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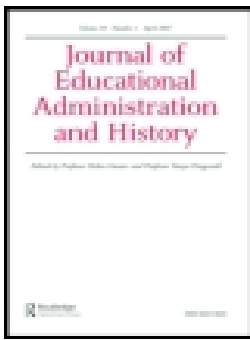
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From above or from below? Chilean NGOs, the State and education reforms

Gonzalo Delamaza ^a and Juan Francisco Palma Carvajal ^b

^aCenter for Regional Development Studies, Universidad de Los Lagos, Santiago, Chile; ^bSchool for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

ABSTRACT

The decades from the 1960s to the 1980s were prolific in the emergence of a significant and diverse movement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Latin America. In the case of Chile, grassroots educational organisations navigated various political contexts. Initially, they played an active part in the process of social mobilisation and the emergence of new progressive trends of thought and political behaviour. Later, in reaction to the civic-military dictatorship, they were forced to adapt themselves and played an oppositional role. Drawing on the review of academic literature and interviews with researchers and activists, the article establishes a macro and meso political-historical analysis of this period. Analysis is focused on the transitions experienced by organisations, the changing role of the State and international alliances, and the different forms of linkage between governments, ideological currents, and social actors during these diverse political and social contexts.

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Introduction

The decades from the 1960s to the 1980s were prolific in the emergence of a significant and diverse movement of non-governmental and grassroots organisations both in Latin America and in the Western world as a whole. In the case of Chile, these organisations had to navigate distinct political contexts. During the democratic period, they played an active part in the increase in social mobilisation and the emergence of new trends of thought and political behaviour that characterised the decade of the sixties and early seventies. Later, in reaction to the civic-military dictatorship led by Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990) and the subsequent neoliberal dismantling of the state, they were forced to adapt themselves, shifting mainly into defensive strategies, although endowed with great creativity.

Among these organisations, the scope of organisations dedicated to education issues played an integral part in these trends and can be understood in connection with the

CONTACT Gonzalo Delamaza  gonzalo.delamaza@ulagos.cl  Center for Regional Development Studies, Universidad de Los Lagos, República 517, Santiago 8320000, Chile; Juan Francisco Palma Carvajal  francisco.palmacarvajal@bristol.ac.uk  School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, Office 10 Woodland Road, room 2.2, Priory Road, Clifton BS8 1TU, UK

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contexts described. For this reason, we have chosen to study a national case, focused on Chile, where three global trends converge: (i) a strong relationship between political and social projects in the country and non-governmental and grassroots organisations; (ii) an important role of education in the transformation agenda: from '*promoción popular*' (in English, popular promotion) in the 1960s to '*educación popular*' (in English, popular education) in the 1980s; and (iii) a relevant role of global agendas and international influences.

As Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) have argued, in recent decades, under the 'evidence-based policy movement', there has been a global reaffirmation of the rationalist approaches to policy analysis. This trend, as they contend, implies conceiving policy as a rational and neutral activity which produces objective solutions to policy problems. Against this understanding, and aligned with a Critical Policy Analysis perspective, in this research we will reject the positivist distinction between values and facts, instead emphasising the importance of understanding and reflecting on the specific context in which a policy arises. In this way, we will focus on situating the practices of policymaking in relation to their wider social and political contexts, paying particular attention to the power relations in which policy practices are submerged in.

Considering this and acknowledging that grassroots educational organisations do not operate in isolation from the political, economic and institutional conditions that prevail in a society, this article will contest the dominant liberal view on civil society. This means questioning the normative assumption which conceives civil society as some kind of outside force which constitutes a counterweight to the state. Instead, following the work of Antonio Gramsci (1971), we will consider civil society as the sphere where culture is produced and reproduced, and therefore the sphere where hegemony is disseminated, but also, in some cases, contested. From this angle then, civil society is understood as an essential dimension of governance, which is capable of both extending and challenging state power.

Aligned with this view, grassroots educational organisations are going to be understood as an expansion and diversification of traditional political practice, performing, as Gerard Clarke (1998, 12) proposes, as 'an arena within which battles from society at large are internalised and multiplied'. In the case of Chile, and the historical period considered, this expansion is visible in various spheres: (i) ideological, with the renewed importance of the 'social Catholicism' and its propagation into popular layers; in (ii) organisational terms, going beyond government agencies and unions towards new hybrid research centres; and in terms of (iii) social actors and their practices, with the strong impulse of the education of urban poor residents and peasants. All this, in a changing context strongly influenced by international trends and new forms of linkage between governments, ideological currents and social actors.

