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PUBLIC POLICIES OR GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS? CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATIONAL QUALITY?

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Abstract: After stating the importance of Public Policies for social transformation, the document explains why and under what circumstances they constitute a decisive factor in promoting or inhibiting social transformation. A policy is a purposeful, intentional, planned behavior, not simply reactive, casual. It is set in motion with the decision to achieve certain objectives through certain means: it is a meaningful action. It is a process, a course of action that involves a whole complex set of decisions and operators. Politics is also a public communication activity. Hence, the purpose of this article is to be a guide in the understanding and analysis of what Public Policies mean, as well as to contribute to the understanding of their design and development mechanisms.

That you have a clear and simple idea of what Public Policies are in a generalized context and the steps that must be carried out to implement them.

Keywords: Public Policies, Quality, Social Transformation

INTRODUCTION

The great task is to be a guide in the understanding and analysis of what Public Policies mean, as well as to contribute to the understanding of their design and development mechanisms. That you have a clear and simple idea of what Public Policies are in a generalized context and the steps that must be carried out to implement them.

Given the importance of Public Policies for social transformation, the document explains why and under what circumstances these constitute a decisive factor to promote or inhibit social transformation.

Educational policies are those public policies that respond, to some extent, to social requirements in the sectoral field of education. The definition of public policies, however, has different approaches, constantly

evolving (Lahera, 2008; Espinoza, 2009). This evolution is linked to changes in our social, cultural, political, economic and institutional environment. Thus, while in the last century decision-making was exclusively state, with its power to create, structure and modify the cycle of public policies, today the participation of various actors, the creation of consensus and legitimacy in the public affairs, have become unavoidable for governance in any territory.

From this approach, conceptually it can be said that public policies “correspond to courses of action and information flows related to a democratically defined public objective; those that are developed by the public sector and, frequently, with the participation of the community and the private sector” (Lahera, 2008 p. 16). It is, in general terms, a set of interrelated options and decisions that involves the establishment of objectives and the definition of the means to achieve them, in response to policy demands¹ (Kraft and Furlong, 2004; Fischer et al. 2007; Espinoza, 2009). From this perspective, public policies have to do with both actions and omissions. On the one hand, they involve a task to deal with problems about which public level actions are demanded and, on the other, they can be reduced to decisions of simply “doing nothing” in relation to some aspect or social problem (Kraft and Furlong, 2004 ; Fischer et al. 2007).

In that sense, public policies are governance instruments that shape policy, assigning winners and losers among citizens and interest groups, which usually affects the policy cycle, participation and future demands (May & Jochim, 2013). Thus, and given that they serve both substantive and political commitments, public policies are, ultimately, a key component of politics itself (May & Jochim, 2013).

Politics and public policies are different

entities, but they influence each other. Both are sought in the opacity of the political system. Both politics and public policies have to do with social power. But while politics is a broad concept, relative to power in general, public policies correspond to specific solutions for how to manage public affairs. The English language clearly reflects this distinction between politics and policies.

Public policies are a common factor in the politics and decisions of the government and the opposition. Thus, politics can be analyzed as the search to establish public policies on certain topics, or to influence them. In turn, a fundamental part of the government's work refers to the design, management and evaluation of public policies.

The objective of politicians - whether conservative or radical, idealistic or motivated by self-interest - is to establish public policies of their preference, or block those that are inconvenient to them. In any government alliance, those who restrict themselves to theses and do not seek their concreteness in policies confuse their role.

Politics in its broadest sense tends to shape both public policy proposals and those that are implemented. Whoever wants the government, wants public policies. Therefore, governments are instruments for carrying out public policies. Rather than looking at the ordering of public sector activities, as given by its organization, it is convenient to look at it as an instrument for the implementation of public policies. Just as the main achievement of a private company is not its organizational chart, but its profits, what is important in government is its results, rather than its structure.

