

Teachers' Viewpoints on Educational Public Policy in Chile

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ABSTRACT – Teachers' Viewpoints on Educational Public Policy in Chile. This qualitative study on teaching trajectories explores Chilean teachers' perspectives on public policies implemented in the education system during the past two decades. Findings reveal that teachers interpret and adopt policies in unique ways, with a contextualized characterization of policies identified. Three major processes of educational policy were identified: Educational Reform, General Education Law, and Teacher Professional Development Law. The study underscores the complex relationship between public educational policies and teacher practices in the Chilean education system. This research can inform education stakeholders and policy-makers about teachers' perspectives and experiences with policy implementation.

Keywords: Educational Policies. Teacher Professional Development. Educational Reforms. Teaching Trajectories.

RESUMEN – Políticas Públicas Educativas en Chile desde la Mirada de Profesores. El artículo busca responder cuáles son las principales políticas educativas identificadas por profesores durante los últimos 20 años en Chile, cómo han vivenciado los efectos en sus trayectorias docentes, qué características destacan. El estudio cualitativo sobre trayectorias docentes levanta categorías y subcategorías emergentes del discurso de los maestros para comprender cómo viven los procesos de reforma educativa. Los hallazgos muestran una caracterización situada en sus contextos escolares, identifican tres grandes procesos de política educativa: Reforma Educacional, Ley General de Educación y Desarrollo Profesional Docente. Por último, se ha observado que interpretan, adoptan y adaptan de manera idiosincrática dichas políticas.

Palabras clave: Políticas Educativas. Desarrollo Profesional Docente. Reformas Educativas. Trayectorias Docentes.

Introduction

Since the end of the twentieth century, literature on education¹ has proposed that teachers' trajectories are imbued with the tracks left by processes of change, transformation, and reforms (Clandinin; Connelly, 1996; Hernández; Rifà, 2011). Thus, teachers' life stories in terms of professional development highlight tensions, axioms, doubts, realities, conceptions, strategies, and projections, both in the paths taken and in the effects linked to the continual improvement of educational processes that occur in real classrooms. For Huff (2016), such contexts create systems of empowerment that foster wellbeing and authentic identity among teachers, or alternatively, they can create systems of imposition or mandates of control that produce feelings of alienation and determinism, with power relations established that privilege one or another set of particular values and beliefs. Therefore, it is important to attempt educational research options through an ascending logic, from the "viewpoint or voice" of the actors recounting their full professional lives, their real "living and direct" experiences without cuts or censure, breaking the researcher-researched dichotomy (Atkinson, 1998; Clandinin; Connelly, 2000; Goodson, 2004).

Furthermore, such trajectories emerge as an option to examine how personal-professional lives crisscross with the political, social, and cultural contexts that undergird the development of the existences, of the situated reality, of subjects that likewise contribute to the construction of the society in which we live. In this sense, the reason for studying teachers' lives through their own discourse is related to the "politics effect," which is the appropriation of politics by the teacher that leads them to make pedagogical decisions.

Teacher Identity and Professional Trajectory

In today's globalized world, in the context of change, teachers live at a crossroads (Hargreaves, 2003) at which, on one side, society demands that they be pillars of development, while, on the other, it does not prepare them or provide the proper conditions, nor does it respect them professionally (Giroux, 1990). Within this logic of requirements, not only must they organize teaching, but also be responsible for the learning of students with a continuously dwindling desire to be at school; cope with families whose trust in them is decreasing; and be part of a society that does not value them, to the point of generating a "destruction" of their professional identity (Mayo; Tardif, 2018).

In the face of external innovation proposals detached from the culture of formative centers and models and focused on filling gaps and addressing teachers' shortcomings and deficits, a new vision is emerging that directs its gaze at teachers as people with specific professional trajectories and stages of development. This vision or approach seeks to show the other side of educational change: how it affects the lives of teachers (emotions, hopes, and future perspectives)

and how they negotiate their place in said contexts (Huberman, 1990; Goodson, 2004).

A collection of concepts and terms (ages of life, life course, life cycles, stages, seasons, routes, careers, trajectories, and itineraries, among others) point to the fact that the human life can be analyzed and understood diachronically according to periods that emerge from autobiographical discourse — from the story told in first-person (Huberman, 1990; Rivas; Márquez; Leite; Cortés, 2020).

During the past several years, studies have proliferated analyzing the life stories of teachers through their professional teaching trajectories in diverse contexts, which seek to follow teachers from their initial pre-service education through their professional integration and Teacher Professional Development (Ávalos, 2009; Cabezas; Gallego; Santelices; Zarhi, 2011; Rivas; Hernández; Sancho; Núñez, 2012). This entails viewing the teacher's trajectory as a continuum of events containing two dimensions, in our view: a life project that must be signified/reflected upon as a career and professional development that is institutionally rooted (Bolívar, 2006).

Educational Policy in Chile during the Twenty-first Century

The educational and school context in Chile during the past 25 years has provoked profound transformations in teachers' identity resulting from a changing scene permeated by social and educational reforms, from local to global, in a liquid society (Bauman, 2003). The constant change in strategies and visions of what a school system should be and comprise causes instability and perplexities, and it leaves teachers at a crossroads in the face of pedagogical decision-making to provide the desired continuity that is required for educational processes (Hargreaves; Fullan, 2014).

