



Decentralization of Education in Chile

A case of institutionalized
class segregation

By Aleida van der Wal

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This document was drafted by Ms. Aleida Ingrid van der Wal
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FOREWORD

Teachers unions around the world are confronted with decentralisation processes in all their shapes and sizes. In many countries decentralisation policies are presented as part of an education reform agenda. They have great consequences for the education sector, educators and learners, not all of them positive. On the contrary, in some countries, it has led to the undermining of the fundamental rights of teachers unions. In other instances, it poses a serious threat to the provision of quality public education for all.

Chile is a country where teachers and their unions have been experiencing the effects of decentralisation policies for over two decades. Initially Chile was a model country for those who strongly endorsed decentralisation, also called 'municipalización' or the handing over of responsibilities to the municipalities. Quite a number of studies have been carried out to demonstrate the great successes of this policy.

However, both the teachers' unions and civil society organisations have expressed their hesitation and opposition to the implications of these policies. The study that you now have in your possession is an important contribution in support of the views of the unions. The study highlights one issue in particular: what impact has decentralisation in the education sector in Chile had on the social stratification of the country. In other words, did decentralisation contribute to providing more opportunities to the lower and middle income groups in the country?

The study clearly shows that – on the contrary – the measures taken over the last two decades in Chile actually strengthened the social divide in society.

This study is not only of relevance to readers interested in the impact of education policies in Chile. The globalisation of education policies and the implications of such must be monitored carefully by unionists.

Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary



INTRODUCTION

Decentralization of Education in Chile

This study has a double value because in writing it, Aleida not only produced a concise and accurate description of the Chilean education system, demystifying the success of our education sector reform, but furthermore, within her story, she gets closer to the readers and to the reality of this country and its culture.

Although the author notes, with some degree of modesty, that her research did not permit generalised conclusions, the reality is that within the very brief period she spent in our country, and with a limited field study, she managed to collect contextually relevant information and to study in depth the complex spectrum of relationships and definitions associated with the distinct actors involved in education in Chile whilst going deep into the topic of decentralisation.

Likewise, this study effectively explains and describes how the process of 'municipalisation' in Chile, much more than a process of decentralisation, has been one of deconcentration, within an authoritarian framework and culture in which, there has not been any concrete participation of the various actors, nor indeed any kind of a cooperative relationship between them. On the contrary, what emerge are, in many cases, competitive relations and a tendency to resolve problems in an individual fashion.

This research also shows that municipalisation has not only failed to break down inequalities in education, but rather that it has tended to deepen it. What has taken place is a fragmentation of the education system according to the different classes, which has effectively institutionalised segmentation.

By means of a reconstruction of the processes from the perspective of the actors themselves, Aleida helps us to understand more completely the complexity and depth of educational segregation in our country. She reveals to these actors, and in particular to teachers and unions, the important challenges that are in existence.

Consequently, the College of Professors of Chile (CPC) would like to express its thanks for the support provided by Education International in making this study possible. Likewise we thank and congratulate Aleida for her capacity to mix and to immerse herself in our culture and for her academic work which is one not only of quality but also of significant value politically.

Jorge Pavez



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Educational decentralization in Chile

When a teacher ends his discourse on the importance of institutions for development, he has the impression that he has not been understood. An indigenous leader comes to the teacher and says "Doctor I understood your message: when we compare someone from here and a Japanese than ours is not worse, but if we take two from here and we compare them with two Japanese, than we know why each country is at the stage where it is". What makes the difference in societal development are not so much the separate individual capabilities, but the capability for joint action (Salvat Bologna P., 2004)¹

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1. Introduction

Education has a fundamental role to play in human development, which is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests². Education is not a miracle cure to achieve all ideals in the world, but it is a principal means to foster a deeper and more harmonious human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war. These situations are still real phenomena in many countries and influence to a large extent people's opportunities and life chances, especially that of the marginalized groups.

According to the UNDP, closing the gap in educational opportunity is a critical starting point for narrowing inequality in opportunities and life chances. In almost all countries inequality in education is among the most powerful drivers of inequality in income². Although poverty in Chile is relatively low compared to other Latin American countries, income inequality in Chile is among the highest in the world. In Chile 18.8% of the population live below poverty line, meaning that income is not enough to cover basic needs. Compared to 38.6% of the population living in poverty in 1990 a lot has been achieved. However in 2003 the poorest 10% of the population still earn only 2.9% of the national income, while the richest 10% of the population earn 38%³. Education has the potential to act as an equalizer of opportunity, but that potential can only be unlocked through public policies that systematically remove the social, economic and cultural barriers facing disadvantaged groups².

Within the field of public administration, decentralization is often referred to as an intervention that gives opportunity for adaptation to local circumstances in order to improve quality

¹ Salvat Bologna P. (2004) '¿Vivir juntos como iguales?', International seminar Escuela Educación UAH-Unicef-Unesco-Fundación Ford, Santiago de Chile: PIIE (Programa Interdisciplinario de Investigaciones en Educación).

² UNDP (2005) Human Development Report 2005. URL: <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/> (26 June 2006).

³ Mideplan (2004) Volumen 1 : Pobreza, Distribución del Ingreso e Impacto Distributivo del Gasto Social. Santiago de Chile: Gobierno de Chile, Ministerio de Planificación y Cooperación. URL : http://www.mideplan.cl/final/ficha_tecnica.php?cenid=120.



of public services. It is a popular reform of governments around the world, but with goals, strategies and outcomes that are as different as the countries themselves⁴. The basic principles of Chile's educational decentralization policy were laid down during the military regime of president Pinochet in the 1980s and have been followed by later governments since the return of democracy in 1990. The responsibility of administering basic education (personnel, school buildings and finance) has been transferred to the municipalities. Rounds Parry⁵ talks about successful implementation of educational decentralization policies in Chile with well-developed vertical control linkages. However he also states, that implementation of this policy had a negative effect on educational equality.

Following the conclusion of Parry, the focus of this article is on the actual situation created by the decentralization policy and its relation with educational inequality in Chile.

2. Research: approach and methodology

This article is based on field research, conducted in 2006. Its main focus is on primary education. Within social science research the dominant scientific approach is positivism. Positivism is about correlations, which are statistical relationships between e.g. variable A and B⁶. This kind of approach can lead to evidence that a certain intervention works, but it reveals very little about how and why this intervention works or not works⁷. And that is exactly where the scientific approach used in this research comes in. Critical realism takes the view that "it is not the intervention as such that leads to direct changes, but rather the extent to which, and the manner in which, a program is taken up by those it is designed to serve given their interpretation of the intervention strategies. The educational system in Chile is analyzed from the perspective of a Complex and Dynamic System (CAD), meaning that the interactions by individuals throughout the population provide the energy that drives the system forward⁸. In other words: development is a non-linear process.

The central task of critical realism is specifying social mechanisms. These mechanisms are also called relational mechanisms, because they are reserved for processes linking units or actors and occur through interactions. However, most of the time social mechanisms are referred to as causal mechanisms, since they link intervention with outcome⁹. A social mechanism then refers to "recurrent processes linking a specific initial condition and a specific outcome"⁶. The initial condition in this research is municipalization, an important element of educational decentralization in Chile, where the specific outcome is educational inequality in Chile.

⁴ Hanson, E.M. (1998) 'Strategies of educational decentralization: key questions and core issues', *Journal of Educational Administration*, 36 (2): 111-128.

⁵ Rounds Parry T. (1997) 'Achieving balance in decentralization: a case study of education decentralization in Chile'. *World Development*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 211-225.

⁶ Mayntz R. (2004) 'Mechanisms in the Analysis of social macro-phenomena', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 34 (2): 237-259.

⁷ Morén S. and B. Blom (2003) 'Explaining Human Change: on generative mechanisms in social work practice', *Journal of Critical Realism*, 2: 1 November 2003.

⁸ Rihani S. (2002) *Complex systems theory and development practice: understanding non-linear realities*. London and New York: Zed Books.

⁹ Bunge (2004) 'How does it work? The search for explanatory mechanisms', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 34 (2): 182-210.



3. Educational Inequality

The Chilean government has increased investment in education considerably during the last 16 years. Figure 3.1 shows a constant annual increase in total educational investments from 1990 onwards. The total increase over 12 years has been 333%.

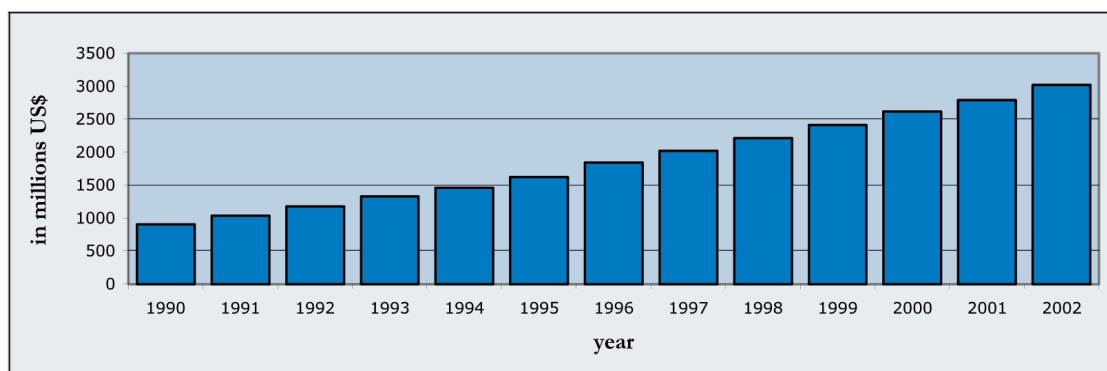


Figure 3.1: Governmental investment in education (source: OECD, 2004: 22)¹⁰

These figures of governmental investment are related to all types of education from pre-school to university. In 2002 Chilean government invested US\$ 2,110 per primary student and US\$ 2,085 per secondary student. Despite the high increase in educational investment, the investment per student is still low in comparison to OECD countries, of which Chile is a partner country. The average expenditure per student in an OECD country is US\$ 5,313 (+2.5 times) for a primary student and US\$ 7,002 (+3.35 times) for a secondary student. However, Chilean investment per primary students is relative high in comparison to its surrounding countries. The average expenditure per primary student in Argentina is US\$ 1,241 (58.8%) in Brazil US\$ 842 (40%), in Peru US\$ 354 (17%) Paraguay US\$ 676 (32%) and in Uruguay US\$ 844 (40%)¹¹.