For what has already been said, public policies are useful for studying various aspects of politics, such as the discussion of the public agenda throughout society, elections between candidates and their programs, government

activities, opposition activities, analytical efforts on these issues. This way, this document aims to provide a panoramic vision of Chilean education between 2004 and 2016, considering the design and implementation of the profound reforms carried out during the second government of President Bachelet. For its study we will make the following division: policy analysis (search for the best Public Policy in terms of efficiency and equity) and the study of policy-making study, positively oriented to describe, classify and explain the decision pattern and operation with which a given administrative political system or a particular government proceeds in Public Policies. Each of these parts leads to a deeper dive into this topic, thus generating a greater complementary idea.

WHAT DO WE UNDERSTAND BY GOOD PUBLIC POLICY

An excellent public policy corresponds to those courses of action and information flows related to a democratically defined political objective; those that are developed by the public sector and, frequently, with the participation of the community and the private sector. A quality public policy will include guidelines or content, instruments or mechanisms, definitions or institutional modifications, and the forecast of its results, (Gómez R. 2012)

The main thing is the idea, the point of view, or the objective from which to propose or analyze norms or provisions. Thus it is possible to consider one norm or decision or several (such as the United States "program"). The expression "policy space" has also been used to denote a set of policies so interrelated that no useful descriptions or analytical statements can be made of them without taking into account the other elements of the set.

Excellent public policies include the

political aspect such as its origin, objective, justification or public explanation. If public policies are not framed in a broad participation process, this can bias public actors: specialists towards technocracy and communicators or pollsters towards immediate populism, (Arellano, J. P. 2001)

An alternative to the inclusion of political considerations in public policies is the simple addition of specialists on some topics, or communication supports - including the use of spots and surveys to traditional government activities. From the most instrumental point of view, it must be remembered that public policies necessarily represent some type of simplification of problems, a characteristic from which their operational character derives. Such simplification can have a negative effect on a broader understanding of the topics or problems, and can even bias the respective academic research. Rather than depoliticization of government decisions, what there would have been is a politicization and degradation of a considerable segment of research activities.

Economic and social issues are so dynamic and related, and the government activities that affect them are so numerous and interconnected, that accuracy in interpreting developments or predicting the results of any new intervention seems doubtful. In any case, it is also necessary to consider the danger of the ideologization of the issues on the public agenda, or their analysis in non-specific contexts or impossible to convert into real policies.

The concept of public policies includes both government and State issues. The latter are, in reality, policies of more than one government, which poses a political specificity. It is also possible to consider as state policies those that involve all the powers of the state in their design or execution.

EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN CHILE (THIS COULD BE A SUGGESTION)

In the period from 2004 to 2016, important changes have been observed in educational policies in Chile. However, even though important achievements have been achieved, education currently continues to be the main challenge facing the country to become a more egalitarian and truly developed society.

Despite the efforts, the educational system in Chile presents high levels of segregation and inequality that were established due to certain practices such as shared financing and school selection. The existence of a co-payment discriminates against families based on their economic capacity, and contributes to the increase in segregation in the country without contributing significantly to quality (Mizala and Torche, 2012; Bellei, 2013; Elacqua et al., 2013). Consequently, families do not have the possibility of choosing the establishment they want their children to attend, but can only choose those they can afford to pay.

Furthermore, before the implementation of the School Inclusion Law, close to 80% of the schools and high schools that received a subsidy from the State required parents to comply with some entry requirement to the establishment (Presidency of the Republic, 2014). School selection deepens segregation by encouraging and allowing establishments to choose their students according to the social, economic and cultural capital of the families. At the same time and similar to what happens with shared financing, selection does not guarantee greater educational effectiveness (Carrasco et al., 2014). Politics, ultimately, is then a result of confrontations and compromises, of competitions and coalitions of conflicts and convenient transactions of the Government in power.