The twenty-first century began with the hegemonic installation of a new model of development for the globalized world organized around financial capital, which brought with it enormous cultural mutations linked to the school and education systems, families, and communities (Reyes; Cornejo; Arévalo; Sánchez, 2010; Carrasco; Flores, 2019). Studies have demonstrated how the neoliberal model grossly impacts the education system in Chile (Orellana, 2018), with the occurrence of diverse processes of educational transformation of an ascending or descending nature, that is, both emanating from public policy, such as the curricular reforms of the Teacher Professional Development Law (*Ley de Desarrollo Profesional Docente* [DPD]), and from social mobilizations, whether that of 2006 or 2011 (Falabella, 2015; Alarcón; Donoso, 2018). For Donoso and Donoso (2009), a series of social and educational processes occurred, generating multiple changes, that come to light in the General Education Law of 2009 (*Ley General de Educación del año 2009*), which represents one of the landmark changes in the Chilean education system since the dictatorship era. This turbulent time characterized by successive changes was

also experienced during the 2010s: the Inclusion Law (*Ley de Inclusión*), a new law public education administration law, the Teacher Professional Development Law, and a new national curriculum, among others (Treviño, 2018). This context of transformations is amplified by the recent contingency that has forced us to contemplate education in times of crisis precipitated by the covid-19 pandemic (De Sousa, 2020; Dussel, 2020; Xin Xie; Fiona Fui, 2020). The emergency pedagogy was increasingly moving toward remote learning from home, as everything had changed within a matter of weeks; during three semesters, we reinvented the classroom, prioritized the curriculum, and viewed the school from another perspective. Afterward, the return to “normality” brought with it new challenges. Today, public policy seeks to address post-pandemic demands; for example, in the case of Chile specifically, a Learning Reactivation Plan (*Plan de Reactivación de Aprendizajes*) has been designed aimed at reinsertion of students with high absenteeism or risk of school drop-out, as well as comprehensive development with a focus on mental health and active coexistence, which was proposed by the *Ministerio de Educación* in 2023².

With this being the context in which our participants have had to be educated and practice as teachers, from the perspective and episteme assumed in this study, the changing educational fabric described implies that their professional teaching trajectories are influenced to some extent by the changes occurring in different spheres of the education system. These trajectories do not merely follow the different individual movements and paths taken by a teacher within their employment situation (workplaces, salaries, positions), but also the forms in which the aforementioned policies provoke systemic changes that impel them to make decisions that impact their teaching and by extension what happens in their classrooms, shaping the permanent construction of their teacher identity.

Methodology

Situated within what has come to be termed the interpretive paradigm in social research (Imbernon, 2002), this studied is underpinned by the lived experience of teachers (Van Manen, 2003). The methodology utilized is quantitative and possesses a relational and comprehensive character. Within the interpretive paradigm and based in a qualitative methodology, we frame our approach in what began, with the hermeneutic turn, as Biographical Narrative research, which is conceived of as a strategy that allows for the widening of knowledge of what occurs in the school sphere from the point of view of the teachers, who construct a life project that unfolds in a culturally and institutionally rooted formative continuum (Bolívar; Gijón, 2008; Bolívar; Domingo; 2019).

The instruments utilized are life stories and in-depth interviews (Arancibia, 2021). These are techniques that invite reflection on professional life. We use biographical-narrative interviews since our fo-

cus is on finding relations between one's own life and the sociocultural context in a recursive coming and going—subjectivity, the social, and one's story. Interviews with teachers were carried out via Zoom due to the covid-19 pandemic, which ultimately allowed us to be present in the three regions in which the study took place during the interviews, enriching the triangulation of the analysis of the results.

First, we proposed to the participating teachers that they give an open account of their professional trajectory, responding freely to broad, general questions. Examples include the following: How did I come to be the teacher I am today? What have been the milestones, experiences, moments, situations, and people most significant to me? The main purpose of asking for this account is to receive a first-hand testimony from the participants without the intermediation of the interviewer significantly interceding. These accounts were then analyzed, and in-depth interviews were carried out with each participant.

We worked with teachers from diverse educational contexts (see Table 1) characterized by the following criteria: rural and urban establishments; government-subsidized private schools and municipal schools; and three regions of the country (Los Ríos, Los Lagos, and Aysén), which in themselves denote substantial differences. We made contact with these teachers through direct reference to the research team's knowledge and contacts, given their professional and research experience on previous projects. Finally, the group is evenly distributed in terms of gender, given that the trajectory of a woman teacher is different from that of a man's (Acker, 1995; Lizana, 2009). The implementation of the study followed the ethical criteria of research on human subjects contained in the Singapore Declaration.

The analysis was undertaken by drawing up categories and sub-categories using the software Nvivo 10. The frequency of categories was also established using this program. We directed our analysis toward the search for the principal effects of policy in teachers' trajectories and singular-convergent meanings, assuming the principle of a formative *continuum* and a mixed analysis sequence (vertical and horizontal).