This approach, it is important to note, seems particularly relevant when reflecting on the theme of this Special Issue, which focuses on the role of different grassroots' organisations and their efforts working with and against the bureaucratic state. In this way, this Special Issue, centred on processes of education reform between the 1970s and the 1980s', represents a valuable opportunity to analyse in more depth the transitions and tactics deployed by these organisations, allowing us to better understand the role they played both in promoting and resisting policy change in different political and social contexts.

In the case of Chile, a plethora of academic work is dedicated to analysing the role of education NGOs in different periods of the history: during the military dictatorship (Garcés Durán 2010; Neut-Aguayo 2018), the transition to democracy (Delamaza 2010; Gruninger 2003; Picazo 2013), and during the recent education reforms implemented in Chile (Palma Carvajal 2021). There is, however, still an insufficient understanding of the origins of these organisations, the role they played during the ambitious educational reforms carried out during the government of Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964–1970), and how they transitioned from this period to the next, characterised by the government of Salvador Allende (1970–1973) and the irruption of the civic-military dictatorship in 1973. Considering the existent gap in the academic literature, the present article builds on the time frame suggested, focusing on the historical period between the late 1960s and the end of 1980s.

In terms of methodology, the study followed a qualitative approach juxtaposing a review of policy documents and academic literature, with semi-structured interviews with key informants. Among those interviewed were researchers on education and historians of the Catholic Church in Latin America as well as activists and former members of some of the educational NGOs studied.

The article is organised as follows. It begins with a brief reflection on the historical proximity between the Chilean State and the work developed by different civil society associations working on education. Following this is a brief characterisation of the main tendencies of the non-governmental educational field which emerged in the context of reforms during the democratic period (1958–1973), under the ‘Revolution in Freedom’ and Popular Unity projects. Subsequently, it describes and analyses the radical transformation which emerged in this field as a result of the 1973 civil–military coup and the dictatorship that followed. Finally, the article presents conclusions, analysing the trajectory and transitions presented, the challenges of grassroots initiatives working in education and the importance of political contexts in determining the orientation of them.

The emergence of grassroots and non-governmental organisations on education in the context of reforms during the democratic period (1958–1973)

At the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s, a new type of civil society organisation appeared in Chile and in other contexts of Latin America. Initially known as ‘support institutions’ or ‘study centres’, and later called ‘non-governmental organisations’ (NGOs), the rise of these new organisations in Chile had the peculiarity of occurring under a dictatorial military regime which effectively dismantled the previous political system, repressed any type of opposition and left very few spaces for manifestations from civil society. In this way, Chilean NGOs were born outside – and often against – the dictatorial State of the time. However, it is worth mentioning, that this oppositional role contrasted with the historical proximity between the Chilean state and civil society. Since the origins of the country, Chilean civil society evolved having a close relation with a State in permanent expansion through a pluralistic, inclusive and relatively stable political system (Moulian 2006).

This pattern of proximity and interconnection between the state and civil society had lasted for almost 50 years, and it was particularly visible in education policy. Before the military coup of 1973, and the subsequent neoliberal reforms implemented, the State had always been the main agent of expansion of the school system. This effort, however, was not without its difficulties in achieving the goals that were proposed, which is expressed in successive attempts at reform and articulation of a national educational project. Despite this predominant position, the State was not alone. Education, as we will illustrate, was also the concern and activity of both the Catholic Church, of enormous influence in the country, and various philanthropic organisations and social movements that considered education as a field of special relevance in their work and projects.

Unlike other countries in the region, for a long time, a pluralist democratic system prevailed in Chile. Since the late 1930s, with the Popular Front governments (1938–1952) there was an expansion towards popular groups. This process and the reform of the electoral laws of 1958 that limited election rigging and the end of the legal exclusion of the communists that had been in force since 1947, opened a period of democratic flourishing that lasted for fifteen years until its violent interruption when the civil–military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet was established (1973–1990). In this way, during a great part of the twentieth-century political parties played a predominant role in the political system, acting as the mediators of social interests, partially articulated in mass national movements, although also with significant exclusions (Garretón 2012).

During this period the educational field was regarded as an essential pivot of social integration. An example of this was the promulgation of the Law of Compulsory Primary Instruction in 1920, which guaranteed the provision of free public and compulsory education for all. However, it would not be until the sixties of the last century, that comprehensive reforms of education would be attempted by the State. In this way, and illustrating the centrality of education in these years, in a relatively short period of time, different administrations, such as the conservative government of Jorge Alessandri (1958–1964), the Christian Democrat government of Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964–1970), and the interrupted Socialist government of Salvador Allende (1970–1973) attempted ambitious and structural educational reforms (Mayorga 2017).