Next to the national data it is also interesting to look at the educational investments on municipal level. Table 3.2 covers the municipalities visited during the field research. The data seems to show a trend that supposes a relation between low family income, high poverty rate and low educational investment per student, as presented for the municipalities of Cerro Navia, Temuco and Angol. In accordance with this trend, the data supposes a relation between high family income, low poverty rate and high educational investment, as presented for the municipality of Vitacura. However, if we look at the data presented for the municipality of Vilcún the contrary is shown. The poverty rate in Vilcún is high, family income is low, but educational investment per student is relative high. This data shows that large differences exist in educational annual investment per student between different municipalities, but it also shows that the relation between different variables is not a linear one. Besides, the annual investment per student on the municipal level shows important differences with the earlier presented national annual investments per primary student.

¹⁰ OECD (2004) *Chile: revisión de políticas nacionales de educación*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

¹¹ Unesco (2002) 'Table 2.3 – Annual expenditure on educational institutions per student. URL: http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?ID=6257_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

Variables	Cerro Navia (urban)	Temuco (urban/rural)	Angol (rural)	Vilcún (rural)	Vitacura *
SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA					
Population (no. of inhabitants)	146,940	260,676	49,265	23,622	84,649
Poverty in %	21.7	20.9	22.7	30.4	0.36
Average month income per family in US\$	757	918	736	448	6,079
Average educational level in years	9.2	11.3	9.6	7.8	14.4
EDUCATIONAL DATA					
Municipal schools in no.	24	50	30	16	2
Students registered at a municipal school in no.	13,606	25,342	9,516	2,487	2,868
Students registered at a private-subsidized school in no.	10,582	38,567	4,763	4,038	1,599
Students registered at a private-paid school in no.	0	4,610	274	0	16,706
Total municipal year income for Education in US\$	10,695,773	21,495,473	9,256,711	3,058,278	4,482,702
Municipal contribution to education in % of the year income	13.66	3.84	2.69	8.23	4.68
Ministerial contribution to education in % of the year income	82.02	85.75	91.98	84.82	36.83
Other contributions to education in % of the year income	4.32	10.41	5.34	6.95	58.49
Total municipal year expenditures for Education in US\$	11,197,941	20,985,318	9,389,582	2,942,611	4,140,047
Personnel costs in % of the expenditures per year	93.32	90.73	90.34	83.15	78.25
Maintenance costs in % of the expenditures per year	6.68	6.12	9.29	15.62	18.21
Investment costs in % of the expenditures per year	0	2.97	0.36	1.23	3.54
Annual investment per student at a municipal school in US\$	823	828	987	1,183	1,444
Operational balance for education	-4.48	2.43	-1.42	3.93	8.28

* The municipality of Vitacura has not been visited, but is added in order to give an impression of the data in a rich urban municipality.

Table 3.2: Particular data in municipalities visited (source Kremerman, 2006¹²; Mineduc, 2005¹³)
Values have been updated to dollars by the author of this study (exchange rate of 01.09.2006 Abn-Amro)

Despite increasing educational investments on a national level and reforms directed at improving quality and equality, educational inequality in Chile has not decreased^{14,15}. The characteristics of the reforms of the 80s and the 90s, which are discussed in the next section, did not improve the educational system that is characterized by an offer of different qualities of education related to individual economic possibilities¹⁶. According to the Teachers' Union 'Colegio de Profesores de Chile' (CPC), inequality and fragmentation have intensified¹⁶. Based on the information received from my interviewees the main argument for the contemporary educational crisis is the segmented educational system: different schools for children with different socio-economic backgrounds. To conceptualize educational inequality one facet of the model of educational inequality used by Farrell is adopted: inequality of output. This facet of the model is defined as "the improbabilities that children from various social groupings will learn the same things to the same levels at a defined point in the schooling system"¹⁷.

In Chile three general types of schools can be distinguished: private paid schools, private subsidized schools and municipal schools. The distribution of students over the period from 1990

¹² Kremerman M. (2006) 'Por una política de financiamiento al servicio de la educación', *La Docencia*

(29) : 4-14. Santiago de Chile : Colegio de Profesores de Chile.

¹³ Mineduc (2005) *Tablas de información comunal: base de datos municipal 2005*. Santiago de Chile: Gobierno de Chile, Ministerio de Educación. URL: <http://www.mineduc.cl/usuarios/mineduc/doc/200608171156360.BaseMunicipal2005.xls>

¹⁴ Bellei C. (2006) Interview.

¹⁵ CPC (2006a) 'La Crisis del sistema Educativo Chileno', working paper june 2006

¹⁶ CPC (2005a) 'Informe Chile', in: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, *Las Reformas educativas en los países del Cono Sur : un balance crítico*. Buenos Aires : CLACSO, p. 277-351.

¹⁷ Farrell, J. (1999) 'Changing conceptions of equality of education: forty years of comparative evidence', in: R. Arnone and C.A. Torres (eds), *The Dialectic of the Global and the Local*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., p. 149-177.



till 2004 has changed considerably, in which especially the municipal sector has lost students. Private paid schools attend children from the highest income groups, while private subsidized schools attend primarily children from middle and mid-low income groups and municipal schools attend primarily children from low and mid-low income groups.

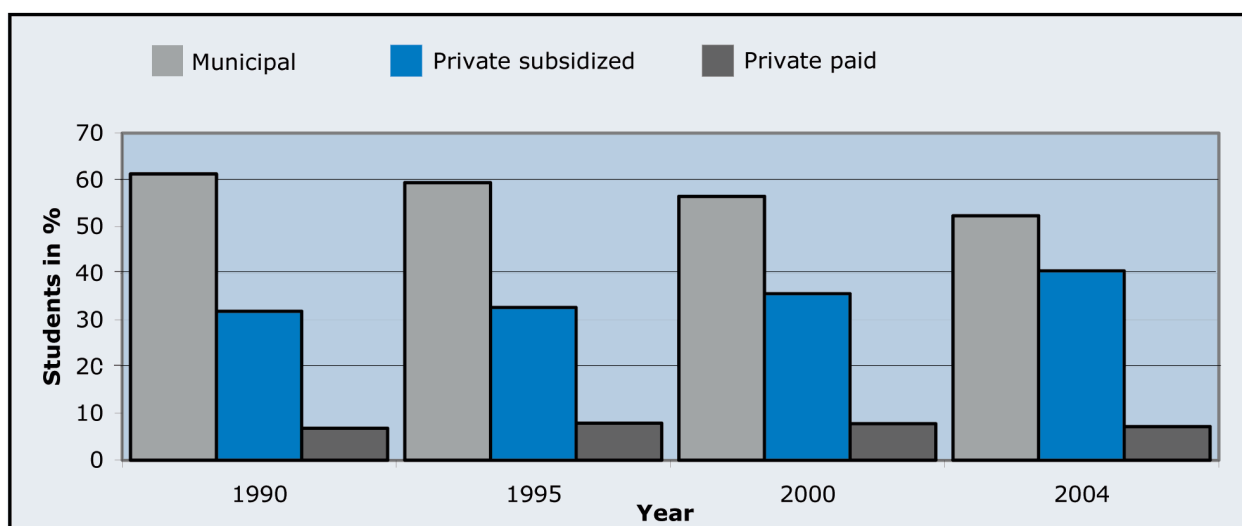


Figure 3.3: Distribution in % primary students per type of school at national level (source: Mineduc, 2004)¹⁸

In Chile, the quality of education is believed to be better at private and private-subsidized schools than at municipal schools, based on the published data from Simce (Sistema de Medición de la Calidad Educacional (quality measurement system)). Simce evaluates the educational quality of all schools in Chile, based on a test that is applied once a year under all students from a specific grade. In 2005 Simce has been applied in fourth grade primary school.

According to the broadly discussed results, students from municipal schools show relative low quality results and students from the private subsidized schools have an average score. Students from private paid schools have the highest score on quality results. In the tables below the development of quality scores on language skills and mathematics of fourth grade primary students are presented, per socio-economic group.

¹⁸ Mineduc (2004) Estadísticas de la Educación 2004. Santiago de Chile : Gobierno de Chile, Ministeriode Educación. URL : http://www.mineduc.cl/index2.php?id_seccion=1275&id_portal=1&id_contenido=1920

¹⁹ Simce. Resultados Simce. Santiago de Chile: Gobierno de Chile, Ministerio de Educación. URL:<http://www.simce.cl/>

Socio-economic group	Language skills								
	Municipal			Private-subsidized			Private-paid		
	1999	2002	2005	1999	2002	2005	1999	2002	2005
High	-	0	0	-	303	294	-	302	301
Mid high	-	276	274	-	281	279	-	282	0
Middle	-	249	249	-	258	258	-	253	0
Mid low	-	232	237	-	230	235	-	0	0
Low	-	229	236	-	216	218	-	0	0
Weighted average	238	239	243	258	259	263	298	300	300
Average over three years per type of school	240			260			299		

Table 3.4a: Simce average national score 4th grade primary school on language skills (source: Simce, 2005, 2002, 1999)¹⁹

Socio-economic group	Mathematics								
	Municipal			Private-subsidized			Private-paid		
	1999	2002	2005	1999	2002	2005	1999	2002	2005
High	-	0	0	-	299	290	-	301	299
Mid high	-	270	267	-	275	272	-	277	0
Middle	-	246	242	-	253	249	-	258	0
Mid low	-	229	228	-	227	226	-	0	0
Low	-	223	224	-	210	207	-	0	0
Weighted average	239	235	235	256	254	255	298	298	297
Average over three years per type of school	236			255			298		

Table 3.4b: Simce average national score 4th grade primary school on mathematics (source: Simce, 2005, 2002, 1999)¹⁵

These tables show the differences that exist in the level of educational quality per type of school and per socio-economic group. Indeed it shows that private-subsidized schools have a higher average national score than municipal schools and it is easy to believe that teaching quality at a private subsidized school is of a higher quality than teaching quality at a municipal school. However if we look deeper into the scores per socio-economic group other differences can be observed. According to Schiefelbein²⁰ the results of Simce show that when schools attend children from the same socio-economic background results coincide. Indeed, the figures presented in the tables 3.4a and 3.4b express that results depend primarily on the socio-economic background of children and not on the assumed low teaching quality at municipal schools.