Table 1 – Participants

	Region	Years of Experience	Type of School	Context	Level
Sergio	Los Ríos	20	Municipal	Urban	Secondary
Gabriela	Los Ríos	20	Municipal	Rural	Secondary
Pablo	Los Lagos	22	Municipal	Rural	Primary
Jeannette	Los Lagos	17	Subsidized private	Urban	Primary
Carlos	Aysén	22	Municipal	Urban	Primary
Laura	Aysén	23	Municipal	Rural	Primary

Source: Authors.

Results

The results of the study are organized according to three categories identified in the implementation of the analysis procedures, which are exhibited in Table 2.

Table 2 – Main Milestones of Educational Reform: Categories and Frequencies

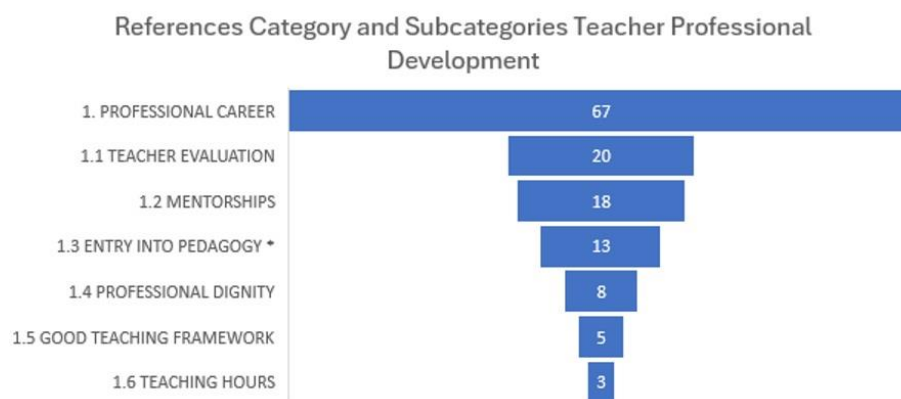
Category	Frequency (F)
Teacher career and professional development (DPD)	67
Educational reform	35
General Education Law (<i>Ley General de Educación</i> [LGE])	23

Source: Authors.

The frequencies indicate the respective allusions made by the teachers regarding their experiences or background in moments or contexts specific to their professional trajectory. It should be noted that broadly speaking, the reform associated with career and professional development, from 2016, is without a doubt the most frequently expressed by this group of teachers. This may be explained by its temporal proximity and present effect on their professional careers. However, the reforms initiated at the end of the last century also represent a significant dimension in the references extracted from the accounts and interviews. Below, we will examine the teachers' own discourse and view the more qualitative scope of these categories and their subcategories.

Teacher Professional Development

Image 1 – Teacher Professional Development Category and Subcategories



Source: Authors.

For the DPD category (frequency 67), six subcategories have been identified: Teacher Evaluation (F20), Mentonships (F18), Entry

into Pedagogy (F13), Professional Dignity (F8), Good Teaching Framework (F5), and Teaching Hours (F3). Below, they are described in detail, with examples added from the discourse of each professor.

Gabriela associates the DPD law with teacher evaluation, visualizing it as an opportunity to leave the comfort zone: “Personally I like the evaluation. I feel that the teacher needs to be evaluated from time to time because you need to take them out of their comfort zone.”

For Sergio, this law appears as a good alternative for better pay, but also as a challenge to improve:

A teacher just out of university with a couple years of teaching experience gets a good teacher evaluation, has good results on that test, and can be categorized very well [...], they can have a salary that can compensate for the bienniums that a teacher with 20 or 25 years of service has, that seems great to me. [...] I don't want to stop teaching classes, I'm going to keep up with the evaluation, I'm going to keep taking the test.

Jeanette sees in this reform a positive space for regulating work and generating spaces for recognition:

It's a positive thing that the teacher evaluation is there, even though many say that it's stressful, but the thing is, there needs to be a way of regulating things and I see it from that positive point of view [...]. If you do things well, you have no reason to be scared, on the contrary, you should be confident. It's unfortunate to have to do it this way, it should have been an action that was always there with all the teachers.

Pablo, on the other hand, expresses an association with teacher dignity, as well as a criticism of the evaluation instruments:

Adding and subtracting are things to go about improving the quality of the system and mainly the teacher's dignity [...]. The way it's done is not entirely to my liking because I feel that they should go on any given day, but not this thing about giving me 2 months to train the kids because it shows, I've seen filmed classes and it shows that the kids are prepared.

Pablo bolsters his criticism by adding that the contexts are not taken into consideration:

Teacher evaluation is envisioned in a very general way. In what sense, in that even with the Inclusion Law, there isn't preparation for teacher evaluation for children with special needs in the classroom. What do colleagues do, the same as the SIMCE [standardized test], sadly, you don't come that day or if the school is bigger, go to another classroom, and your recording turns out perfect.

Carlos, for his part, adds to this criticism the fact that the evaluation does not reflect reality: “When the guy does well, he stands out, I'm an expert, you feel boastful like a child learning phonics, but if they do bad, it's like you're garbage, it doesn't represent your reality. It all depends on the nuance it's viewed from.”

Meanwhile, regarding the mentorship program for new teachers, there are many mentions by participants. The majority make positive allusions to the program, as it helps to get to know teachers' real-world roles and immerse oneself in the territory of the classroom, something that is not learned in initial teacher training (*Formación Inicial Docente* [FID]). Gabriela is clear on this point: “Because you

come out of uni knowing a lot about your specialization, but at least in my case nobody taught me how to fill in a grade book, how to deal with parents/guardians, all those administrative things that come with the process of working in an educational establishment.”