Despite the diversity of these different reforming efforts, in all of them it is possible to appreciate two common and significant factors: the relevant presence of international influences and the impact of social mobilisations. For instance, in 1961, a comprehensive reform, which aimed to modernise the Chilean Education by introducing planning and rationalisation in the educational system, was proposed (Nuñez 1990). Nevertheless, the lack of support from the teachers' unions and the existing political conflict at the time impeded the reform from being carried out. It is only a few years later, with the arrival of Frei Montalva to the presidency, that a new education reform was announced, proposing first, the expansion of school enrolment at all levels, and subsequently, an administrative, curricular, and political reform of the entire Chilean education system. This ambitious reform was directly supported by the United States (US) government as part of their international initiative in response to the Cuban revolution: the Alliance for Progress, which demanded as a requirement, the implementation of an education reform (Austin 2003, 338). Thus, the goals of Frei's educational reform were very clearly inserted in the developmentalist approach proposed by the US government at the time, promoting the idea of 'Human capital' as a way to help overcome the diagnosis

of economic stagnation and social pressures that were observed in the country (Ahumada 1958; Pinto 1959).

The political reform implemented by Frei Montalva, however, went beyond the reformulation of the Chilean school system. It also considered an ambitious programme of social mobilisation aimed mainly at integrating the peasantry and the recent migrants from the countryside to the city in an accelerated urbanisation process who had shaped a new social sector: 'los pobladores' (in English, the settlers). Upon assuming the presidency, Frei Montalva established the Popular Promotion National Council whose purpose was to create and strengthen different types of community-based organisations in Chile. This emancipatory political project, known as *promoción popular*¹ aimed to recognise and promote grassroots organisations; providing services and resources to give presence in social life and educate the sectors considered 'marginal'. Along with the provision of formal school services, *promoción popular* involved a broad process of non-formal education and training beyond school. As part of this effort, in 1967 the Agrarian Reform Law is enacted, and later, in 1968, the Parliament passed the Law for Neighbourhood and Community associations.

Surprisingly, even when they were implemented by the same government, the education reform and the *promoción populares* were very different processes. The education reform was conducted by a team of high-level technocrats who incorporated economics and planning disciplines into their initial training as educators. They applied pedagogical principles from the pragmatism of John Dewey and were not linked to the educational renewal movements in the country, which came from the 1920s (Caiceo 2013; Nuñez 1990). Leading this team was the Minister of Education at that time, Juan Gómez Millas, a politician and intellectual with a long career, who had been in the rectory of the country's most prestigious university, the University of Chile, for a decade.

On the other hand, the *promoción popular* represented a very different project. This was a space for political and social innovation, largely inspired by the reformist social thought of the Catholic Church, of which Frei Montalva and many Christian Democrats were followers, and by the approaches of the 'theory of marginality' (Delfino 2012; Veke-mans and Giusti 1969). This approach represented an alternative to Marxist theory and its class struggle approach, considering new grassroots sectors that needed to be mobilised 'from above'. Besides, it was among the activists and technicians of the Agrarian Reform and the *promoción popular* where the 'leftward shift' of Catholic sectors had a lot of influence. This was prompted by the Second Vatican Council, the Conference of Bishops of Medellin in 1968, the emergence of different catholic leftist currents inside the church and the growing social and political mobilisation of the sixties (e.g. Cuban revolution and guerrillas in various countries of the continent).

Chilean Catholic church supported this reformist's experiment. However, this political project had no continuity and at the end of the sixties much of the activists and several priests adopted a more leftist position, supporting the 'Chilean way to socialism' headed by Salvador Allende. An example of this was the case of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who came to Chile in 1965 as a political exile to work at the Agrarian Reform Training and Research Institute (ICIRA). Freire would exert great influence on Chilean promoters and educators, and it was in Chile where he elaborated one of his most important texts, the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 2017), which according

to some authors marks his transition from a more traditional Christian conception of education and social change to one heavily influenced by Marxism (Austin 2003, 327).