It is remarkable however, that students from especially the low socio-economic group show an even higher score when they study at a municipal school than when they study at a private-subsidized school. From the information in the above tables it is not clear why children from low socio-economic groups have a lower simce-score at the private-subsidized school. However, it could be hypothesized that private subsidized schools do not attend the specific needs of children from low socio-economic backgrounds. This hypothesis is however not researched in this article.

To dive a little deeper in the assumption that it is primarily the socio-economic background of students that influences educational results, the average simce-scores per socio economic group are presented in table 3.4.

²⁰ Schiefelbein E. (2006) *Propuestas para mejorar la educación municipal en Chile*. Santiago de Chile: Universidad Autónoma de Chile



Socio-economic group	Language skills			Mathematics			Average per socio-economic group
	1999	2002	2005	1999	2002	2005	
High	-	302	300	-	301	297	300
Mid high	-	280	278	-	274	271	276
Middle	-	254	253	-	250	245	251
Mid low	-	232	236	-	229	228	231
Low	-	226	231	-	220	220	224
Average	250	251	255	250	247	248	-
Average over three years	252			248			-

Table 3.5 *Simce average national score per socio-economic group, 4th grade primary school on language skills and mathematics (source: Simce, 2005, 2002, 1999)*¹⁵

The figures in this table underpin the earlier presented assumption that it is primarily the socio-economic background of a student that influences educational output. If we look at the difference between the scores of students from the high socio-economic group and students from the low socio-economic group the difference in educational output is as much as 76 points.

4. Decentralization

Within the Public Administration theory there is a shared assumption that educational decentralization should lead to improved educational quality and equality²¹. In theory the benefits of educational decentralization in broad terms include: improved effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery, because of improved decision making based on more accurate information about local conditions, greater responsiveness to individuals and communities who are encouraged to participate, and encouragement of innovation^{21;22;5}. Unfortunately in reality these expectations are often not fulfilled^{5;22}. The widely held assumption that more autonomy will spontaneously produce improvement does not seem to be borne out in practice. According to Hanson⁴ and Rounds Parry⁵, the classic problem often encountered in Latin America is decentralized responsibility, without the necessary authority, training or financing. It is important to remember that the transfer of authority provides an opportunity, but no guarantee. "It is the performance of the key actors that determines whether or not equality of education will improve"⁴. In the next sections first the antecedents, the approach and priorities of decentralization in Chile are discussed. Followed by discussions on the performance of the key actors.

²¹ Nickson, A. (2001) 'Educational Reform in Latin America: Decentralization or re-structuring', *Paper presented at Conference on Exclusion and Engagement: Social Policy in Latin America*. Institute for Latin American Studies, University of London. Pp. 1-14.

²² Carnoy M. (1999) *Globalization and Educational Planning: what planners need to know*. Paris: Unesco.



4.1 Antecedents

In 1842 Chile was the first Latin American country to establish a system of public education. This system expanded rapidly and by 1974 Chile had achieved remarkable education statistics for a developing country, like high enrollment ratios in primary as well as in secondary education. Throughout this period public education was provided through a highly centralized bureaucracy, which was relevant for finance, administration and determination of education policies. Reforms during the 1960s and early 1970s attempted to promote greater participation in decision-making. New established councils and organizations were added to an already overextended bureaucracy. Unfortunately the Ministry of Education did not have the capacity to manage the rapid growth of the education system along with the intentions for greater participation⁵.

The military coup led by general Pinochet in September 1973 had a lasting impact on the education system. He introduced educational decentralization. The period in which this system was implemented was characterized by an oppressive regime. Political opponents were persecuted and often removed from social or economic positions¹⁶. National unity was presented as being the ultimate objective of the country. Unity of different social sectors however was tried to be prevented and united sectors were disintegrated. During the development of the decentralization policy Chile went through an economic period filled with optimism. After 1981 however the economic situation deteriorated and educational finances were led by a restrictive policy. The educational decentralization design is based on Milton Friedman's model with a central place for competition between schools and the voucher system. The voucher system is operational through the Unidad Subvención Educativa (USE or state subsidy for education). Each school receives a state subsidy based on the number of registered students and their attendance at school per month. If a student changes school, the voucher – the right for a school to receive a state subsidy - changes with him or her. Competition between schools is regulated through Loe (Ley Orgánica Constitucional de la Enseñanza, law no. 18,692 (organic institutional law for education)), which was agreed upon one day before the fall of the military regime on March 10, 1990. This law defines the minimum requirements to establish a primary or secondary school. Market mechanisms were introduced in an effort to stimulate a more active and competing role of municipal and private actors. It implied the entrance of new actors and the start of new educational processes¹⁶.



4.2 Approaches

Decentralization is an administrative structure to guarantee a wide representation of legitimate interests in a specific public good²³. It is also called administrative decentralization. Four approaches can be distinguished^{5;23;24;25} :

- a) *De-concentration*: policies that de-concentrate tasks, but not authority to sub-national directorates of the central government. Meaning that these sub-national directorates have little discretion in implementing policy;
- b) *Delegation*: Decision making authority and responsibility is transferred to other public sector authorities, such as public corporations, regional development agencies, or special function agencies. The most typical form is delegation to semi-autonomous organizations not wholly controlled by the government but legally accountable to it;
- c) *Devolution*: Decision making authority, responsibility and tasks are transferred to sub-national governmental units holding a corporate status granted under state legislation. Devolution is considered the 'true' form of decentralization;
- d) *Privatization*: policies that privatize decision-making to the business sector or the non-profit sector.

Chilean educational system has undergone profound changes since the 1973 military regime of Pinochet and the neo-liberal policies this regime initiated. Up until then education was centralized and controlled by the Ministry of Education. Only private paid schools were outside the control of the central government. In those days more than 80% of the Chilean schools were public and free and private paid schools served about the wealthiest 10% of the population²⁶. The Ministry was responsible for contracting, paying salaries and supervising educational personnel, creating a curriculum and pedagogical methodologies, administering the educational budget, building and maintenance of infrastructure, to invest in material in order to improve teaching practice and to invest in a teachers' career. With the constitution of the 80s the State's role changed considerably to that of a supplier of subsidy to school administrators, being municipalities, corporations or private entities²⁷. From the tasks mentioned before, only the creation of a national curriculum and pedagogical methodologies remained the responsibility of the State. The constitution of the 80s defined that Chile is a unified country, divided in 13 regions, 51 provinces, and 345 municipalities, and administration will be decentralized according to territory²⁷. An extended process of decentralization, municipalization, and privatization of education has been implemented²⁸.

²³ Luz Latorre C. c.s. (1991) *La Municipalización de la Educación : una mirada desde los administradores del sistema*. Santiago de Chile: PIIE (Programa Interdisciplinario de Investigaciones de Educación).

²⁴ Nickson, A. (2001) 'Educational Reform in Latin America: Decentralization or re-structuring', *Paper presented at Conference on Exclusion and Engagement: Social Policy in Latin America*. Institute for Latin American Studies, University of London. Pp. 1-14.

²⁵ Cohen J.M. and S.B. Peterson (1996) 'Administrative decentralization: a new framework for improved governance, accountability, and performance'. *Methodological Issues in the Analysis of Decentralization*. Development discussion paper no. 555, October 1996. Cambridge: Harvard Institute for International Development.

²⁶ Torche F. (2002) 'Educational expansion, educational reform and persistent barriers in Chile'. Department of Sociology, Columbia University. *Paper prepared for RC28 ISA Conference "Social stratification and mobility; Integrating Theory and Research*.

²⁷ Miranda Salas E. and J. de Simone Lavia (2002) *Gestión Educacional Descentralizada : análisis y propuestas de acción a nivel municipal*. Concepción (Chile) : Universidad San Sebastián.

²⁸ Maldonado Tapia M. (2004) 'The privatization of education in Chile', *Educational International Working Papers* No 19 (October 2004).

The responsibility of administering primary and secondary education was transferred to municipalities, and corporations – an entity outside the official organization of the municipality that is responsible for the administration of education - both operating under responsibility of the mayor, and to private entities. The process of transference of tasks to municipalities is called municipalization, which is the central focus of this article. The process of transferring tasks was realized between 1981 and 1986.

After the fall of the military regime in 1990, the democratic governments have legitimized the system of municipalization without changing its fundamental features. However, they did criticize the system: municipal authorities were not elected, teachers had lost a great deal of their benefits and their salaries have been reduced substantially, many municipalities had huge financial deficits, the public system lost many students to the private school system, low state subsidies, inefficiency of municipal administration and double dependency for administration and technical assistance. But it was expected that through extra investments and new programs, decentralized education would have more capacity to connect to the demands and necessities of the population. Instead of focusing on a system change the Chilean government focused on educational conditions, like improving working conditions of teachers, improving the curriculum, improving distribution of textbooks and alimentation, and improving school access. An official of CPC states that some progress has certainly been made, but the reforms clash with the structural theme of municipalization" (official CPC). From the 1990s the government initiated a new stage in order to restore the level of the financial investments, and on the other hand in order to strengthen the decentralization process. The four main aspects of this new stage are: improve educational quality, improve educational equality, stimulate autonomy of schools, and stimulate a broad level of participation²⁷. According to CPC 16 however, the reform of the 90s is principally focused on quality more than on equality.