Sergio, for his part, emphasizes this point in terms of the support that mentorships provide for understanding the educational reality: “All the efforts that can be made to potentiate new teachers so they can get to know their work reality better, are welcome and very valid, and they should be taken advantage of as much as possible.”

Jeannette indicates that the mentorships improve professional relationships as well as retention: “It’s a good policy because the first two years of a professional’s life leave a mark [...], if there are 80 pedagogy students who studied with a scholarship and 60 want to leave the profession, they’re going to be left with 20, which is not advantageous for them.”

In relation to the above, participants recall their first experiences as student-teachers during initial teacher training, which for all participants was a very lonely experience of only one semester at the end of their university programs. As stated by Gabriela: “Yeah, I feel like I was left there like... first the professor in charge of the methodology course took us there the first day, and we never saw them again. Because it’s supposed to work like, they come to observe you and see your practice.”

However, there is also a positive assessment of that moment of student-teaching during initial teacher training for Gabriela in spite of her “loneliness,” which she expresses as follows: “I feel like I learned a huge amount, because all the same, I was doing everything. I was responsible for bringing kids who got hurt to the hospital, because we were located more or less nearby to the hospital, and it was also fairly close to my house.”

Another key element associated with the Teacher Professional Development Law is the opportunities for continuing learning that it includes as a right for teachers. In this regard, Jeannette was firm in maintaining the necessity of permanent education:

Many teachers in the past just let themselves be. They were not concerned with capacitation, and the establishments weren’t obligated to, or didn’t support, providing capacitation. Laying out new frameworks in capacitation leads to teachers not just letting themselves be, as it is crudely said, and new tools for continuing education must continue to be sought.

Pablo offers some nuance regarding the difference between a more “institutional” capacitation option and one based on personal interest: “I think the teaching career is important because it provides a certain degree, a professional ladder for teachers to continue their education. Whether it’s because their employer requests it or, in my case with the graduate certificate, because of a personal choice.”

Another element revealed by the teachers is the adjustment made in the teaching and non-teaching hours within the workload of a teacher in the school system. For Jeannette, while this topic is

viewed as positive, it also signals something that is not entirely fulfilled:

We're with 65-35, and that did help us a lot because before it was the entire workload. But the thing is, it only "helped us" that way in quotation marks. A week goes by and then what happens with our hours that they say are non-teaching hours for planning? In our case it doesn't pan out that way. We have to go and look after courses so that children aren't left alone.

Laura, for her part, expresses the necessity felt among the teaching staff to have actual hours for planning, considering the challenging characteristics of today's children: "No matter how many years of service, the teacher requires additional support. They require time to plan classes, because you can't improvise, you can't show up and improvise. Today's kids are different."

Another reflection that appears frequently is related to the teacher commitment associated with scholarships or economic incentives for those who decide to study pedagogy, which is viewed as a weak point, as clearly stated by Laura:

I question it because I say, sure, she entered with the incentive, studied for free because she scored more than some amount of points [on entrance exams], but one doesn't envision her teaching her whole life, I find it different from how one was educated in the past...I feel that young teachers want to be their students' friends. [...] But I do like that a minimum score is required [on university entrance exams] to study pedagogy, and that the people who [receive incentives] have the obligation of returning the favor in public schools.

Jeannette also perceives a lack of commitment in the new generations of teachers: "The lack of commitment, maybe they don't really grasp the weight of what teaching really is. I find it relevant to mention because it's something I've always commented on."

Carlos, meanwhile, reinforces the idea of finding weaknesses in new teachers from a perspective that we could term *vocational*: "Now regarding pedagogy, I think that I always dreamed of being a teacher. Why? I don't have an entirely clear answer, but I always dreamed of and imagined myself being a teacher, and you don't see that today in the younger generations."

Regarding the latter, an issue related to teacher identity and initial teacher training (FID) arises in connection with the rural school, as expressed by Carlos:

When I describe my plan of studies [from university] to colleagues, I had agriculture, silviculture, forestry production, home economics. We're in another context. So when you finished, we, the graduating class of 40 that we were, were focused on the fact that we had to go to a rural setting; without a doubt our compass was pointed toward the countryside: somewhere near the ocean, near the forest.

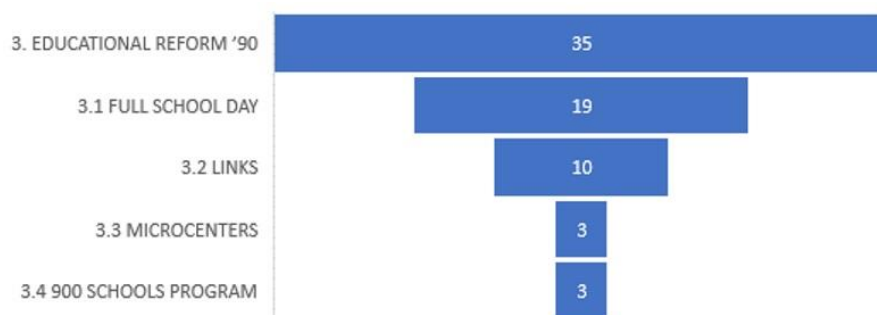
In a similar sense, for Laura, the lack of identity could be associated with the lack of initiative or creativity to take a risk or do something different: "We teachers need to have a bit of craziness, I say, and be brave, take risks. I always remember that if there's nothing more to say, we have pencils, leaves, shells, and I have nature and venturing outside the norm."