In Chile, the economic globalization policy developed since the 1990s was characterized by economic opening and its reorientation

towards the external market. But, the important technological modernization and adjustment policies that ended up producing an increase in unemployment and a reduction in public spending on social coverage. Public policies were interpreted only to the action of the social sectors, biasing the State's ability to respond to the effects caused by economic policies and reducing its action to emergency situations. The social policies derived from these public policies were characterized by allocating a high budgetary cost for their implementation and ineffective results to resolve the problems derived from poverty.

So much so, that social programs became a mechanism of social control, through which the actors with the greatest power exert a strong influence to legitimize perspectives and ideologies in areas of poverty. Focused this way, the field of social assistance ends up producing a bureaucratization of public policies and a marked fragmented profile characterized by the disarticulation of actions, the lack of competitiveness and the inequity in the distribution of resources.

The economic evolution of Chilean capitalism has produced a contrast between misery and wealth, strengthening these inequalities. The spread of poverty has generated some worrying social problems such as malnutrition, disease and ignorance. The impact of poverty and its innumerable consequences are as devastating as the uncertainty of what is to come. Its increase is the consequence of the social costs implemented by the policy model that accompanied it, whose new accumulation patterns extended the unequal distribution of income.

Economic policy is highlighted because it is not possible to analyze social policy without relating it to economic development, and vice versa. The phenomenon of increasing poverty produced a decrease in the standard of living

of certain population groups, marking strong social differences. But this increase is not new and its increase does not stop.

WHAT DO WE UNDERSTAND BY GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC POLICIES?

The limits, times and techniques that separated the activities of the government and those corresponding to political campaigns have become more blurred. Campaigns seek to persuade and the government to do, but this distinction is more or less sharp, depending on the political system of each country and the majority that the government has in parliament. The deadlines in the campaigns are indefinite, everything seems possible at any minute. Not so in government, where options and sequences are very important.

As a result, the time of politics seems to have become permanent which often results in a discredit of the activity. Political campaigns aim to obtain votes or approval percentages in polls, an objective shared by governments. On the other hand, campaigns do not need to be precise or detailed, but rather be based on simplifying phrases.

The campaigns are based on the use of surveys as a proxy for less spaced voting; and in communications based on one sentence a day, pseudo-events and the privilege of television images. The government will usually have more material with which to present itself to the public and will have achievements to display, while the parties remain in limbo until the next elections. This trend may contribute to the decline of political parties.

The existence of the "paradox of determination" has been proposed, according to which the great conditions of political-economic balance, whatever they may be, predetermine what will happen. However, a mistake is made when public policies are advised based on a narrow view of their

feasibility. There is no essential difference between technical, economic, political, institutional or any other kind of restrictions: they all limit the ruler's freedom of choice, and their violation always carries a sanction.

Governments must specify the programs in public policies for their period. This determination is an effective way to not give too many people what they want. Typically, there are no optimal public policies, but rather a range of possible solutions. There is no guarantee of choosing the best public policy. But it is a duty of governments to choose courses of action.

It is convenient to distinguish between the public program and the government agenda, sometimes because demagoguery inflated the program and, in any case, because the aim is to choose optimal sequences, cascade effects, political and economic moments. A central activity of an interest group is to incorporate its own alternatives to agenda items that others have made prominent. This affects the policies considered, even if the respective agenda is not affected.

Governments need to coordinate their public policies with political parties. Political parties must be able to organize for elections, but also to govern; To this end, it would be advisable to strengthen the study institutes linked to them and insist on the incorporation of people with technical and scientific capacity to design public policy proposals.

Some public policies are more important than others. And it is in the nature of good government that its action is organized mainly around strategic guidelines and policies. Strategic policies are those that prefigure the government's legacy. They must provide the main evaluation criteria for one's own management and allow the parties that support the government to be organized.

A medium-term strategic vision is required that adequately combines the political and

technical dimensions in public policies. To achieve this, it is advisable to institutionalize a "roadmap" for government management, which is evaluated and updated periodically. The prospective analysis function must become a formal routine in the management of the Executive Branch.