4.3 Priorities

A decentralization strategy can consist of one or a combination of the above-mentioned approaches. Within these approaches different priorities can appear:

- a) *Fiscal priority*: the way that financial means are distributed, supervised and fiscalized. Including expenditure decentralization - financial support is supplied by the central government, generally through block grants which tend to equalize revenue across regions -, and revenue decentralization - local governments or organizations are given large freedom to specify tax rates and to develop other types of revenue instruments.
- b) *Political priority*: citizens are given a greater voice in decision-making, e.g. through participation, citizen groups, and allowing elections of local authorities rather than appointment by the central government.



Concerning the fiscal priority it is the Chilean central government that distributes, and supervises the financial resources, through its Provincial Directorate. The military government decided to freeze the level of the state subsidy as from 1982. This had serious consequences leading to huge municipal budget deficits. From 1991 on adjustments were made. Each school administrator – municipal or private subsidized - receives a state subsidy per registered and assisting student²⁷. This is called “Unidad de Subvención Educacional (USE Educational Subsidy Unit)” and functions according to the so called voucher system. The state subsidy is supposed to cover operational costs, like salaries of teachers, but also investments in infrastructure and other school needs. In general more than 75% of the received state subsidy has to be used to pay teachers’ salaries²⁷. The result being that municipalities cannot finance education exclusively from the received state subsidy. They have to invest also from their own budget.

Municipalities have a limited possibility to specify tax rates and to develop other types of revenue instruments, depending not only on the legal framework, but also on the municipalities’ economic reality: the more developed the municipality, the more income it will generate from for example car taxes. Besides, they have financial autonomy by law, but also limitations in generating their own financial resources²⁷. Since 1993 it is legally permitted to the private sector to help and donate to educational establishments based on the law ‘Apoyo financiero de las empresas a la educación’ (Law no. 19.247 (financial support from companies to education)²⁷, but according to my interviewees these relations are not established in practice. Municipal actors give arguments related to ignorance about how to establish private-public cooperation. It is said that the private sector only wants to work with organizations that act and think like them: the private schools. Furthermore it is said that the private sector does not want to invest in municipal schools, because the Chilean public sector is assumed to be inefficient.

Concerning the political priority, giving citizens a greater voice in local decision-making was the main marketing argument of president Pinochet when he implemented municipalization: “hoy los padres de familia no solo tienen el poder de elegir el establecimiento educacional que estimen más conveniente para sus hijos, sino que, además, se les ha otorgado la efectiva oportunidad de participar junto a las autoridades locales en este proceso” (Today the parents do not only have the possibility to choose the school they consider best for their children, but also have the opportunity to participate with local authorities in the educational process) (part of the speech of president Pinochet on September 11, 1987, in Espinola, 1991²⁹). Also the reform of the 90s has as one of its main objectives the promotion of a broad level of participation. Within the municipal system different laws have been created in order to promote community participation. Like PADEM (Plan Annual de Desarrollo Educativo Municipal, law no. 19.410 (yearly plan of municipal educational development), which states that the community members, like parents, teachers and municipal officials meet in order to form a school plan for the next year of municipal education²⁷. The same goes for ‘Consejos Escolares’ (school council). Parents, teachers, students and one representative of the municipality come together regularly in order to discuss

²⁹ Espinola V. (1991) *Decentralización del sistema escolar en Chile*. Santiago de Chile: CIDE.

educational themes. In addition, in every school 'Centros de Alumnos' (students' centers) and 'Centros de Apoderados' (parents' centers) are implemented. However, according to my interviewees the main objective behind the establishment of these institutions is control rather than participation in local decision-making.

4.4 Roles

Administrative decentralization however is not only about approaches and priorities, but also - possibly even more - about the performance of the key actors. Decentralization is not an end in itself, but an instrument whose value and effectiveness depend largely on the political, economic, social and cultural context³⁰. Cohen and Peterson²⁵ introduce the pluralist administrative design, which uses roles rather than structure as the principal instrument of analysis. The central issue of roles is relationships among central government, non-central governmental institutions (regional-, provincial governments and municipalities) private sector institutions and organizations, and private actors, in order to arrange task sharing related to a specific public service. Through decentralization a diverse arena of organizations, actors and means are involved in the production and delivery of a public good. What emerges is a complex structure of actors that are inter-dependent. In this section the modus operandi of the educational system in Chile is described: the identification of the key actors and their relation towards each other. Since the main focus of this article is on the functioning of the local educational system, a distinction is made between this local educational system or primary actors and the educational periphery or secondary and tertiary actors. Before describing the actor roles, the organization chart of the Chilean educational system is presented, which shows the official actors involved and their place in the hierarchy.

³⁰ Delors J. (1996) *Learning: the treasure within*, report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. Paris: UNESCO.

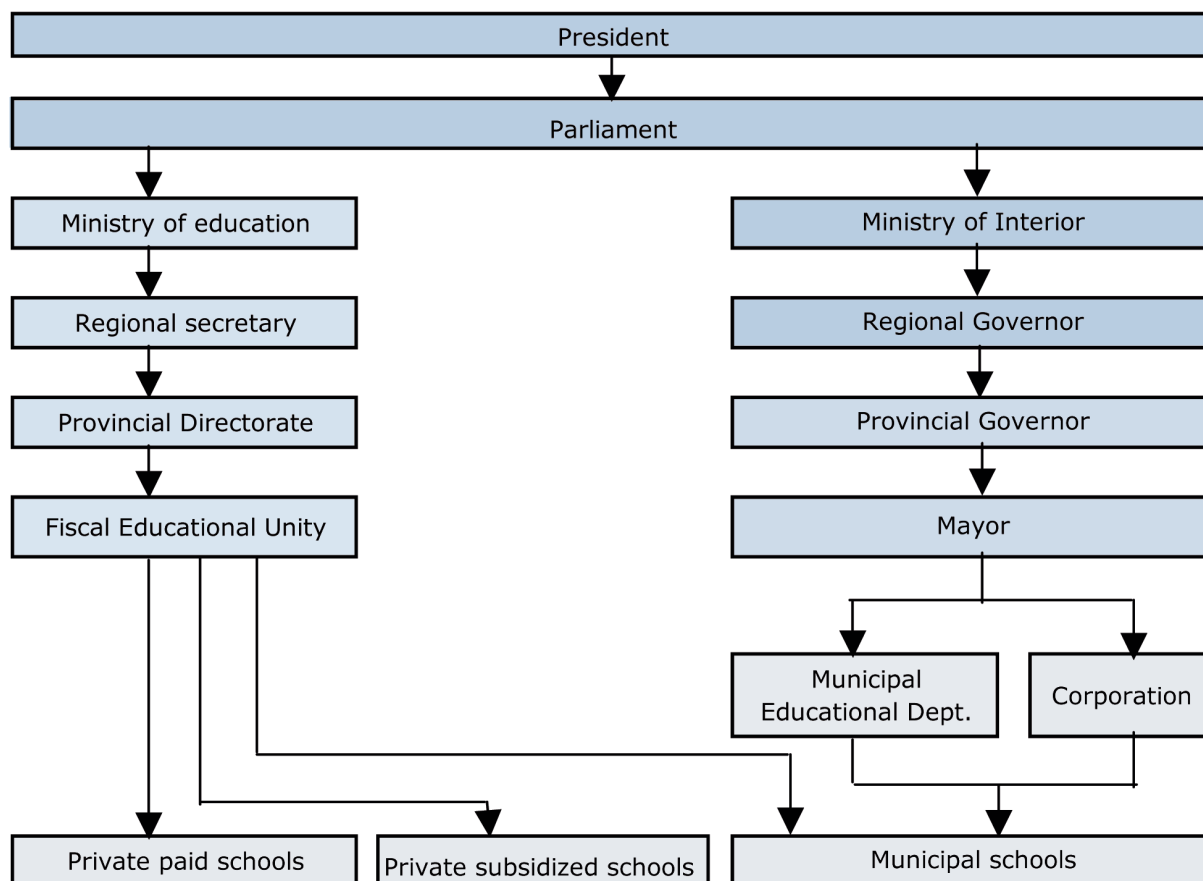


Figure 4.1: Organizational chart educational system in Chile (source: Flores c.s., 1988: 69)³¹

³¹ Flores P. (1988) 'El proceso de municipalización debe seguir o no en un Chile democrático'. *Working papers profesores*. Santiago de Chile: Colegio de Profesores de Chile.

4.4.1 The local educational system

In this article the local educational system refers to the functioning of municipal education at a local level, consisting of the following primary actors: parents, students, teachers, school principals and officials of the municipal educational department (Daem).

Students

Students are the main beneficiaries of the educational system. Before May 2006 students did not play an active role in decision-making. "We are only involved in the organization of festivals or special activities, not in the discussion about the annual school plan" (student). However, they created their own space of participation through the strikes of secondary students that took place in May 2006. Since then representatives of secondary students have a chair in the national 'Consejo Asesor Presidencial' (Advisory Council for the President) and students are often interviewed in order to give their opinion on the Chilean educational situation.

Parents

Although increased participation of citizens was one of the core elements of municipalization and of the 90s reform, parents only play a minor role in local decision-making. At each school parents are grouped in a 'Centro de Padres' (parents' center), which is an entity primarily occupied with supervising school expenses on infrastructure. A 'Centro de Padres' consists of representatives of the parents, who are newly elected each year. However, depending on the motivation of the parents' representatives, they can play a significant role in observing personal problems of students and organizational school problems. In general parents don't know the officials of Daem. The ones who do, say the officials of Daem do not really listen to them. "The only time we raise our voice is during elections" (parent). Many parents say their relation with the school principal and the teachers is good, but as we talk longer there seems to be only little mutual communication. "When we tell the school principal issues which concern us, he does listen, but it goes in one ear and out the other" (parents' representatives) With respect to the parent – teacher relationship, in all schools monthly meetings take place discussing general issues and the grades of the children in general. "It would have been nice if we could have individual conversations with the teacher to discuss progress and problems of my own children" (parent). A frequently heard comment is that there is no space to talk to teachers about specific questions, since teachers do not have time. On the other hand a kind of reserve on the side of the parents does also hamper a more intensive relationship. "When there are problems you can ask the teachers, but when everything is well you just do not' ask" (parent).