Gabriela approaches the question of identify, or lack thereof, based on the commitment that is needed toward students: “First comes commitment to the student. The fact that the environment should always be conducive to learning [...]. The things needed were there and everything, but I feel that teachers have to be super committed to the students.”

Another element associated with this category, referring to the Teacher Professional Development Law (DPD), is the mention of the Framework for Good Teaching as a reference instrument of public policy for evaluation and thus for professional development. Gabriela makes this connection, as well as a connection to the transversality of this instrument in the work, education, and evaluation of teachers: “It’s good that they get to know it from the outset, because if not, the people who don’t do well on the teacher evaluations, it’s often because they don’t know how to make the connection between classroom practice and the vision of the framework.”

Educational Reform

Image 2 – Educational Reform Category and Subcategories



Source: Authors.

As exhibited in Image 2, the Educational Reform category, referring to reforms initiated at the end of the twentieth century, is composed of a total frequency of 35 references. This category unites the most significant processes of educational change in Chile during the post-military dictatorship period, and they have affected the teachers in this study with respect to the commencement of their Teacher Professional Development (DPD). This category is further broken down into four subcategories: P 900 (900 Schools Program), Microcenters, Links, and Full School Day (*Jornada Escolar Completa* [JEC]).

The P900 corresponds to one of the first educational policy initiatives occurring in the context of the transition to democracy initiated in March 1990. Its purpose has been to attend, with resources and capacitation, to the 10% of state-subsidized urban and rural schools with the lowest results on the Educational Quality Measurement System (SIMCE) standardized test, which at the time had last been applied in 1988 (during the dictatorship period).

Carlos recognizes the purpose of this initiative as support for vulnerable schools. He references quality and equity as criteria, which are also two key notions in the neoliberal educational discourse that began to take hold in Chile during the 90's. He labels the initiative as "the improvement in educational quality and equity and the plan for the 900 most ailing schools in the country, which needed to be given a major boost."

However, Carlos' position is critical regarding the relevance of the capacitations afforded by this program. In particular, he refers to the comprehensiveness and the qualities of those responsible for imparting the courses:

I remember being in Lago Verde, staying after class for entire weeks with the famous MECE and P900 capacitations, but I insist, these were people who had spent many years in offices and were going to capacitate us, I mean, everything they were telling me or everything they wanted to impress upon me, it didn't fit with who they were, they didn't convince you.

Meanwhile, the LINKS (*ENLACES*) program is another key reform policy from the 90's. Its purpose was originally to generate conditions in the education system in general, and in schools in particular, for the development of competencies associated with the pedagogical use of information and communication technologies. It was launched in 1992 as a pilot project, but later expanded throughout the country, undergirded by a network of support, training, and infrastructure in which universities also participated.

Gabriela recognizes, firstly, that this program has represented a meaningful experience related to the support or monitoring function that she fulfilled for a university and the learning it represented. She states the following:

For me it was wonderful. First of all, the number of people, of teachers that one gets to know, the effort that they put in, my work in Enlaces was... I feel almost privileged because I have to say that since I worked in many different districts and since they brought me in as a substitute sometimes for various things, I know practically all the rural schools in the region.

Speaking from her experience as a teacher, Gabriela also draws attention to the technological resources that the program provided to her school. She offers a glimpse of the manner in which some of her colleagues have taken in these resources: "I feel that in the school where I work, we are privileged, we have projectors in every classroom. All the classrooms from first to fourth grades have a digital whiteboard. Now, whether they use them or don't use them, that's another conversation."

Her positive and meaningful experience does not impede her from questioning the weak pedagogical appropriation of the resources in question, nor the lack of support. In terms of the former, she refers to an underutilization of resources, explaining this based on working conditions: "We even have an English lab, but the teacher has never had time to do the capacitation on how to use all this stuff that arrived. So, they build the special classroom, they leave it super nice,

but you keep on doing your classes the same way.” Regarding the lack of support, she acknowledges that there is scarce oversight, which she envisions as accompaniment or following up on the installation of the technologies in question, stating succinctly: “I feel that lots was provided and with little oversight.”

Apart from the aforementioned programs, the Full School Day (JEC) is undoubtedly one of the pillars of the educational reforms of the 90's, as its design and implementation entailed a substantial increase of approximately 200 school hours annually, along with investment in infrastructure. These changes inevitably made a direct impact on curricular design, teachers' work conditions, and the management and organization of schools.

The teachers' narratives on this policy refer to the existence of initial expectations that were not met in its implementation. These were related to better conditions for the development of teaching and learning activities, particularly the time dedicated. Carlos states the following:

The JEC, if memory serves, its beginnings were very interesting, attractive, and motivational, both for students and teachers. I mean, a schoolday in which you do a morning of formal classes, and in the afternoon you have the famous free choice activities, where I remember that in one school in Ñirehuao we just started with the JEC, wow, without having any more preparation than whatever occurred to us.