Considering this, it is possible to appreciate the active role of the state with important initiatives in the social field over the period. However, not everything happened at the state level. It was also in this period that many relevant NGOs, aligned with this political and educational project, emerged. In 1963, the Institute for Agrarian Promotion (INPROA) was created to support peasant families on land which was donated by the Church. The Society of Jesus also played a significant role. Using its vast global network linked Belgian and French priests and intellectuals with Chileans (Beigel 2011). This effort had an impact not only in Chile but also in Europe, such as the creation of the New Catholic University of Louvain in 1972. These international links were discernible in the prolific work of one of the Belgian priests that came to Chile, Roger Veke-mans, who founded the DESAL Centre, the Bellarmino Centre, the Centre for Socio-Cultural Research (CISOC), and the Institute of Sociology of the Catholic University.²

The influence of the Society of Jesus was also visible in the creation of other NGOs. They were involved in the creation of the Latin American Institute of Doctrine and Social Studies, ILADES, in 1965, and the Centre for Research and Development of Education, CIDE in 1964 (López 2013; Salazar 2019). Referring to the creation of the latter, García Huidobro, who had worked for many years in it, remembered:

Patricio Cariola, S.J. founded CIDE in response to the will of Cardinal Silva Henríquez, who did not want the Church to be left out of the Reform, a purpose that has at least three aspects: to incorporate Catholic education into change, to contribute into aspects in which the church had more capacity, and to generate a centre that would contribute intellectually (García Huidobro, 2014, 1).

Considering this, it is possible to appreciate that the action of the Jesuits covered both the field of school reform and, more broadly, *promoción popular*, especially in terms of their constant work with peasants. This dual presence continued for many years, and it was only after the military coup of 1973, when the military dictatorship used all its powers to restrict their work, that CIDE ventured more directly into *educación popular* (Milos 2004)

While all this occurred, other significant social changes were happening. The increasing migration from the countryside to the city throughout the twentieth century not only generated an educational deficit but also led to the formation of large urban conglomerates of slums on the outskirts of the main cities. These were dubbed the '*poblaciones callampas*' (in English, mushroom towns), owing to their rapid emergence from land occupations by families who lacked housing. Once settled in the place, the families began a negotiation process with the authorities to obtain infrastructure and services and thus convert the '*callampa*' into a more consolidated '*población*' or '*villa*', which were areas with constructions buildings and facilities especially for workers. In this context, multiple educational experiences that combined the search for access to the state education service, with self-managed efforts to provide education were developed.

In this vein, Camila Silva (2013) identified three different approaches that emerged in different *poblaciones* of Santiago in different periods. For instance, she argues that in the first major occupation of land that occurred in Santiago in 1957, which gave rise to

población La Victoria, the school emerged as a strategic space for social struggle, aiding the development of the community and playing a significant role in the construction of its combative social identity. Later, during the implementation of Frei Montalva's educational reform, Silva analyses another case, the one of *población* Blanqueado. In this case and period, she argues, the school acts as a space for social conciliation, helping to build agreements with the State in a period of characterised political tensions and social transformations.

The final case studied by Silva occurred during the period of Salvador Allende's government, and its 'Chilean road to socialism' project, which, as we will discuss below, was violently interrupted in September 1973 and therefore did not manage to carry out the educational transformation from the State. In this period, and through the analysis of *población* Nueva Habana, Silva identifies a third type of school. In this case, instead of promoting conciliation, the school emerges as a space for political dispute, reproducing, at the grassroots level the tensions between different revolutionary projects. Considering these three different moments, between the 1960s and 1970s it is possible to appreciate the coexistence of contrasting scenarios. Social movements were oriented to press and demand access to education by the State, but also, to cooperate with it in the framework of a profound reform, and finally, to dispute, without success, the possibility of organising education at the service of the revolutionary process outside of a not sufficiently transformed state. These different orientations, as we will see in the following section, recurred in the new context created by the military coup and the long dictatorship that followed.

Even when the political project of the Popular Unity finished in 1973, the three years that Salvador Allende governed (1970–1973) left some interesting aspects to analyse in terms of education policy. During this period, the government maintained and deepened the expansion of access to education that began in 1964. Another feature to consider is the important participation of teachers' unions in educational management and the formation of multiple instances of popular participation in the educational debate. Probably, the most important expression of this was the First National Congress of Education in 1972, with the participation of different unions, *poblaciones*, political organisations, as well as different actors in education. Another example of this participatory approach was the decision to submit the National Unified School project (ENU) – the most ambitious education reform proposed during this period – to the scrutiny of the National Council of Education, an instance that brought together the main actors of the educational system that which had not played major roles in the reform projects of Alessandri and Frei (Farrell 1986). The ENU proposal considered both formal and non-formal education and aimed to expand the actors, fields and scope of everyday educational practice. This project also included the scientific and international debate of the time – mainly led by UNESCO – along with the socialists' values and orientation of the current government. The ENU, after a long discussion, was never implemented.