Now, governing is an assertion of will, an attempt to exercise control, to shape the world. While public policies are instruments of this determined ambition.

There is agreement that public policies are important, but the usual concept of them is imprecise and the poor quality of policies is a widespread phenomenon. The challenge is to specify the first and improve the second.

Public policies establish courses of action to address problems or to provide goods and services to segments of society. Policies do more than simply announce a course of action.

It is a reality that the role of the government and companies in Chile have undergone major structural transformations that have changed the landscape of the economy and politics during the last decades, making the implementation of new policies necessary. However, these transformations have fragmented society in such a way that the economic, cultural and social empowerment and development of communities is unequal.

We must go beyond questioning what is the right public policy to resolve this great debate and clarify what makes public policies work.

- Governments, by constitutionally and politically taking charge of many of the social and economic problems that affect individuals and social groups, have tended to shift the emphasis from "politics" to the axis of "public policies."
- Such problems demanded a solution from governments; social well-being had to be ensured. It is in this context

where public policies regain renewed importance. Ultimately, “politics,” it has been argued, consists of determining who gets what, when and how, from public policies. However, it would be a mistake to assume that “politics” is the same as “public policy” since they are very different issues.

- Politics is a concept, unlike public policies, more related to the issue of power (and its legitimate use) in society. And public policies, for their part, are an instrument of the government in power, of public and educational affairs and the resolution of problems felt in a society, in all areas.

However; “the policy can be: Satisfaction of the educational needs of school-age youth sectors with a high degree of vulnerability.” For this public policy, programs can be generated that support their development, but today the lack of fiscal resources prevents the development of educational projects of the government in power; contradictorily, investment in education in the last decade has been increasing, which does not It is reflected in the educational quality of the country.

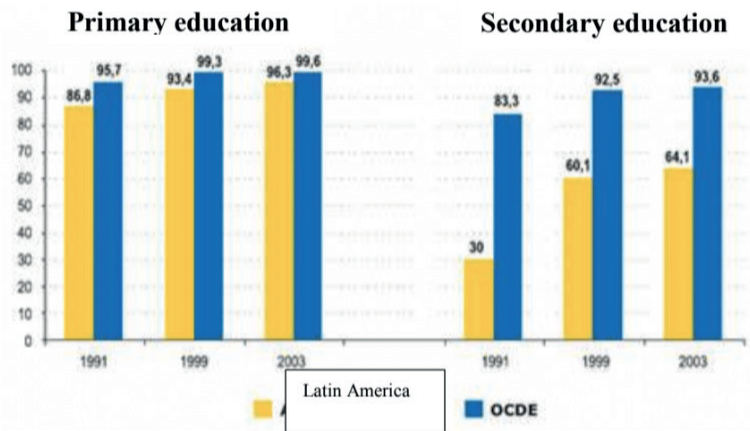
It could be said that the history of educational policies in Chile dates back to 1810, with the starting plan of public education. From then on, several milestones stand out, including the approval of the Organic Law of Primary Instruction in 1860 and the Law of Compulsory Primary Education in 1920.

During the governments of Eduardo Frei Montalva and Salvador Allende, reforms in the educational field had priority and deserve to be highlighted. For example, the advance from 6 to 8 years in duration in the basic education cycle, and to 4 years in the case of secondary education. In that period there was also a great expansion of educational coverage and opportunities (Oliva, 2010).