Regarding the students' expectations, Pablo indicates the following: “At a very personal level, in the beginning the JEC was very effective because of the fact that the children could develop beyond the subjects of the curriculum, they could develop other skills and abilities within the school.”

In everyday life, the teachers now feel that the JEC has, on the contrary, had a negative impact on students in relation to their workload and development of schoolwork. Gabriela explains the following:

At the outset the JEC was meant for the student to carry out all school-related activities within the establishment, and then arrive home to relax, rest, and basically look at the minimum necessary, but in reality the JEC has morphed into many more hours of classes, and the student arrives exhausted to do all their homework just the same.

This policy is also questioned in relation to the appropriation and management of time in the school day. In particular, it is pointed out that the original idea that schools and teachers would have more time available to propose or create activities has become time for test preparation for obtaining better results on SIMCE standardized tests. As Pablo states, “The vast majority did more mathematics, more language, in terms of the SIMCE, many schools prepare for the SIMCE.”

Indeed, it is interesting to note that despite its stated purposes, the JEC has rather turned into an added effort for schools to meet the demand to have good results on standardized tests that the educational system itself supports as a principle objective. In the face of what they perceive as the loss of purpose of the JEC, teachers place at least some responsibility on the fact that the processes of consulta-

tion, support, and supervision were not up to par. This issue is seen to be even more complex when experienced in conditions of rurality and isolation, such as those experienced by Laura:

I felt that the JEC was put together without consulting those of us who are actually in the classroom, there were more hours, I mean, what resources would we use? ...because we were supposed to do different things. With the JEC we have to do different things, but how, if we didn't have resources, what different things? It was like guessing, it was a bit of guesswork, and in a one-teacher situation you're all alone.

The concrete consequences of this policy for the teachers interviewed manifest at the level of a feeling of denaturalization of the function of their schools and of their own professional role. Regarding schools, Gabriela states the following: "I feel that the JEC turned schools into a longer daycare center. The parent or guardian has the child in school until 5 pm, whether or not they attend classes. As a teacher you prefer for your classes to be in the morning."

Pablo identifies this distortion as abiding by a market intentionality:

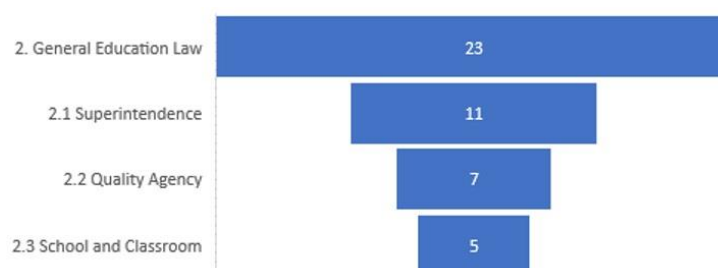
The purpose of the JEC today, is as if the purpose of the schools and the JEC itself were distorted, because they are beneficial for families who really go to work and there's also a market issue there. [...]. Ideally the kids are always in the classroom so the dad or mom can work.

The narratives allow us to establish that the focus of questioning by the majority of the teachers is external and refers to a lack of consultation and support. Little vision or critical perspective is developed regarding the management carried out by individual schools or the teachers' own practices developed for the implementation of the innovation in question. This seems to reflect an assessment that includes a lack of capacity to influence.

On the contrary, however, it is worth highlighting the case of Laura and her school. The envisioning of an opportunity and the commitment of her colleagues allowed them to develop a wide-ranging project: "We basically reorganized the JEC with what we had in the surrounding environment. Doing those things that they asked of us. That's where the school gardens came from, projects with laying hens, working with the environment, because we didn't have resources."

General Education Law

Image 3 – General Education Law Category and Subcategories



Source: Authors.

Image 3 illustrates that the General Education Law category has a frequency of 23 within the discourse of the participants, which is distributed among the following three subcategories of analysis: Superintendence (f=11); Quality Agency (f=7); and School and Classroom (f=5).

From the participants' perspectives, the General Education Law (LGE) has been positioned as a normative tool that takes charge of a number of situations that the Chilean school system has experienced. In this sense, the LGE has contributed through "more control of the school," according to Sergio. He adds, "There's a greater control that I think is very positive, and it's understandable and good that it's been done...control of the school's decisions, but without taking away their autonomy."

In this manner, the control in question is viewed positively for the management of educational establishments, where a relationship is generated between autonomy in decision-making and the control exercised by the State. In this context, for Sergio, an ideal of autonomy exists in terms of school management; however, this must be subject to the control that is possible to exercise, so that the decisions made can be supported by the resources necessary for their implementation: "Schools ought to be autonomous, but within that autonomy and the decisions made there must be backing, ultimately, in terms of both resources and rationale."

For Jeannette, the idea of control, as a non-punitive element, is reflected in the necessity to overcome the prejudices that accompany the process of municipalization of public education, which she expresses as follows:

I see it more in terms of the neglect that existed in the municipal system, which many still criticize, but it can also be seen in the SIMCE [standardized test] results. Why should a teacher from a private school, where they have an employer demanding it from them, have had the obligation to prepare themselves, and why couldn't it be another teacher? I feel that the passing of this law balances that situation a little bit.