Teachers

Teachers describe their role as transferring knowledge to the children independent of their social background, with the objective to support students to continue studying or find a



decent job. Teachers say they find it especially difficult to teach children from low socio-economic groups in a way the children comprehend it. Circumstances, like low financial resources at the school and little support at home, do make teaching more difficult. Teachers' relation with parents is often commented on as difficult. Only about 30% of the parents come to the meetings at school. Many say it is hard to involve parents in the education of their children, mainly because their low degree of education. "But especially in rural areas, parents do know a lot about e.g. local customs and agriculture. Schools should use this knowledge to involve parents" (teacher). According to teachers, bureaucracy has increased with municipalization. "A lot of forms have to be filled in, as well for the Ministry of Education as for the Municipality" (teacher). Besides, the process of municipalization was initiated without consultation of teachers. Also the reform of the 90s has been designed without consultation. Therefore "We do agree with the system, but do not feel really involved" (teacher). Besides, the relation between the teachers and the municipality is one without a real discussion. "In the meeting concerning the annual plan, the municipality hands over a paper with a proposal and you can agree or not, but this is actually already the final plan" (teacher). In general teachers qualify the local educational system as a system in which "all is about power, not about working together" (teacher).

Teachers find the relation they have with each other within the school or with teachers from other schools good. "Every Friday we meet, discuss problems and make a planning for the next week" (teacher). In rural areas many teachers do gather in the so called 'micro centers'. "Teachers of five rural schools meet every month and we interchange experiences" (teachers, rural). Also the relation between the teachers and the school principal is qualified as being good. The relation between teachers and students is good, according to most teachers.

School principals

At a municipal school the municipality contracts the teachers. School principals feel quite restricted for not having influence on their own personnel policy. In contrast, principals on a private school have more decision-making power, since they administer the school themselves and do not depend on a municipality. School principals describe their relation with the supervisor of the Ministry of Education as only a relation of control and supervision, not of cooperation. However, it depends on the person. "Every year we make a schedule with the supervisor and plan 6 to 8 sessions with a supervisor and our teachers about specific themes" (school principal). And "There is a new supervisor now. He visits the school regularly and we work together on different issues" (school principal). School principals as well as teachers would appreciate it when there would be a real cooperative relation with the supervisor. The relation with the municipality differs per school and depends on the initiative of the municipality. Some say they have rare meetings with the municipality, others have a very close relationship. "In many municipalities you have to ask the municipality to repair for example a broken window. But they do not work in this building with the broken window, so they do not

feel the urgency. In our municipality we receive financial resources of the municipality each month and administer it here at the school. In August we make a plan for the coming year and based on that plan they transfer money to us. This plan is made in cooperation with teachers, parents, students and the municipality who are all represented in the 'equipo de gestión educativa' (team for educational policy) of this school. Each municipality has the opportunity to design its plan in its own most strategic, dynamic and participative manner²⁷. In other schools the municipality receives finances for the project to attend to children with learning problems. The municipality hires a teacher. Here, we receive these financial resources at our school and can hire a psychologist, or whoever seems necessary. We give a monthly account of our expenses to the municipality. The manager of the municipal department of education is a proponent of school autonomy" (teacher). "I do think that in this municipality we are more advanced in the level of decentralization than in other parts of this province and probably even at country level" (official Daem). Overall the relation between the officials of Daem and the school principal is quite authoritarian and depending on the personal relationship between the manager of Daem and the school principal. School principals see their relation with the students as good, but with the parents as problematic. "Maybe 30% of the parents is really involved in the education of their children" (school principal).

Officials of Daem (Municipal Educational Department)

The municipal educational department is responsible for the administration of human and financial resources, improving and maintaining school infrastructure, plan educational development, and respond to the needs of the municipal schools and its persone²⁷. The head of this department is the mayor. The mayor has executive power and the municipal council has a normative, decisive and fiscal role. They have to approve the annual educational plan, which is supposed to be developed with participation of all actors of the local educational system²⁷. The relation with the Ministry of Education is an authoritarian one. Municipalities are not included in policy making. "I have worked many years as a teacher and now already quite some years as the manager of this Daem. And you are the first to ask my opinion on the educational situation. The Ministry invested in education, but because they never ask the people who work in it, they invested wrong. As joined municipalities we tried to reason with the Ministry, but they just do not listen" (official Daem). The relation with school principals and teachers is also authoritarian, but then from the side of the Municipality. The relation with parents is depending on the initiative of the Municipality. All agree however that it is difficult to involve parents in education. "Parents look at a school as a nursery. They bring their child to school and than it is the responsibility of the school. According to an official of Daem this is an issue of Chilean society".



4.4.2 The Educational periphery

The educational periphery consists of the so-called secondary actors: the Teachers' Union and the Educational experts, and the tertiary actors: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior³² decide on the policy. The Teachers' Union and Educational experts can be seen as intermediary for the tertiary actors and the primary actors.

Officials of the Ministry of Education (Mineduc)

Despite the implementation of municipalization, the State retained its role of financier and supervisor and carries out a regulatory and enabling role. It enforces rules and regulations, elaborates the national curriculum, provides technical support to 'vulnerable' schools, supervises student's assistance and assigns extra resources for redistributive purposes²¹. The Ministry of Education decides how much to invest in education and transfers money to the municipalities and private subsidized schools in the form of USE (subsidy per students' attendance). The ministry also assigns money to certain projects for which municipalities and schools can apply. However, actors like the Teachers' Union, and educational experts in Chile are of the opinion that the State should play a more pro-active role. The State should take responsibility so that all children can receive good education. The Mineduc itself has a decentralized structure, which means a division in regional and provincial departments. The 'Secretaría Regional Ministerial' (Seremi; Regional representative of the Ministry) is responsible for the supervision and coordination of technical and fiscal norms mainly in relation to school infrastructure and, students' assistance in a specified territory. The 'Departamento de Educación Provincial del Ministerio de Educación' (Dprov; Provincial educational department of the Ministry of Education) is responsible for the practical realization of these norms. The supervisors of Dprov control and support schools in methodological and pedagogical aspects. "We have to establish a good relationship with the municipality and the schools in order to improve results" (official Dprov). In practice though support is limited, mainly because of a lack of specialized personnel at Dprov. Most interviewees, including those of the Mineduc and Dprov, find that supervisors only visit the school to supervise, but do not fulfill the important task of providing technical assistance. A teacher describes the relation between the school and the supervisor as a "digital relation", where the relation consists of filling in forms and sending them to the supervisor by e-mail.

Teacher's Union

The Teacher's Union in Chile, 'Colegio de Profesores de Chile' (CPC), was established in 1974 by a decree of president Pinochet. In those days affiliation with CPC was by law obliged for teachers in order to carry out their profession. The first period of CPC's institutional development was marked by docile and assigned leaders who did not seem able to prevent

³² The Ministry of Interior has been involved in this research through its local representation, the municipality. No direct interviews with this tertiary actor have been conducted.

the gradual decrease of teachers' rights and the National Educational System. This resulted in heavy resistance from the teachers. In the beginning of the 1980s a parallel organization was established called 'Asociación Gremial de Educadores de Chile' (AGECH), that had a clear anti-dictatorial connotation and fiercely resisted municipalization. Because teachers were obliged by the military regime to be member of the CPC, the AGECH had no more than 10,000 members. The first important triumph of teachers' resistance within CPC took place when in 1985 CPC's national leaders were elected. A new official national management was installed in May 1986³³. At the same time the two existing teachers' unions merged within CPC.

The Teachers' Union in Chile fights for good labor conditions for teachers, and for public education of good quality in an educational system independent on the characteristics of each municipality. It stimulates debate about educational policy and presents alternative proposals. Within the educational system CPC is an important negotiation partner for the tertiary actors and has close relations with educational experts. CPC's members are mainly teachers from the municipal sector, but also teachers from the private subsidized sector are affiliated, resulting in more than 100,000 members. In 2005 a total of 148,000 teachers¹² worked in the municipal and private subsidized schools. It is safe to say that CPC represents 67% of teachers in these two sectors. CPC has elected leaders on national, regional, provincial and community level. The community representatives have a bridge function between all teachers in a specific community and the regional, provincial and national offices of CPC, but they also have an important function in negotiations with the local municipality. Unfortunately the relation between the community representative and the officials of DAEM is difficult, which seems to be mainly caused by the fact that the community representative is an employee of the Municipality. "If he or she is too critical it could mean losing the job. Maybe that is why the dialogue on a local level does not come about" (official CPC). But also the relation between CPC and the teachers seems rather fragile. Teachers do not always feel represented by CPC. "At a national level CPC does not take the small communities into account" (teacher), "within CPC there is no major concern about quality and curriculum. They are more occupied with salaries and labor conditions" (teacher), and "Officials of CPC are more worried about their own political career than about the local educational system" (teacher), are regularly heard remarks.

According to officials of CPC this lack of trust has a lot to do with a lost feeling of collectivity. "We have to find new ways to reach society" (official CPC). "One of the biggest problems within our organization is the data flow that does not reach the teacher. Never before we have invested so much in pedagogical proposals, proposals for an improved curriculum and health issues of teachers. But the teacher does not feel represented because he or she does not know what we do" (official CPC). Information does not reach the base. CPC publishes the magazine "Docencia" which contains very rich information on education in Chile.

³³ CPC (2006b) 'History' Colegio de Profesores de Chile A.G., URL: http://200.27.90.155/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=51



Unfortunately many teachers do not know this magazine. The magazine is more focused on the academic world, but CPC is discussing how to connect the information to the real world without losing the connection with the academic world. The fact that information does not reach the base might be related to the organizational structure of CPC, which looks decentralized, but appears to operate quite hierarchical. “CPC is quite hierarchical, we should decentralize” (official CPC). Financial decentralization however has taken place meaning that local communities receive more financial resources. Another factor why it is hard to reach the base, is that CPC is also not retro alimented from the part of the teachers. Maybe there is a discrepancy between how information is offered, mainly through internet and an academic magazine, and how the teacher absorbs information. A substantial part of the union members are elderly teachers. “Younger teachers do not seem interested in collective memberships” (official CPC). “This is a topic that we should research further: how can we reach these teachers? We do have a good connection with the academic world and use a lot of research for defining our educational proposals, but we could and should make more use of research for designing our own policy” (official CPC).