Also, in the context of the Higher Education reform that has been going on since 1967, the government sponsored the emergence of various interdisciplinary institutes under the wing of the Catholic University, such as the Interdisciplinary Research Programme in Education (PIIE), created in 1971. Its founder and first director was Ernesto Schifelbein, who had played an important role in Frei's educational

reform. During its first years, PIIE looked broadly into the different levels of formal education but later shifted into a focus on the relationship between education and poverty and the study and development of *educación popular* (Neut-Aguayo 2018; Reyes 2005).

New context after the civic-military dictatorship (1973–1990)

The military coup of 1973 brought the centrality of politics in Chilean society to an abrupt end. After this, the actors involved in policy, and the interaction between them, changed dramatically. From 1975, and under the protection of the military, the so-called ‘Chicago Boys’, a group of Chilean economists trained by Milton Friedman, imposed a radical structural adjustment programme that we now call ‘neoliberal’, aimed at creating a society modelled in all its spheres by the rationality of the market (Garretón 2012). By 1975, the Chilean neoliberal experiment not only had already impacted peasants and settlers hard but also substantially retracted the role of the State and public policies (Huneus 2000b).

In 1981, the dictatorship was institutionalised through a new Political Constitution that was imposed upon all Chileans. In the same year, the military began the implementation of a drastic neoliberal restructuring different institutional areas. Among them: the Chilean education system. These reforms, among other measures, included administrative decentralisation, privatisation of public institutions, the replacement of the stable financing of schools with a competitive individual model per student, the dismantling of national universities and the introduction of evaluation systems for teachers (Bellei 2015).

The military, as they declared, sought to re-establish the social order and give Chile ‘a new institutional basis, ... to rebuild the country morally, institutionally and materially’ (Junta Militar de Gobierno 1974). To achieve this goal, the civic-military regime carried out acts of brutal political repression and closed the spaces for popular participation that had been growing in the last 50 years. Political leaders and activists, as well as the large contingent of social leaders linked in one way or another to politics, were persecuted, tortured and killed. Elections were prohibited in all types of social organisations, whose leaders began to be designated by the authorities. Unions were severely controlled, political parties prohibited and the Congress was suppressed, leaving all the legislative action in the hands of the government (Huneus 2000a).

Under this difficult context, the historical presence and influence of the Catholic Church and other Christian churches became extremely relevant. Under the leadership of the progressive clergy of the 1960s, most of the church acted as a protective institution against state abuses.³ Its role was essential for the emergence of important organisations for the defence of human rights, such as the Pro-Peace Committee (ecumenical), the Vicaría de la Solidaridad (Catholic) and others during the 1970s. At the same time, the Peasant Assistance Coordination Office (OCAC) and other support organisations for popular subsistence initiatives were organised. This allowed the rearticulation and protection of an important group of social leaders and allowed the emergence of successive waves of organisations that combined attention to social problems and support for the victims of human rights violations, with education, awareness and political and social agitation (Delamaza 2014). These organisations

also served as refuge to the vast amount of academics, researchers, public officials and activists expelled from the universities, as in the case of the PIIE, and from the various public bodies that had implemented the agrarian reform and the *promoción popular* policies and their derivatives. Professionals from the Christian democratic party and the new Catholic left had great importance here, since they used their pre-existing links with the church to extend support to academics from the traditional left, without those connections.

As can be seen, in a very short period, the Chilean State was reduced in its social task and becomes the adversary, while most of the church provided a space for action to small groups of social activists and opposition professionals. However, it is essential to mention another key actor: international cooperation and solidarity. The huge amount and variety of NGOs that emerged during the 1980s would not have been possible without the support of the international non-governmental cooperation and solidarity obtained by Chilean exiles for actions within the country.