Thus, with the implementation of municipalization, public education was impaired without the existence of an "obligation" for continuing education for teachers, in contrast to private schools. This situation had a negative impact, ultimately, on the results obtained by students from municipal schools on national standardized tests. Thus, the General Education Law (LGE) allows, as indicated by Jeannette, some balancing of the situation through the establishment of norms and standards for teachers in the national education system as a whole.

This situation of neglect to which public schools were subjected was not exclusive to them; indeed, there are accounts that indicate the existence of structural problems in private education as well, such as the following:

The fact that this has all been generated and that it has been gradual obligates the sponsors to share in these experiences. It shouldn't just be a business operation for

them, because ultimately it is. The same goes for private establishments, despite the fact that they are a bit outside the scope of this conversation, but the sponsors always saw this as a business.

In this testimony we find that the economic component as a model of management of educational institutions has been a central factor in the deterioration of learning outcomes for students. Thus, as the teachers have indicated to us, we could declare that the purpose of schools has not been to educate the population, but rather to build an economically viable business.

Meanwhile, negative views are also expressed regarding the Superintendence of education, which are related to the development of oversight focused on intentionally seeking out errors in processes of academic and administrative accountability. Pablo indicates this clearly: "The person who came to do the inspection came mainly to look for what errors I was making. So they were very punitive in their moment, and I let them know that I had barely completed a year and a few months of experience when they came, and they didn't have a bit of compassion."

In this manner, the oversight tasks carried out by Superintendence staff begin with mistrust, in which the search for errors, assumed by the teachers, is positioned as a punitive instance without pedagogical value or support for the work being carried out. In the statement above, we can understand these as instances in which criteria based in reality and the possibility that the teaching staff may be unaware of something are disregarded; ultimately, they represent an instance of technical oversight. This situation, which is presented as transversal in the agency's actions, has generated fear among teachers, as indicated by Gabriela: "Now anyone can go, it's almost like everyone is in a panic about the Superintendence because anyone, any parent or guardian, can come and threaten you that they'll go to the Superintendence, it's like hell."

In this manner, the Superintendence generates fear among teachers and school directors, as it is used as a threatening figure by members of the educational community. A complaint in such an instance by students' parents or guardians is seen as a potential sanction and a disciplinary means for teachers. In this context, and considering the idea that prior instances should exist, it is worth questioning whether the teachers and schools generate the possibility of said instances existing, or, failing that, if the complaint to the Superintendence is a way that allows families to be heard. But the fear of the Superintendence is not exclusive to complaints; rather, it has a permanent relation with schools, as indicated by Laura:

I think that it was a bombardment, but with the fear of facing everything the Superintendence represented, a lot of paperwork, so with all these demands, as a head teacher I had to do 22 hours of classes, so for me it was a gigantic workload, so everyone could leave at 6 and I left at 10 because I had so much work.

Thus, the volume of work considered in the management processes of the Superintendence of education do not fit with the reality of the schools, in which the labor of management is combined with a

high workload of direct teaching with students. This means that teachers must invest a high quantity of unrecognized work hours (free time) in order to meet demands and avoid administrative sanctions.

In the context of an already established management model focused on education as an opportunity for profit for sponsors, both public and private, and in light of the detriments experienced as a result of the municipalization of public education, the Education Quality Agency emerged. Although their work has been viewed as another instance of control, it is also valued as support for the development of teaching processes. Carlos confirms this sentiment:

Honestly, the Quality Agency feels like a support to me. I feel that it has ordered us schools to be a bit more rigorous in what we have to face, that we can still have that liberty and irreverence that we put forward some time ago, but focused 100% on the students. I insist that it's always been good... I think that one has to see it more as help, as support.

In these testimonies, we can see that the Quality Agency comes to "order" the development of educational and administrative processes in schools, where the freedom of management of educational institutions must be framed within processes that allow for assurance of the quality of teaching. In this context, while the instances of oversight carried out are perceived as an invasion of the space of professional development, generating discomfort, they are likewise "necessary" for the schools in order to carry out their educational task in an optimal manner. From Jeannette's perspective, although the oversight contributes to improved performance, this is done at the risk of generating situations of work stress: "The changes that they have been making have been improving this whole system; although for many it might seem stressful, it really isn't."

Despite this perception of "a positive end goal," there are criticisms of the Education Quality Agency's model of development, ranging from its focus on management to its punitive role. One of the first criticisms is expressed by Gabriela: "The thing is that, basically, a given classroom teacher doesn't interact much with these institutions because they're more active in the area of management of the establishment."

Subsequently, from the teachers' perspective, the focus of the Quality Agency is exclusively on the management processes implemented by the establishments, without corresponding actions associated with educational development itself or related directly to working with teachers in the classroom. That is, it is a policy that ignores the particular reality in which processes of teaching and learning are implemented. Therefore, as Gabriela points out, the Quality Agency does not contribute to teacher development, which is posited as a second criticism: "The agency simply provides statistics on the results of distinct evaluations, it doesn't provide me with extra tools to improve my teaching work, because the SIMCE [standardized test] report is still exactly the same as before the Quality Agency existed."

