinary path that has left a legacy of major importance to the world. History will always remember Salvador Allende, and the people who put him in power, as a shining and valiant example of democracy for the people. History will always remember Augusto Pinochet, and the people who put him in power, as a shining aberration of abuse and crushed dreams - the harbinger of an economic "miracle," capitalist development built on the bones and agony of a nation. History will decide what path of development reaps the greatest benefits for the people of Chile. Since the disaster of the military regime, Chile has firmly settled in a specific developmental direction the results of which, in education and elsewhere, are not quite as rosy as the hubris of short-sighted neo-liberals would lead the world to believe. Resistance to neo-liberal capitalist development and education policy grows. In terms of education, Chile and the rest of the world would do well to heed the words of Iván Nuñez:[15] "I think the neo-liberal policy makers did us a favor, now we know what definitely does not work in education."

Notes

[1] The neoliberal economic theory for which these economists are credited is based on an undying faith in the market's ability to stabilize itself and through this stabilizing process eventually provide goods and services of superior quality to the public. In order to reach this position of freedom from which the Market can most effectively work, various "free market" measures must be applied within the given site. These measures include: cutting back on social expenditures and subsidies - this is coupled with reforms which facilitate the privatization of entities which previously provided these social needs i.e. education, health, transportation, housing, utilities;

removing trade barriers; lowered taxes on corporations to inspire investment; creating a flexible labor supply; etc. In short any policy or control which in any way inhibits the free flow of market forces should be eliminated. Then after the initial years of "austerity" should - theoretically - follow economic growth and stabilization in which all the needs of the citizenry are met.

[2] It is doubtful that any of these debates took place in Chile in the early 1980's. There was little or no participation by any members of society on issues concerning the restructuring of the Educational System. From all reports, the workings of the National Education Ministry and other governmental agencies during the Military Regime was clothed in secrecy and notably free from debate. It is even impossible to find documents pertaining to policy changes made during this period of time, as these were all destroyed before the transfer of power to the civilian government. Further the re-structuring of the educational system and all changes made by the Military Regime were never referred to as "Education Reform" by anyone encountered during the course of this research.

[3] Attempts to minimize these conditions continue to be the focus of several aspects of the ongoing *Reforma Educacional* in recent years. Pay for municipal teachers has been increasing, a richer nacional currículm has been developed, and the *jornada completa* remains a large part of Chilean education reform. The 900 schools program and some MECE rural programs have specifically focused on equity in low performing/low income areas as well.

[4] "death beat justice"

[5] Interestingly, the situation of teachers holding several jobs in different schools simultaneously, poses a challenge for those who consistently maintain the superiority of private institutions. Many teachers in Chile today are teaching in both the public and private spheres. Lacking prep time, they often present the same lessons in both contexts, regardless of the material resources that exist at the specific site. One must question whether or not the advantages of abundant material resources sometimes found in private institutions (such as computers, didactic materials, extra texts, and perhaps even smaller class size) are realized when the actual human resources in both public and private sectors remain the same.

[6] The *Estatuto Docente* is a law passed by the newly "democratized" Chilean government in 1990. It is a provision that creates an independent regulatory body in charge of teacher labor practices in Municipal schools. Its passage was highly sought by the teacher *gremio*, the Colegio de Profesores as it assured, for the first time in 17 years, a certain degree of job security and a minimum salary standard (See Guari, 1996 for a detailed discussion).

[7] TRANSLATION: This state, and its subsidiary character has profoundly modified the very objectives of education in our country, conceiving of the student basically as a consumer. In this way it has transformed the concept of quality in education, reducing it to an efficient preparation that generates the diverse types of human capital that this society requires for its productive development, like so it has moved towards the formation of human beings competent to act as good consumers in the market society.

[8] ... the educational policies initiated in 1990 are defined by two principal orienting factors: improving the quality of education and improving the equity in its distribution. The focus of the policies with respect to quality has been improving the internal processes of the educational system and learning outcomes. At the same time policies focused on equity have been oriented according to the criteria of positive discrimination, according to which the equality of educational opportunities within heterogeneous groups requires increasing material resources and giving more attention to the most vulnerable groups in the country.

[9] The Concertación coalition is made up of left-leaning Social and Christian Democrats from four different political parties: Socialist (Partido Socialista - PS), Christian Democrat (Partido Demócrata Cristiana - PDC), Radicals (Partido Radical Social Demócrata - PRSD), and Party for Democracy (Partido por la Democracia - PPD)

[10] Some of these *MECE* projects are especially interesting in that they veer broadly away from traditional neoliberal approaches to education. The P-900 project begun in 1990, for example, aimed extra funding for teacher training, curriculum development, materials, and infrastructure at the poorest elementary schools in the country. This is an approach to education that makes no sense within a business consciousness. If

schools are not doing well, if students are failing, the free-market in education choice should be able to take care of it, and failing schools should not be supported. In the P-900 project, the exact opposite occurred, with extraordinary results.

[11] In one account, even the right wing political parties have attempted to co-opt the discourse of equity into their lexicon by calling on equity in schools in terms of rewards for performance. “Many private schools are actually doing a better job educating our children, if we want to be truly equitable in education policy, private schools should also be eligible for *subvenciones* / vouchers”. (In Guari, 1998)

[12] In Fact, in May 2007 Chilean president Michelle Bachelet announced another set education reform proposals. Key among them is an increase in the amount of the *subvenciones*/vouchers, one of the most 'neo-liberal' elements in the structure of education in Chile. Ministry of Education, Chile, (http://www.mineduc.cl/index0.php?id_portal=1#)

[13] Gaston Sepulveda, conference presentation (November, 1998), "Desafios para la educación rural," Universidad Catolica de Chile, Santiago.

[14] TRANSLATION : In this land where we were born, I grieve what we live. How many promises of new days, and justice that never comes near. The sun that is coming at dawn, does not shine through all the wounds that remain open in our memory, all history is in mourning.

[15] Iván Nuñez served as Vice Minister of Education during the Popular Unity government, he was one of the primary policy makers responsible for the Escuela Nacional Unificada, the proposal for educational reform that was never implemented due to the coup. He currently works in the Ministry of Education in Santiago as Advisor to the ministry. He was interviewed on June, 20, 1999.

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