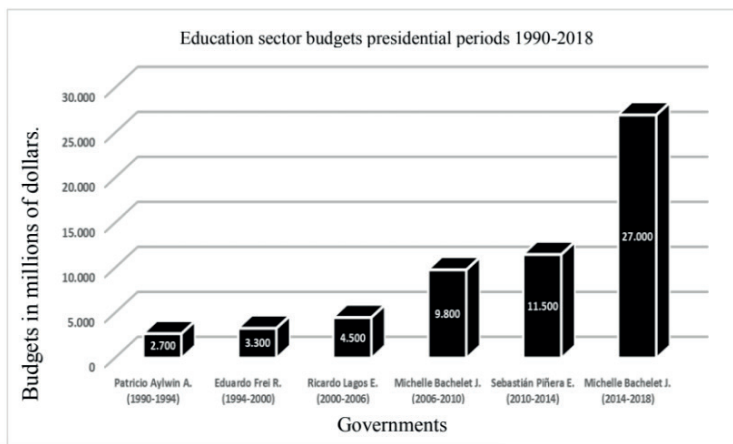
The most contemporary phase in the history of educational policies in Chile can, in turn, be divided into two periods of analysis: the military dictatorship and democratic governments.

In the first case, during the 1980s, a profound educational reform began, under a logic of competition, as summarized in graph 1 below. On the one hand, the administration of public schools was transferred from the central level to the country’s municipalities. On the other hand, a demand financing system was introduced through a monthly subsidy (voucher) per student attending the school. The figure of the “educational supporter” was created, who assumes, before the State, the responsibility of managing a school or high school according to the subsidy law (García-Huidobro, 2007).

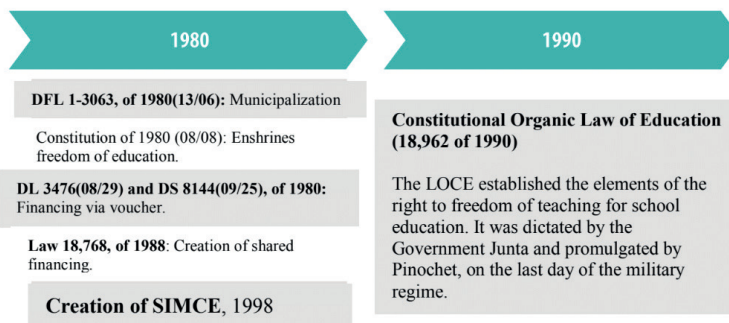
- Since 1990, with the return of democracy, the issue of education has been evolving from a focus on coverage and scope in the 90s towards policies focused on ensuring quality, equity and inclusion. These last aspects have been promoted especially since 2006, with the student marches and the involvement of society in general.
- Since that date, a period of participation of key actors in the development of policies has begun, which has influenced several fundamental laws that provide the basis for a structural reform of the Chilean educational system, such as the Preferential School Subsidy (SEP), the General Education Law (LGE), the Quality Assurance Law (SAC), the Inclusion Law, the Teaching Career Law and the Law that creates the new Public Education System. The graph below summarizes the most important milestones to date.
- After the last 40 years of reforms, a regulatory framework and a set of



Source: Evaluations of national Education policies. OECD

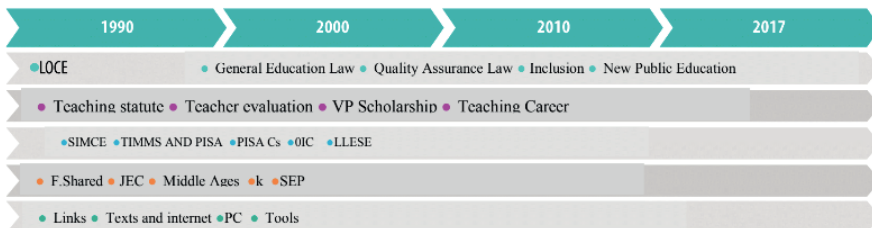


Source: Own elaboration with data Mineduc Studies Center, 2017.



Graph 1 - Main legal changes during the military regime

Source: self made.



Constitutional Organic Law on Education:

Defines objectives of basic and secondary education and parents as the first person responsible.
Saving Statute: Minimum job security conditions for teachers.
 Shared Financing or co-payment: Schools have the power to set monthly charges to families in addition to the state subsidy.
Texts and internet: Free in public schools.
 Full School Day (JEC): 8 hours a day, establishes at least two meals a day via JUNAEB.
Teacher Evaluation: Reveals challenge of initial teacher training.