Concretely, as one teacher illustrates, considering standardized evaluations at the national level does not have any impact on the

teacher nor on spaces for the construction of new competencies that would allow for better performance. Viewed in this manner, in basic terms, the school system continues functioning in a similar way with or without the presence of the Quality Agency.

A third criticism leveled by Sergio refers to control: “In operational terms, in practical terms, I don’t see any major change. I mean, in my work both as a teacher and as a school administrator, I find that, as a result of this change, there is simply greater control.”

Thus, the control in question refers exclusively to the show of compliance with bureaucratic elements involving school management and the use of economic resources within the framework of new state regulations. Sergio continues his explanation as follows:

In the schools, we’re now subject to oversight that is carried out precisely by the institutions that sprang up under the auspices of this new law, which will supervise everything from the implementation of a given action to the last bit of cash that we can spend or not spend. This is carried out every year in municipal schools.

Thus, even when control is developed based on a multidimensional view of school management, there is likewise a notable focus on the use of resources on the part of educational establishments.

Discussion and Conclusions

Firstly, in response to the question, “Which are the main policies implemented during the past 20 years identified by teachers in Chile”?, we find that teachers identify, with a high frequency, three processes experienced during the past 25 years: the Educational Reform from the early years of the century, the General Education Law, and the Teacher Professional Development Law. All of these, according to Treviño (2018) and Falabella (2015), are the principal markers of the great processes of educational reform in Chile, and it follows that in the discourse of our participants, the Laws of Inclusion and of the New Institutionality for Public Education were mentioned less frequently, or even passed over in part or ignored.

Regarding the question of “How have professors experienced the effects of the educational reforms in their teaching trajectories exercised in Chile during the past 20 years?”, in general, in the presentation of our results we have shown that by analyzing teachers’ life experiences, nuances of professional trajectories can be observed that criss-cross with contingent processes of educational policy. We perceive that teachers are not merely executors of *curriculum*, but rather persons who reflect, position themselves, and make pedagogical decisions in accordance with their trajectories and life stories (Goodson, 2004). However, teachers read, adopt, and adapt to associated demands in their experiences in idiosyncratic ways, thus constructing their own teaching trajectories, which allow us to approach their school practices and therefore the school itself and its complexities (Bolívar; Gijón, 2008).

Responding to the question, “What characteristics stand out?”, we can mainly evince that teachers’ characterization is always situat-

ed within their context and experience; there is no analysis of a contingent or global political nature toward the laws or political processes affecting the policy in question; rather, the characterization is focused on how it affects them in their school processes. For this reason, this type of study contributes to viewing the education system from the singular but profound life of its actors and protagonists, in a “forensic” mode in the line of Rivas (2020), which examines reality to seek out its transformation.

Nonetheless, it is also important to investigate how the trajectory that the teacher has been constructing through experiences of reforms and policy resonate within the school system, allowing for an understanding of its complexities and transforming it, contemplating its present and future, and remaking it from the foundations by those who live it and help construct it, teachers who have developed professionally in complex and diverse school contexts. Following Huff (2016, p. 673),

[...] it is necessary to explore in a deeper way the complex relationship between personal life stories and context, and the role that they play in the development of identity in order to understand the teacher's practice in a manner that provides it with meaning and pedagogical judgement.

Many of the theoretical constructs arising from research *about* education (Imbernon, 2002) focused on teachers show little support from the teachers' own voices. Seeking to overcome these limitations, in this study we have observed that the assessment of certain historical, political, and social milestones of the education system takes on other viewpoints when we listen to the teachers. For example, they value teacher evaluation as a vehicle for growth and opportunity, and they consider the creation of the Quality Agency as a contribution to the service of teachers, children, and adolescents in our country, as opposed to the Superintendence, both institutions of the Education Quality Assurance System introduced as part of the General Education Law of 2009. In this sense, it is not surprising that the Superintendence³, a body facilitated to monitor and control the use of resources and attend to the complaints that arise from families regarding the educational service of the school, would be viewed as “negative” given that it is charged with ensuring the fulfillment of the law in terms of resources and their proper use, with its inspectors and supervisors completing the role of auditors. The Quality Agency⁴, on the other hand, has a role of accompaniment and guidance in the context of the results of different examinations, tests, or instruments to measure educational quality, and therefore has greater closeness with pedagogical and didactic affairs.

Additionally, participants recognize that the full school day was initially well conceived and beneficial for the education system, and that the incorporation of educational communities as important entities within the school has been a success. In line with Bolívar (2006), in the face of external innovation proposals detached from the culture of schools, and in opposition to training models aimed at filling gaps and addressing deficiencies and deficits among teachers, the bio-

graphical approach emerges as a bid for directing attention toward teachers as people with singular trajectories, but who together form an ethos of shared knowledges, values, and demands.

Viewed in this way, it must be taken into account that a large part of the success of educational reforms can be explained in terms of the meanings and interpretations that teachers give to their purposes, this based on the margin of autonomy that they possess for the development of active and critical positions, as well as for selecting and proposing *curriculum*.

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Notes

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- ² The website of the program can be accessed at:
<https://reactivacioneducativa.mineduc.cl/>.
- ³ The Superintendence website can be accessed at:
<https://www.agenciaeducacion.cl>.
- ⁴ The website of the agency can be accessed at: <https://www.agenciaeducacion.cl>.

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