Behind the emergence of this wave of NGOs was the evolution of a close alliance and exchange of purposes, strategies and work methodologies between three actors, what we have called the 'three-legged table' (Delamaza 2010), composed of: (a) International cooperation with a democratic vocation, politically interested in Latin America and influenced by the currents of Latin American exile, especially the Chilean. Here it is important to highlight the role of the official cooperation of European countries governed by social democratic parties and the non-governmental actions linked to Christian churches, unions and other organisations. Moreover, since the mid-1980s, some funds have also been added from the US to support democratisation efforts in Chile; (b) A generation of middle-class professionals and technicians with academic training and experience of militancy in social and political movements or participation in the government from the mid-1960s, many of them with links to international cooperation; (c) and a strong group of social and community leaders and grassroots political activists who led the reconstruction of the bonds and values of popular social movements. They provided social anchorage and legitimacy to the NGO movement, while receiving support for their subsistence and social action.

Considering this, it is possible to appreciate that this social rearticulation did not emerge from a vacuum but had as a background a vast political trajectory both in the State and in the social movements that explain its strength and effectiveness. In other words, these actors represented the 'classical sociopolitical matrix' of Chilean development, trying to rearticulate themselves in the midst of new and very difficult social and political conditions. Regarding the role of the Catholic Church at that time, this can be understood as an influential and multiple actor. It had powerful connections at an international level but at the same time was rooted in local territories through its parishes throughout the country. It played an important political role but at the same time was able to act through civil society, especially during the sixties and early seventies. In addition to this, the external support provided by the international cooperation played an essential role, as it allowed this articulation of the aforementioned actors certain autonomy and improved their possibilities of action.

How was this broader phenomenon expressed in the field of education? We will mention three main areas: the continuity and development of *educación popular*; the

reconversion of the education NGOs and the union reconstruction of the teaching profession.

As we have stated above, the influence of Paulo Freire during his time in Chile (1964–1969) was significant. This is visible in the impact of his work designing the state literacy programmes at the time but also in his continuous work with an important group of young professionals who worked as a team with the Brazilian educator and contributed ideas and practices to the development of *educación popular*. There is no single definition of what *educación popular* means. Broadly, the word popular is used to designate an educational approach owned ‘by the people’, characterising the efforts of political movements and oppressed groups to take control of education to raise social awareness and critical thinking (Freire 2017). Considering this, the figure of Freire, as an organic intellectual, is extremely significant for understanding this period. Even when the state space was closed, his influence among Chilean professionals was projected in various projects of popular action that continued throughout the eighties. The phenomenon was also international. After his time in Chile, Freire migrated to the United States in 1970 and then to Geneva, from where he advised the World Council of Churches on the educational policy of the newly independent African countries, and returned to Brazil in 1980 collaborating in the founding of the Workers’ Party (Gerhardt 1993).

The *educación popular* movement was also strengthened in the international arena with the creation of the Centre for Adult Education in Latin America (CEAAL) in 1982, under the presidency of Paulo Freire. Regarding this influence, it is interesting to mention that the ‘psycho-social method’ introduced by Freire to teach adults to read and write based on the concrete reality of the subjects remained in Chile for many years. It was not only used in during the Popular Unity, but also, later on, during the Pinochet dictatorship, but removing from it the contents linked to reality and social conflict (Austin 2003; Holst 2006).

It was, however, in the field of opposition activism where a broader conception of *educación popular* gained more strength and expanded itself through the work with popular sectors, mainly settlers from the *poblaciones*. For instance, during the 1980s, training programmes for popular educators were developed, such as the one developed by ECO, Education and Communications (ECO 2012) and the four National Meetings of *Educación popular*, between 1980 and 1985 (Reyes 2005, 401–403). This ongoing political and educational practice was carried out by various NGOs, social work teams of the Catholic Church and different popular groups. Among these, we can mention ECO, the CIDE programme, the EDUPO teams in Santiago and Concepción, the educators team linked to the Vicaría de Pastoral Obrera in Santiago and Concepción, the Department of Social Action of the Bishopric of Copiapó, the Cultural Action Workshop (TAC), Tierra Nuestra and Formation of Community Leaders (FOLICO) with women and young people in the south of Santiago.

The work of *educación popular* was also a space where the actions of the CIDE turned. In 1975, Patricio Cariola, the head of CIDE, was arrested, and after this, by ministerial order, CIDE was excluded from all contact with public schools. In this new scenario, CIDE developed an active *educación popular* programme with an emphasis on the production of widely used educational materials. The incipient programmes that the institution had developed in the field of non-formal education, some publications in

Cuadernos de Educación (Neut-Aguayo 2018, 202) and the contributions of professionals with previous experience working on peasants literacy were the basis for it.⁴

In a different arena, the Interdisciplinary Research Programme in Education (PIIE), suffered the effects of the interruption of the university reform at the Catholic University: the great majority of the interdisciplinary centres created under its auspices were suppressed. In the case of the PIIE, it remained under the wing of the university, although with various limitations in its actions. In 1977 the centre was finally suppressed by the military authority that was imposed as the new chancellor, and the entire centre migrated to the Academy of Christian Humanism, an entity created that year by Cardinal Silva Henríquez to host exonerated academics from Chilean universities.