National and international educational experts

In general, educational experts do research on the educational situation, are critical about the results of municipalization and reflect this view in their advices. Unfortunately the overall opinion is that research results hardly ever are incorporated in the national educational policy. Moreover, especially international educational experts, like those working for Unesco and Unicef, offer special projects to support municipal educational development to improve learning results²⁷.

The explanation of the *modus operandi* of the educational system in Chile shows that the relation between key actors in general is not a cooperative relation. Relations appear to depend on the willingness of the person. There does not seem to be an overall agreement on the importance of cooperation between key actors within the complex structure of educational decentralization. Moreover, according to my interviewees municipalization in practice cannot be referred to as decentralization. It is rather qualified as deconcentration. What this means for the continued existence of inequality is explained in the next section.

5. Social Mechanisms

The former paragraph presented a fragile cooperative structure between key actors of the educational system in Chile, and paragraph three showed that there is no linear relation between municipalization and inequality of educational output. Educational inequality is primarily related to the unequal socio-economic structure in Chilean society. Therefore, the central focus of this section is to explain social mechanisms underlying the relation between municipalization and the continuous existence of socio-economic inequality in Chilean society. As explained in paragraph two of this article, social mechanisms refer to recurrent processes based on linked activities of different units or individuals.

Before explaining the different kinds of social mechanisms, I will shortly describe how dissatisfaction about education has mobilized in 2006. Discussions about education have never been as frequent as in 2006 and it are the municipalities that are blamed for the educational crisis. In May 2006 secondary students went on strike and refused to attend school. These were the largest protests within the educational sector in the last 20 years. Students demand in the short run a new curriculum, free public transport as well as abolition of university entrance fees and exam fees. In the long run they demand a return to central responsibility rather than administration by local municipalities, which leads to inequalities they say³⁴. Dissatisfaction that was already boiling beneath the surface, was made a public issue by them. "We had a wake up call from the base: our students told us we are doing things wrong and it has to change rapidly" (official Mineduc). "They generated their own space of participation. No one gave it to them" (official Daem). In response to this movement the 'Consejo Asesor Presidencial' was established, which is a multi actor institution, discussing the problems and possible solutions for the contemporary educational crisis. Not only the secondary students went on strike, the teachers and 180 of Chile's 345 mayors also put an ultimatum to the government of Chile as a protest against the low state subsidy.

In the following sections different kinds of social mechanisms underlying the relation between municipalization and the continuous existence of socio-economic inequality are explained. The first mechanism to be explained is a transformational mechanism. Transformational mechanisms are actions of and interactions between a number of individuals that generate macro level outcomes. The second kind of mechanisms to be explained are called action formative mechanisms. These mechanisms refer to the way the individual assimilates to the impact of macro level conditions. Cognitive and psychological mechanisms driving individual behavior are central aspects. The working of this pattern of action at the micro level influences the transformational mechanisms. Subsequently situational mechanisms are discussed, explaining the actual situation created by municipalization. Central aspects are different kind of resources, rules and competences enforced by the government.

³⁴ BBC (2006) 'Chile students reject reform deal', *BBC News*, 3 June 2006. URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/5042758.stm>.

³⁵ Soto V. (2006), *Interview*.



However, it is the action pattern at a micro level that influences the outcome of these macro conditions enforced by the government. Therefore not the intentions of municipalization, but the actual created situation by municipalization is explained.

5.1 'Friends and enemies' as a transformational mechanism

The secondary students' movement has created more awareness about the problems in the educational system, which can result in changes. However, Viola Soto (2006)³⁵ does not think that a real change in the educational system will occur: "For that a more collective and participative structure is required". A collective structure refers to a situation in which involved actors cooperate. To achieve that will take a long time, according to Viola Soto.

Despite the high degree of collectivity among secondary students, the overall degree of collectivity among the population in Chile is low. Only 13% of the Chilean population say they can trust the majority of people¹⁰. "A complete generation lost its sense of collectivity, of involved citizenship" (official CPC). "As a consequence of the former military regime, Chilean society is still divided in friends and enemies" (education expert). It appears that the degree of trust towards each other is low. This effective mechanism of trust and collectivity is switched off and partly responsible for not curbing the existence of socio-economic fragmentation. In fact decentralization produces a complex structure with a high number of actors who are interdependent and have to share tasks in order to deliver effective services. Friends share tasks, but enemies do not!

5.2 'No give and no take' as an action formative mechanism

A student from a low-income rural family, now about 20 years old, tells me that if you want, you can achieve your goal, even if you come from a low-income family and live in Chile. "Besides there are many scholarships for children from low income families. But you have to know how to find them. I asked the help of my teachers". Based on empirical research, it showed that most people do not take this pro-active stand, but wait until someone offers them a chance, or not. "After the students strike in May 2006 we now wait for something to change" (Daem).

The lack of competence at the municipal educational department and the lack of competence of teachers are often mentioned as an explanation of the educational crisis in Chile. Different interviewees expressed the opinion that quite some teachers only do their job and are not concerned about the question whether the student learns something or not, is an often-heard remark. Besides, the school culture consists of one-way teaching. "Teachers work through memorizing not through doing" (Daem) and do not measure the outcome of what they teach. Most agree that teaching quality in Chile is not as high as it should be. Even the teachers them-

selves express the feeling that a substantial part of the teachers is not devoted enough to his or her work and worries more about salary and stability. However, teachers say they do feel responsible for educating children in order for these children to keep on studying or finding a decent job. The Teachers' Union and educational experts, stipulate that not all should be blamed on the teachers. Teachers have seen the benefits they had deteriorate heavily during the military regime, which obviously affects the quality of teaching.

It is not only the teachers who seem to lack capacities, also municipalities do not seem to have adequate knowledge to administer education. The reasons given are the fast implementation of municipalization during the 80s without consultation of the municipality and without technical support. But also the broader responsibility (security, public infrastructure, health) a municipality has beside education. "Municipalities have no specialized people in education" (teacher). A rural school principal shares his experience: "When I went to the municipality to ask how to apply for specific funding they were not able to help. For me there is no other way to get funding". Moreover, the way educational projects are distributed from the central to the local level is through active application. "If you don't apply you don't get it" (school principal), but "municipalities often do not know how to apply for these projects" (teacher). "The more powerful municipalities like 'Puente Alto' and 'Lo Barnachea' in the city of Santiago have the capacity to tell us that certain programs do not work in their specific circumstances and they will develop their own project with the same money. The problems is that most municipalities do not take this pro-active stand" (Mineduc). The same counts for the flexible curriculum. Chile has a flexible curriculum, but since many municipalities do not have enough technical capacity to design a program of its own, 99% of the municipal schools use the curriculum defined on by the Ministry.

One of the schools I visited is a rural municipal school not far from the city of Santiago. It was the most beautiful and well-equipped school I have seen during my field research. The school principal told me first of all that the school was rebuild two years ago. But also that they received many programs from the Ministry of Education. "You have to be very attentive all the time on new programs and projects and apply for them. Since many programs are focused on poor areas, I receive a positive response to most applications". Not the municipality, but the school principal himself applies for educational programs offered by the Ministry of Education. This experience apparently negates the argument of school principals that there is no other way to find funding than through the municipality.

The officials of the Municipality acknowledge their functioning has been rather poor and blame it on the low financial resources they receive from the State. However, there are also municipal initiatives that have the potential to improve educational equality. "Experience shows that the Ministry of Education has failed in her responsibility to offer pedagogical support and we cannot keep on waiting until a powerful hand comes to help us. Therefore we created a pedagogical project ourselves. This is a new activity for us and nowhere in Chile



are they doing it on such a large scale" (Daem)

The municipalities, the school principals and the teachers mention another problem the local educational system is facing: the low expectations the parents have on the future of their children. According to my interviewees only 30% of the parents is involved in the education of their children. The same percentage of parents, mostly mothers, attends at school meetings "where they can ask their questions and make comments, but they hardly do" (teacher). Fear about what might happen if you really say what you want to say is still very alive. "During the former military regime we learnt to say what we want to say in a different way than actually intended" (Mineduc).

The explanation of this mechanism shows there is a lack of knowledge and capacity, but also initiative on the side of all actors in the local educational system. They are aware of their own shortcomings, but in general are not able to take an active stand. They keep on blaming the other actor(s) or the circumstances. "It is not possible to have a good education with this system. The contemporary educational crisis is not the fault of someone, nor is it because of poverty. It is the system that does not give the opportunity for improvement", according to an official of Daem.

5.3 'A contagious disease' as an action formative mechanism

The contagious disease that I call authoritarianism is still very strong and 'common' at all levels of society in Chile, from national to regional to provincial to local. Municipalization is often referred to as 'alcaldización' (mayorism). It refers to a despotic management style at local level, where the mayor has major power.

Each mayor decides on the content and implementation of the administrative aspects of the educational policy in his specific municipality. "It is the mayor who decides, often based on his political preferences" (teacher). Some mayors allocate everything received through the state subsidy in education and invest more from their own municipal budget, and others do not. Besides, "a teacher is not just a teacher, but also a vote. A person who influences parents, the community etc." (official CPC). Moreover, interviewees often favoritism, which is closely related to authoritarianism. The opinion has been expressed that professionals are not contracted based on their capabilities, but because of their good political relations. Since 2005 Chile has a law stating that all school principals and teachers are to be hired based on selection through an application procedure. Also all school principals who are appointed at a previous stage have to go through a selection procedure.

At school level authoritarianism is also quite strong. There is little mutual exchange between the school principal and teachers, which frustrates teachers. But, the disease is so contagious,

that “when a teacher who used to protest against the despotic management style becomes a school principal himself, he takes over the same authoritarian attitude” (official CPC). For tertiary actors the same holds true. The officials of the Ministry of Education know they have a lot of power. “When the Ministry says something, the people move” (Mineduc).

The actors in the local educational system as well as those from the educational periphery think local educational practice in Chile depends too much on the affability of one person. The overall idea is that over the last 25 years authoritarianism in the educational system has not decreased. This mechanism is mainly described based on the behavior of the authorities. Of course this mechanism also continues to exist because of the rather following behavior of the receiving parties. This behavior is further discussed in the next paragraph.