TIMMS and PISA: Bad results when standards increase.

Average age: 12 years required
PC: Delivery of computers and supplies to the most vulnerable students.

Preferential School Subv: Additional funds for establishments with students from the 1st and 2nd quintile.

K: Kindergarten Compulsory.

General Education Law: Broader and more flexible objectives, first responsibility in the State, adds nursery education.

Professor Vocation Scholarship (VP Scholarship): Free degree for students with more than 600 PSU points.

Creation of Quality Assurance System:

Generation of the new institutionality in 4 levels.

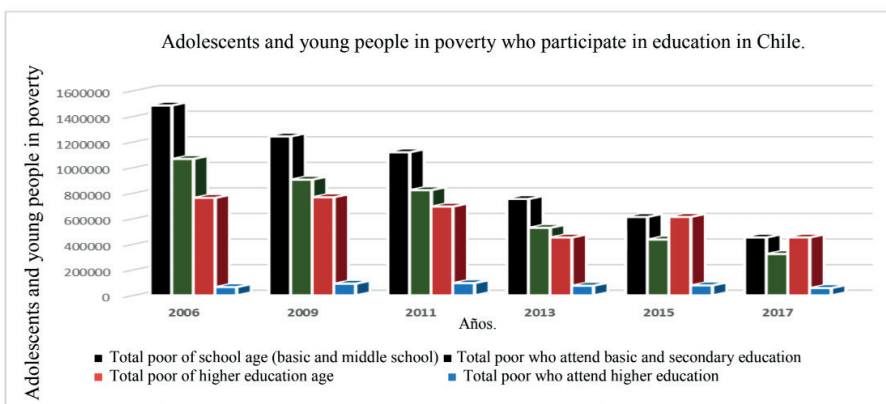
Teaching Career Law: Establishes parameters of advancement, evaluation and performance for teachers in a staggered professional trajectory.

Inclusion Law: Ends profit, selection and co-payment in establishments that receive funding from the State.

New Public Education Law: Creates the system that will absorb education as the supporting entity of the public establishments of a territory.

Graph 2 - Timeline of recent Chilean educational policies

Source: Funcación Chile, Center for Innovation in Education (2018)



	2006	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
Total poor of school age (basic and middle school).	1484152	1242142	1118318	752938	612576	452159
Total poor who attend basic and secondary education.	1065329	904595	822342	527777	436401	322901
Total poor of higher education age.	761502	766928	693728	451801	612676	452159
Total poor who attend higher education.	64274	90720	95456	74923	77116	56422

Source: Own elaboration with data from the CASEN Survey period 2006-2017

educational policies have been installed that emphasize diverse principles and follow often antagonistic motivations: from competition to collaboration, from selection to inclusion, and from the imposition of external support for internal capacity building.

- Although this incoherence of the system must decrease with the reforms of the last government – with the inclusion law –, the implementation of these reforms is a key point. Likewise, the interaction of these laws with demand financing and a highly demanding external liability system is certainly a challenge that remains.

How school actors interpret and implement these educational policies and their demands is a topic to be explored in depth in Chile. In relation to policy contradictions, Acuña et al. (2014) emphasizes, for example, that educational inclusion, as a principle and right, is both encouraged and hindered by the system, given the differences in incentives from the financing system on the one hand, and responsibility on the other.

In many ways, therefore, a tension is perceived that is mainly due to the lack of coherence of the system and its educational policies, and the superposition of contradictory schemes of pressure and support for school actors.

As Munby and Fullan (2016) point out, this type of struggle between national-level discourses and policies on one side, and the actions or omissions of schools, on the opposite side, results in a type of friction that certainly mode produces heat but does not give light, since its results, or the levers it moves, are not sufficient to produce systemic change.