During this difficult period, the main effort in *educación popular* of the PIIE was the design and implementation of Learning Workshops, a methodology that was later implemented in the framework of formal education. In this way, it is possible to observe that from the mid-seventies both CIDE and PIIE, with a previous focus on formal education, begin a new stage, making room for *educación popular* experiences and converging in their substantive agendas, which had not happened in the previous stage. As Sebastián Neut-Aguayo (2018, 206) argues, this convergence around what they considered a new paradigm, called *educación popular*, occurred within the framework of the consolidation and the radicalisation of educational policies from the military government and the consequent: 'theoretical valorisation of the self-educational processes that were developed at the time outside of formal education'. In this way, they also converged with the other organisations and actions that we have previously reviewed. The rupture to this consensus would take place in the mid-1980s, when the possibility of a political transition towards democracy, led by the traditional political parties and negotiated with the military regime, emerged on the horizon.

One last element to highlight in this period is the organic and political rearticulation of the movement of education workers. In 1973, the military regime dissolved the Single Union of Education Workers (SUTE), created in 1970 by the Chilean Federation of Educators. Instead, the civic-military dictatorship established a College of Teachers, of compulsory affiliation, controlled by the government and closely related to its ideas. However, after many attempts, in 1981 the political opposition succeeded in organising the Chilean Education Union Assembly (AGECH). Nevertheless, the AGECH was strongly repressed: it was legally dissolved in 1983, its Communications Workshop was raided and, finally, one of its main leaders, Professor Manuel Guerrero, was assassinated in 1985. With strong influence from the Communist and Socialist parties in its directives, its main orientation was to defend teachers and denounce the political abuses at the time, although it also had grassroots expressions dedicated to pedagogical renewal, with links to the *educación popular* movement and some NGOs such as the PIIE (Reyes 2005, 299). In 1987, the AGECH agreed to join the College of Teachers, already democratised and with an opposition directive.

Final reflections

In an article from 1983, the Brazilian popular educator Carlos Rodrigues Brandao, a colleague and friend of Paulo Freire, alluded to the 'crossroads' of the conceptions of *educación popular* that had originated in Latin America from the adult education movement

(Rodrigues Brandao 1983). He was referring to two types of initiatives. Firstly, to those educational efforts coming from the State and that sought different ways of educating ‘al pueblo’ (in English, *the people*), such as the Literacy Campaign led by Freire in Brazil at the beginning of the 1960s. Secondly, to the educational initiatives that emerged from the popular organisations themselves, seeking similar purposes, although with other instruments and objectives, closer to the political goals of the popular groups than to education itself.

Thirty years later, Rodrigues Brandao (2015) returned to his reflection, distinguishing various currents under what, during all this time, has been developed in this field. In the meantime, Paulo Freire had been officially named ‘Patron of Brazilian Education’. However, his proposals on education were hardly considered by the leftist government of Brazil. This example, even though from abroad, seems pertinent to illustrate the trajectory of popular educational practices and the tensions between the state initiative and popular initiatives in the Chilean context. Freire’s own performance in the country suggests this: hired by the Christian Democratic government for a literacy programme, his method continued to be used, and adapted, during the military dictatorship. In parallel, however, the practice of adult education in the political context of the late 1960s gave rise to a broad movement associated with popular dynamics and had great development among organisations in opposition to the Chilean military regime.

In the 1990s, with the democratic recovery in Chile and other Latin American countries, this tension emerged again. As the revolutionary project of the type imagined by the Christian socialist current of Freire and his colleagues is not consolidated in the region, the possibility and capacity of popular movements in education to occupy certain spaces in the state sphere depended on the evolution and breadth of political processes. At the same time, with greater or lesser success, they maintained autonomous practices related to the dynamics of popular movements. However, the reflection on this constitutive tension of *educación popular* does not seem to have evolved sufficiently among the authors dedicated to the subject. Rodrigues Brandao’s own observation of Brazil in 2015 is not too different from what many Chilean activists proposed twenty-five years earlier when in the context of the democratic transition called popular educators to favour broad alliances and take on the challenges of massiveness and coordination with government initiatives over the ‘small testimonial experiences’ (Delamaza 1992).