5.4 ‘Legalism’ as an action formative mechanism

In the busy shopping streets in Santiago de Chile, street vendors sell copies of laws. Never before I have seen common people in the streets buying copies of laws in the street. It appears that Chile is a very legalistic country. “We live in one of the most legalist countries in the world” (official CPC). It also appears that Chilean population leave changes up to legislation. “First a law has to be changed or created, only then something can change” (teacher).

For example the necessity to abolish the Ley Orgánica Constitucional de la Enseñanza (Loce, law 18,692 (Organic Constitutional Law for Education) has been discussed frequently during the year 2006. It was 16 years earlier, one day before the downfall of the military regime that this law was adopted. The law defines the minimum requirements to establish a primary or secondary school, the norms for official recognition of a school, and regulates the subsidiary task of the State. The main reasons for the call for abolition of the Loce are the minimal requirements to establish a school. “Loce has opened the door for education to the market. You can open a school like a restaurant” (official CPC). A representative of the Provincial Directorate of the Ministry of Education states that “Loce mainly includes freedom of education. A guarantee of quality is missing” (DPROV).

The primary actors are waiting for the central government to enforce a law and do not seem able to adjust education to the local needs and requirements. “Since we cannot interfere in pedagogical issues by law, we are waiting for the central government to improve the situation” (school principal).



5.5 Action formative mechanisms

The central aspects of the action formative mechanisms at the local educational system in Chile are summarized in three social mechanisms.

1. No give and no take: primary actors are not given and do not take enough responsibility.
2. A contagious disease: authoritarianism keeps central decision-making alive;
3. Legalism: primary actors adopt an attitude dependent on central decision-making;

These three mechanisms do not intervene in the gap between friends and enemies and hamper the development of mutual cooperative relationships, which are necessary to achieve a more equal socio-economic structure in a decentralized educational system.

In the next paragraphs different kinds of situational mechanisms that influence the pattern of action at the micro level are explained.

5.6 'Parallelism' as a situational mechanism

As presented in the organizational chart (figure 4.1), there is a line of responsibility between the Ministry of Education (Mineduc) with all schools and between the Ministry of Interior with municipal schools. Mineduc has the pedagogical responsibility and decides on the curriculum, introduces reforms and special educational programs. She operates through her regional secretary and the provincial directorate. The Ministry of Interior has the administrative responsibility and operates through the municipalities. This institutional context with its two separate lines of responsibility does affect the pattern of action of the actors in the local educational system. Many municipalities do not see themselves as "the principal" of a school, but more as "an agent" of the Ministry of Education. This also means that many municipalities also do not feel responsible for the quality of education. It is seen as a responsibility of the Ministry of Education³⁶.

"We have tried to build up a relation between the two lines, but it did not work, mainly because of differences between planning and administration" (Mineduc). Besides, "as a Ministry we arrived at the school through a direct relation, leaving the municipality aside. That is why the mayor and other municipal officials do not feel responsible for the programs we introduce" (Mineduc). But in practice decisions taken in each line of responsibility do affect each other. If administrative decisions are implemented this has consequences for the pedagogical issues, e.g. cutback in expenditure can mean contracting less teachers. When pedagogical decisions are taken this has consequences for the administrative issues, e.g. implementation of new programs that require more teachers. Because of parallelism, the primary actors at school level feel they are left in the air. "It would be better if schools depended on one organization" (official Daem).

³⁶ Bellei C. (2003) 'Notas para debatir sobre la gestión municipal de la educación en Chile', Working paper.

A recent example of a program that seems to fail in its intentions because of parallelism is the Jornada Escolar Completa Diurna (JECD, law 19,532 (full school day)). This law arranges a full day to school, with the idea to increase educational quality, and especially the formative aspects of students²⁷. According to an official of the Daem, the ministry 'again' enforces her plan without consultation of the local educational system, but the municipalities are expected to invest in order to make the program work. This local official does emphasize however, that he does not think it is a bad plan as far as contents is concerned. In practice this well intended program even seems to increase inequality. Especially the schools with low financial resources – municipal as well as private subsidized schools - do not have the necessary resources – infrastructure, teachers, and finances – to introduce this program with the supposed intensity. The local educational system judges the JECD as "more of the same". "The idea of the JECD was to build up students' self-esteem by focusing on talents. "But we do not have the capacity in our school" (teacher). Capacity is related to the lack of financial resources, lack of adequate infrastructure, lack of materials like a guitar or sports equipment, and the high age of many teachers". But schools have to comply with the JECD, so workshops are given in the afternoon, but teachers do not know what to teach and leave the children outside, let them do whatever they want. "Especially students of the 7 th and 8 th grade are given more 'responsibility'" according to a rural school principal. However, at the municipal primary school Paolo Freire, a school in the poorest sector of Cerro Navia, students told me that the JECD was very good and they had workshops in the afternoon from 1 pm to 3.30 pm. I have also visited a presentation of the dancing workshops where parents were invited. It was beautiful to see the enthusiasm of these children to perform for their family.

Parallelism in Chile affects the action pattern at the local educational system in a negative way. Because of the lack of cooperation between the two lines, being the Municipality and the Ministry of Education. The primary actors feel they are being left in the air. At the end of the day no one takes up the responsibility over the local educational situation.

5.7 'Class struggle' as a situational mechanism

The main marketing instruments for the promotion and introduction of municipalization were free school choice and direct participation of all parents in local decision-making on educational matters. However, nowadays the overall idea in Chile is, that people can choose only if they have financial resources and achieved a certain level of education. Since 45%³⁷ of Chilean population belongs to the low and mid low socio-economic groups, it appears that many parents are severely limited in their choices as well as excluded to a large extent from direct participation.

³⁷ Casen (2003b) *Encuesta Casen, modulo Ingresos*. Santiago de Chile: Gobierno de Chile, Ministerio de Planificación y Cooperación
URL: http://www.mideplan.cl/casen/modulo_ingreso.html



In poor neighborhoods education means something different. It is not a family's first worry. In low-income communities people are especially worried about basic needs. Some parents in poor rural areas, emphasized that school choice depends also on the school arranging for food and transport for their children. Parents' excuses for not attending school meetings are related to excuses like cleaning the house, but also to other preoccupations like finding a job or having to work all day and part of the night. Moreover, because of these worries about basic needs, often there are family problems related to alcoholism, drugs, maltreatment, unemployment, and disintegration. In addition, many parents only have primary education and do not or cannot motivate their children to study. "It is easier to educate a child from a family of a higher socio-economic group than one from a lower group" (official CPC). "Children from higher income strata have a broader frame of reference and therefore enter the school with a broader socio cultural baggage" (official CPC). Parents from lower socio-economic groups regularly have to buy a book for their child for studying and reading, but they lack the money to pay for it. "When there is a test these children cannot make the test. So, then they borrow the book from another student and make the test later" (teacher).

Parents do want to help their children with school tasks and are aware that their support is important for their children's educational results. But they do acknowledge that there comes a point when they cannot help anymore, because of their relative low educational level. "We come already behind when they start with English lessons" (parent). They emphasize that they can help with information about traditions, like the Mapuche culture. According to school principals and teachers the problem is that parents do not have high expectations for the future of their children. The opinion is expressed that it is important for parents that their children finish primary school, but they are not convinced that education can bring about a social change. "Parents are more interested in their children not having bad grades, receiving food, having basic health care then in advancing the learning capabilities of their children" (teacher). Although parents say they are helping their children with school tasks, experiences of teachers and school principals are different. "They do not stimulate their children and think that everything has to be done at school. That's why we go slowly" (teacher). One school principal of a rural school said that the majority of the parents at his school are involved, but it costs energy and perseverance from the side of the school to involve parents.

This lack of encouragement appears to be a problem on the demand side, but also on the supply side stitches are dropped. In poor municipalities, "schools in general do not invest in challenges and live more by the daily routine" (official CPC). "They have less knowledge about the application and implementation of new projects" (official CPC). All primary actors in the local educational system expressed to be convinced that the education they offer is inferior compared to the education offered in rich municipalities. For example computer technology. "Computers recently arrived at this rural school. My students have little knowledge on computers. So, it is hard for them to find a job in the city or to go to the university. It is difficult to convince these children that they have the opportunity to go to university".

Secondary students are eager to learn, but said that only recently schools started with preparations for entrance examinations for the university. And, in poor communities children as well as teachers have limited access to internet, leading to an unequal access to information compared to richer communities. Also access to written information is unequally distributed between rural and urban municipalities and poor and rich areas, as well for students as for teachers. During my interviews I tried to give parents information about scholarships on the website of the Ministry of Education and tried to persuade them to have a look. “I did not know, but I do not have access to internet” (parent) was a standard answer. Apparently, it is assumed too easily that everybody is familiar with the digital highway. “We loose opportunities because of a lack of information” (parent).

Parents from low socio-economic groups do not have the necessary resources (income, education, and information) to make use of free school choice in their benefit and actively participate in local decision-making. And, the officials of Daem as well as school principal and teachers do not seem able to support and motivate parents. It appears that people who live and work in low socio-economic environments do not receive enough encouragement in order to help students emancipate from their lower class position.

5.8 ‘What they have, we have not’ as a situational mechanism

Municipal schools see private-subsidized schools attracting their students and they cannot get these students back. Municipal schools do not have the same instruments as the private-subsidized schools. Municipal schools perceive that private subsidized schools can decide what salary to pay to teachers and they cannot, that private subsidized schools can select their students and they cannot, and that private subsidized schools can ask for family contributions and they cannot. A feeling of creeping paralysis is created: “we will always loose, since we just do not have the same opportunities as private subsidized schools”. This mechanism, however, does not only hold true comparing the opportunities of municipal with private-subsidized schools, but also comparing municipal schools in poor municipalities with richer municipalities.