This, according to Munby and Fullan (2016), implies a great challenge and at the same time a great opportunity for middle

leaders, who, on the one hand,

“They can remain victims of a fragmented system with top-down policies or they can work for change. The idea is not to be a rebel without a cause, but to change the game from obeying to being focused with a sense. It is the responsibility of leaders to model a culture that ensures that while they take into account the requirements of external accountability at the national level, they develop internal accountability that leads to the expected results. Leaders in the environment need to consider ambitious alternatives that develop the capabilities at the heart of the systems” (p. 13).

On the other hand, for several six-year terms the idea has been questioned through different means that governing by public policies varies in short-term expectations versus long-term consequences, since they often tend to have unexpected results, they function as a type of experimentation based on “trial and error” and the reflection that the Chilean constitution has lost validity today, as a result of the social outbreak in the country, is debated.

Therefore, addressing the problem with inadequate tools can be worse than not addressing the problem, since citizens must be guaranteed fair access to public policies that can only be granted by improving the country’s governance.

Therefore, although public policies are merely actions of the government, they are not reduced to it, citizens are also responsible for generating significant change, since as stated by Paul Romer (2019), first economist of the World Bank “*Government officials do not act in a vacuum. Their decisions reflect the bargaining power of citizens who compete with each other to defend competing interests*” and, focusing as citizens on governance issues, as a key response to the challenges facing Chile today, will be the future guarantee for compliance with the law in the interest of

equity, development and prosperity.

In summary, public policies participate in national development by solving and responding to the various deficiencies, needs, interests, demands and individual and community predilections, in order to make possible the progress of citizens and strengthen their coexistence.

They must be established within the current legal framework, be prepared by people trained to do so, have financial viability, be oriented towards the common good and allow citizen participation.

Evaluations of public policies must be impartial, they are done for improvement, not for stigmatization, as a follow-up and monitoring action; They must include any moment, from the definition of priorities and elaboration of the design, implementation, resources, performance during its course, partial results, complications and difficulties, to final results and impact on users.

The evaluations of the national policies carried out present relevant elements for decision-making within the framework of the important transformations and educational reform processes that Chile is experiencing. Analyzes the educational continuum and highlights recommendations that, if implemented, could have positive impacts on the quality of learning and the equity of the system as a whole. Public policies in Chile must be designed and managed educational environments that advance in quality to be drivers of creativity, innovation and inclusion.

CONCLUSIONS

Finally, the role of public policies in educational improvement depends on the context of each establishment, that is, those external elements that influence the daily activities of each school community (Spillane et al. 2002). The external element considered most explanatory of educational results is the

socioeconomic level in which the educational establishments are immersed. Another very important element, which influences the way a school responds to policies and projects improvement, is that linked to pressures or institutional support from intermediate authorities (Trujillo, 2013; Woulfin et al. 2016). Although, in effect, the school, through its internal capacities, is the main unit of change, the leadership of the holder is key in terms of how policies are perceived or received by a school, which influences the appropriateness (or not) implementation of the same, both due to (or lack of) technical-pedagogical as well as political and economic support (Spillane, 1996; Leithwood et al. 2004; Trujillo, 2013; Woulfin et al. 2016; Valenzuela and Montecinos, 2017).

From the above it is clear that Public Policies are the consequence of:

- Guideline, decision-making guideline that defines the way to act in special cases
- The public nature of the policies is given by the participation that the different actors involved have in these decisions.
- Set of decisions, principles and norms that guide action, defining specific objectives and goals aimed at legitimizing and exercising power and authority that lead to satisfying certain needs of a country, sector, institution, community.
- Once we have analyzed and conceptualized Public Policies, what can we say, from a civil society perspective, Public Policies are relevant, since they constitute one of the socially available instruments to address the needs of the population. The vision that needs to be emphasized here is an instrumental one, emphasizing that they are “means to”, the resolution of social problems. From the above it can be deduced that the ideal of

a government is to have state policies, to maintain them over time, independent of the government in power.

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