Considering all this, at the light of the current global upswing in civil society activism, the transitions analysed in this work reaffirm the importance of political contexts in determining the orientation of popular initiatives. As has been discussed, in the context of structural reforms and the rise of social mobilisation, popular initiatives on education became increasingly autonomous, although not contrary to state action, which is also evolving. In the next period, characterised by the violent imposition and instauration of the civic-military dictatorship and its neoliberal project, autonomy became an essential requirement for survival and allowed, even when limited, to sustain different and significant actions ‘against the State’. However, later on, when the transition process began in the mid-1980s, the paths diverged again. This phenomenon, in part, is possible to understand because the currents that helped to strengthen and expand the spaces for popular movements were not a cause of the efforts dedicated to planning and developing educational reform. There is no justification to detract the importance of the changes promoted by the education reform implemented during the

government of Frei Montalva. However, it is also important to recognise that this reform ran in parallel and without a clear connection to the efforts of the popular sectors, and even to those that different government organisations itself made, in its action towards peasants and settlers.

From this angle then, and it was discussed before, the ambitious and extensive education reform of 1965, which was funded with external support, did not consider the objectives of the previous efforts of educators from the educational renewal movements, and the Chilean State itself. Instead, it was inspired by a new technocracy that aimed to modernise education through planning and economics and which did not have the tools and language to accompany the social mobilisation occurring on the streets. Many years later, the reforms promoted by the democratic governments after 1990 would repeat the scheme, although with much less impact on the educational system. These reforms were promoted by professionals from educational NGOs, such as CIDE and PIIE, and funded with external support. But, as in the 1960s: they did not really alter the fragmented character of Chilean education and they did not consider, in a significant way, the practice of *educación popular* either.

Once again, it is interesting to note here the influential role that international cooperation plays. In different periods, and according to the different political contexts, it introduces and promotes different innovations, but they do not have an organic insertion in the country's educational transformation projects. In the sixties, it was the theory of human capital and the reforms to stop 'communism'. In the eighties the solidarity with Chile and the opposition to the dictatorship. In the nineties, when democracy returned, external influence came from large international organisations, such as the World Bank, promoting a new recipe: the rise of neoliberalism.

The role of the state also deserves further consideration. Through this historical analysis of the main actors, ideas and reforms implemented in the course of Chilean education, an incomplete trajectory can be verified. Despite the various efforts from the State to integrate public education into a single system, aligned with the objectives of national development, this objective has not been achieved. This was not the axis of Frei's reform and with Allende, it was a project that was never implemented. After the municipalisation and privatisation of education promoted in 1981, the fragmentation has continued to accentuate and currently the percentage of students in public education is lesser than the private one. The reforms of the 1990s did not aim to modify this but instead focused on curricular modernisation and the incorporation of rural schools. This has resulted in the maintenance of great differences between types of education, beyond the massification of access to school. Finally, in the field of 'non-formal' education and autonomous educational practices, the *educación popular* movement weakened in the mid-1980s and since then it has not been taken up by state initiatives.

Notes

1. We decided to keep the terms *promoción popular* and *educación popular* in Spanish to preserve their meaning. In Spanish they both have clear orientation to political aims of conscientisation and social transformation.
2. Much of the activity promoted by the progressive sector of the Church was made possible thanks to donations from developed countries, such as the United States and Germany,

through the Alliance for Progress. Between 1960 and 1970, nearly 70 million dollars arrived (Salazar 2019).

3. It is worth mentioning that this oppositional role was not shared by all within the Chilean church. In parallel with these efforts, there were some conservative groups of the church that actively supported the dictatorship and asked Chileans to cooperate with it (Sigmund 1986). Nevertheless, Pinochet never obtained a clear support from the Catholic hierarchy and there were several conflicts between the regime and the church.
4. An example of this is the testimony of Luis Brahm, from DESAL, in Milos (2004).

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Notes on contributors

Gonzalo Delamaza is a Professor at the University of Los Lagos in Santiago, where he does research with the Centre for Regional Development Studies and Public Policies (CEDER). His work focuses on citizen participation in public policies, social movements and decentralisation.

Juan Francisco Palma Carvajal is a Lecturer in the School of Policy Studies at Bristol University. His research focuses on the politics of policymaking, citizen participation in policy processes and the changes in policymaking under neoliberal governance.

ORCID

Gonzalo Delamaza  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5418-3135>

Juan Francisco Palma Carvajal  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7998-5305>

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