Both municipal and private-subsidized schools receive the same state subsidy and have to comply with the same national curriculum. Chilean government transfers a state subsidy, called USE (Unidad Subvención Educativa (state subsidy) to municipal schools and private-subsidized schools. The administrator is autonomous in allocating this money, but it is intended to pay teachers’ salaries and maintenance costs of infrastructure. An administrator -municipality, corporation or administrator of a private school- is never sure about the exact amount of the financial resources it will receive, because the USE depends on the actual student assistance, and not exclusively on registration numbers. The USE is not enough to



pay the salaries of the teachers. Not to mention costs of infrastructure. “As a State, we know that the subsidy is not enough to cover all costs” (mineduc). At this moment 25% (86) of the municipalities in Chile are in a critical financial situation.

First, rich municipalities can invest more in education than poor municipalities, which attend the majority of the population living with low social and economic resource. A consequence of the USE is that schools with a low number of students receive a low amount of money. This situation is especially relevant for rural areas that are sparsely populated. The contradiction is that the investments in education in rural and poor communities should be higher in order to reach more equality in educational output. In Chile 75% (258) of the municipalities have less than 50,000 inhabitants, and 60% (207) of the municipalities have less than 25,000 inhabitants. These small and often poor municipalities do not have the financial resources to attract professionals in education. Moreover, investments in infrastructure and incentives for teachers to improve are impossible. It is clear that for a private subsidized school it is not interesting to start a school in a sparsely populated area. A municipality however has to offer education to all children. A poor municipality is not able to invest extra in its education and in general does not know other ways to receive more money than from the Ministry. Rich municipalities in contrast have more financial recourses, from commerce, industry and local taxes.

Second, private subsidized schools can decide what salary to pay to teachers and municipal schools cannot. Municipal schools have to comply with the ‘estatuto docente’ (law no. 19.070, teachers’ statute). According to the ‘estatuto docente’ municipalities guarantee a minimum salary, job security through a restrictive dismissal policy, and pay for years of service. “Moreover the ‘estatuto docente’ enforces the municipality and the school to work with teachers that do not function properly, because there is no possibility to fire them” (Municipality). However, this statute also offers teachers continuous education and personal improvement. This statute was seen as an important step in improving deteriorated job circumstances of teachers, but it brought with it some obligations hard to fulfill by many – especially poor - municipalities. The private subsidized and private paid schools in contrast are not obliged to follow the ‘estatuto docente’.

Third, private subsidized schools can select their students and municipal schools cannot. Private subsidized schools, which receive the same state subsidy as the municipal schools, are not obliged to accept all students. Apparently a large part of these schools apply methods of selection, accepting children based on their abilities and knowledge. Moreover, children who’s achievements are below a certain standard or who have behavioral problems are expelled from school. The municipal schools on the other hand have to accept all children based on the ‘right of education for every child’, including the children who are expelled from other schools. “Municipal schools have more responsibilities and have to fulfill a more difficult task, but receive the same state subsidy as private-subsidized schools”³⁷.

Fourth, private subsidized schools can ask for family contributions and municipal schools cannot. In addition to the received USE, private subsidized schools can impose family contributions, obviously without having impact on the level of USE. A municipal school on the contrary is not permitted to impose family contributions. And despite the recent law allowing municipal schools to receive private funding, these schools do not know how to find funding, and moreover the private sector is not interested in investing in municipal education because of perceived inefficiency.

This mechanism, based on restrictive regulations, selection, and additional funding, led to a situation where opportunities are decreasing in those sectors of the educational system where higher investments in education are needed in order to achieve more equality in educational output.

5.9 Situational mechanisms

The central aspects of the situational mechanisms are summarized in three social mechanisms.

1. 'Parallelism': primary actors feel they are left in the air. At the end of the day no one takes up the responsibility.
2. 'Class struggle': people who live and work in low socio-economic environments are not encouraged in order to help students emancipate from their lower class position.
3. 'What they have, we have not': restrictive regulations, selection, and additional funding led to a situation where opportunities are decreasing in those sectors where higher investments in education are needed.

Based on these three social mechanisms it shows that the conditions enforced by municipalization do not encourage the primary actors to initiate necessary interventions to fulfill the needs of the local educational situation in neighborhoods characterized by a population with low social and economic resources. Without this encouragement mutual cooperative relationships will not be developed and the necessary intervention in the unequal socio-economic structure is not initiated.



6. Conclusion

In the introduction it was stated, that education has the potential to act as an equalizer of opportunity. But that potential can only be unlocked through public policies that systematically remove the social, economic and cultural barriers facing disadvantaged groups. In Chile it shows that municipalization does not systematically remove the existing social, economic and cultural barriers within society. It even institutionalizes them.

Educational inequality is the result of “unequal treatment” of different categories of the Chilean population. Municipalization operates as a social mechanism that perpetuates class segregation instead of breaking or removing it. This occurs because lower socio-economic groups are dependent on the administrative and policy decisions of different actors between which consensus concerning policy goals, plans and allocation materialize with difficulty. The necessary resources, like knowledge, experience, capacity and money, turn out to be lacking with actors at the primary level as well as actors at the secondary and tertiary level. These resources are necessary in order to improve the special needs and social position of a large group of students in an effective and efficient manner.

It is concluded that the actual degree of decentralization is rather low. The involved actors qualify municipalization not as a decentralized structure, but as a deconcentrated structure. This opinion is mainly based on the low degree of task sharing. Decision-making power is still centralized to a large extent. Legal structures have not been de central focus of this research. However, based on the experience from field- and literature research a decentralized structure is in place to a large extent. It are the roles in order to arrange task sharing that are not ‘yet’ in place.

The secondary actors - Teachers' Union and Educational Experts - as social powers seem not to be strong enough to offer sufficient political and social counterbalance and produce far-reaching changes in the educational system. They offer representation and advise within the macro-social framework of the established order, maintained by the tertiary actors. And the primary actors – students, parents, teachers, school principals and officials of the municipal department for education - are not capable of developing a kind of mutual interaction, which is necessary to remove educational inequality between students and to help students emancipate from their lower class position. Educational decentralization in Chile has not resulted in improved educational equality since it does not intervene in the existing socio-economic differences. Different social mechanisms hamper decentralized educational development in which decision-making should be based on more accurate information about local conditions, and on greater responsiveness to individuals and communities who are encouraged to participate.

This conclusion is based on field research under a small sample of the actors involved in the Chilean educational system. Therefore this conclusion is still preliminary and cannot be generalized. But it shows the importance of social mechanisms on the outcome of a policy intervention. For Chile the explanation shows that specific conditions of municipalization influence the pattern of action at local level. The interactions based on this pattern perpetuate the existing class relations.

Although this research did not have an exclusive focus on the role of the Teachers' Union, the results provide some lessons for Teachers Unions in general.

- In a decentralized educational context, the teachers union has an important role to play in empowering teachers. Teachers should be stimulated in developing a proactive attitude in order to help students develop their capacities.
- If the union is used to function in a centralized way it is difficult to change to a decentralized operational structure. In general the central way of working will just work within the organization, so why change. But it does seem important to adjust the operational structure if the union wants to connect with the base: teachers.
- The Teachers' Union can focus on aspects that hamper mutual cooperative relationships – social mechanisms – in order to design alternative educational proposals.
- The focus of Teachers' Union alternative proposals should be more on the relation between local governments and teachers. Maybe it should be the provincial together with the community representatives that should have the primary voice in decision-making within the Union and the regional and national representatives should play a facilitating and advisory role.

Since the research was focused on explanation, further research is needed in order to collect detailed information on the necessary interventions. One thing is sure though: the actors of the local educational system should be more actively involved to make decentralization work. In addition, the awareness that all actors involved in the educational system are indispensably needed to achieve educational equality should be stimulated among all actors.

Lo que hace la diferencia en el desarrollo de las sociedades no es tanto la capacidad de los individuos por separado, sino su capacidad de acción colectiva" (Salvat Bologna P., 2004)

What makes the difference in societal development are not so much the separate individual capabilities, but the capability for joint action.



Topics for further explanatory research in Chile:

1. Why do students from the low socio-economic group show better results on Simce at a municipal school than at a private subsidized school?

Hypothesis: If private subsidized schools do not attend the specific needs of students with a low socio-economic background and municipal schools do, then these students will show lower results on Simce, compared to municipal schools.

2. How does socio-economic background in combination with type of school influence educational outcome (connection to labor market)?

Hypothesis: If the overall opinion of the Chilean population is that educational quality at a municipal school is low, then employers will prefer students who studied at the private-subsidized and private-paid schools.

3. Why are secondary actors as social powers in Chile not capable to offer sufficient political and social counterbalance in order to achieve educational equality through decentralization?

Hypothesis1: If secondary actors are too dependent on the tertiary actors then they are not able to offer the necessary political and social counterbalance.

Hypothesis2: If secondary actors would focus more on local governments and teachers, then primary actors will develop a more empowered attitude.

4. Does the relation between the reforms of the 90s and educational inequality show the same results as the relation between municipalization and educational inequality in Chile? Why did the reforms of the 90s not improve educational inequality?

Hypothesis: If the educational reforms of the 90s were not designed to intervene in the existing class system, then educational equality will not be the result.

Topics for implementation of interventions in Chile:

1. Primary actors working and living in a low socio-economic environment should develop a more empowered attitude.
Action problem: How do primary actors develop a more empowered attitude?
Hypothesis: If primary educational actors can develop a more empowered attitude then more synergy in mutual relationships will be established.
2. The influence of authoritarianism and favoritism should be diminished at all levels in the educational system.
Action problem: How to diminish authoritarianism and favoritism?
Hypothesis: If authoritarianism and favoritism are removed, then more synergy in mutual relationships will be established.
3. The existence of parallelism in the Chilean educational system should be removed.
Action problem: How to remove parallelism in the Chilean educational system?
Hypothesis: If parallelism is removed then municipalities are encouraged to develop an effective and efficient local (decentralized) educational policy.
4. All schools that receive a state subsidy should have equal rights and obligations.
Action problem: How to banish unequal rights and obligations of schools that receive a state subsidy?
Hypothesis: If municipal as well as private subsidized schools in Chile have equal rights and obligations, then education can intervene in the existing socio-economic differences.



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