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## **Thesis Prospectus Draft – 4**

### **Research Question/Overview:**

This thesis will focus on the question what is the promise of current reforms in addressing inequality in the Chilean educational system. The type of inequality considered will be the opportunity of access to education, predominantly at the secondary and tertiary level. I will identify the strategies in place being used to target these inequalities and determine what educational policies are recommended to include for the alleviation of inequities on both a national and international level. Then from a qualitative and quantitative perspective, I will build an educational profile of Chile detailing past educational reforms that will provide a foundation for an analysis of current reform policies. The goal is to pinpoint the educational inequalities still facing Chile and suggest whether government policies, with the implementation of recent reforms, will be able to address them.

### **Background:**

Educational policy in Chile is important because the inequities of the Chilean education system continue to hold Chilean development. Chilean students face a segmented education divided by a private vs. public system that does not ensure equal access and success, particularly on the secondary and tertiary level. Student protests of the last decade have helped bring these inequities further into perspective and show the student desire for Chilean education to evolve into a fairer, more equal system. Starting in 2006 with a series of protests, so called the March of the Penguins or the Penguin Revolution because of the school uniforms worn during the protests,

high school activists demanded quality education for all. Michelle Bachelet's government listened to these students and in 2009 passed a new educational law with the issues raised in mind. But by 2011, students, now more university-level but with the continued presence of high school activists, took to the streets again demanding a new framework for education in the country, including more direct state participation in secondary education and an end to the existence of profit in higher education. These protests, still active and attracting international awareness, show the unwillingness of students to accept the pervasive inequalities still plaguing their education.

Chile, while still classified a developing country, has a fairly high level of human development as determined by the UNDP with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.805, ranking it number 44 on an international scale (2011) placing it in a group with countries like Portugal (41), Bahrain (42), Latvia (43), Argentina (45) and Croatia (46).<sup>1</sup> According to the World Bank, Chile has one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America with "consolidated macroeconomic stability" and a "large and well-diversified financial system". The inequality levels however are also high where the average income of the richest 20% of Chileans was 12 times that of the poorest 20% in 2009.<sup>2</sup> With regard to the quality of education, Chile has achieved one of the highest graduation rates in the developing world and high levels of improvement in areas like reading and math in its secondary education according to the OECD's international PISA tests. Chile's Education Index according to the UNDP is 0.797, only bested by Cuba (0.876) and Argentina (0.806) of the countries in Latin America. But even with these results and the continued priority of educational reform in the country, Chilean education has not

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<sup>1</sup> "Chile – Country Profile: Human Development Indicators." UNDP, International Development Indicators. Accessed September 5, 2012. [hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CHL.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CHL.html)

<sup>2</sup> "Chile Overview – Context." World Bank, Working for a World Free of Poverty. Accessed September 5, 2012. [www.worldbank.org/en/country/chile/overview](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/chile/overview).

been able to overcome inequality and exclusion, as revealed by inequities in graduation rates, school attendance (entry rates and years averaged), educational coverage (access to schools), public spending (grants per student) and levels of financial support (scholarships vs. student loans) when measured by region and income level.<sup>3</sup> When looking at the UNDP's Inequality-adjusted Education Index, which is adjusted for inequality in the distribution of years of schooling, Chile scores 0.688 (2011), placing it between countries like the Russian Federation and Bosnia and Herzegovina that have regular HDI international rankings of only 66 and 74 respectively.

Past educational reforms, starting with those of the military government of the 1980s, made significant structural changes in Chilean education. Pinochet's market-oriented reforms introduced privatization, labor deregulation, and "municipalization"/ decentralization driven by efficiency concerns into the Chilean education system. In contrast, the democratic government of the 1990s oriented its educational policies around quality and equity. While maintaining a private/public competition mechanism established by Pinochet, the government—with the support of international organizations like the World Bank—began targeting rural and at-risk schools in an effort to build more equity within the system. Education became a national priority with the government of former President Eduardo Frei in the mid-1990s and the country developed a broad national consensus on education with the endorsement of the Brunner Report, which diagnosed the challenges facing the Chilean education system in the twenty-first century. After the Penguin Revolution in 2006, former President Michelle Bachelet continued to make educational reform a priority with the passing of the General Law of Education (*Ley General de Educación*).

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<sup>3</sup> González, Pablo. "Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009: Governance, management and financing of educational equity-focused policies in Chile." (Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009: *Overcoming Inequality: why governance matters.*) UNESCO (2009): 1-49.

Recently, the Chilean government has passed a tax reform that allocates more resources to education. Introduced and endorsed by President Sebastián Piñera in April, the reform is comprised of an increase in the taxation of large corporations and a minimization for those persons in the lower tax brackets. The projected income of this reform of approximately one billion USD annually will be reallocated mainly to bonds, subsidies and tax credits to families with children in preschool and primary school, as well as the provision of more government scholarships and loans to students on a tertiary level. The rationale is that the extra funding will go towards better quality and equity on all educational levels because it reduces the tax burden for those in the lower classes and will encourage these families to keep their child in school to continue profiting from the tax break. The Chilean government just passed this reform into law on September 4, 2012.

Analysis of these recent reforms of educational policies, in conjunction with international policy recommendations and past reforms, will generate the assessment of the promise of Chile in addressing its educational inequalities.

**Data/Methodology:**

Starting with a theoretical literature chapter analyzing a broad relationship of education and inequality over the last three decades, I will identify the strategies in place being used to target inequality of education and determine what policies are recommended to alleviate educational inequities on both a national and international level. Scholars like Rambla, Torche as well OECD publications will help map these strategies and policy recommendations. Rambla

focuses on the effectiveness of equity strategies that target support to disadvantaged schools.<sup>4</sup> Torche focuses on addressing the relation between the economic crisis of the 1980s and socioeconomic inequalities in developing countries.<sup>5</sup> The OECD publications will help determine the international policy recommendations. The organization published policy recommendations—ten steps to be exact—for nations wanting to achieve equitable and quality education systems including design, practice and resourcing recommendations.<sup>6</sup> Also, the OECD and the World Bank teamed up in reviewing tertiary education in Chile making specific policy recommendations to improve equity levels in higher education.<sup>7</sup> Continued reading for this section will be guided by looking at the general strategies for equity-driven reforms of the last three decades and the international policy recommendations for societies wanting to target these educational inequities.

After looking at the strategies implemented and policies recommended internationally, I will start building an educational profile of Chile with a qualitative analysis of past educational reforms in Chile starting with those of the military government in the 1980s to those of the 1990s following the democratic transition. This qualitative analysis of historical reforms will help build on the specific inequalities of opportunity in access to education from the last three decades and analyze how and why the government implemented these reforms. By using literature and opinions of other scholars that have analyzed these past reforms I will determine the general effect of these reforms in addressing the inequalities. The reading of the literature of these past

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<sup>4</sup> Rambla, X. "Globalization, Educational Targeting, and Stable Inequalities: A Comparative Analysis of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile." *International Review Of Education/ Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft*, (2006): 353-370. doi:10.1007/s11159-005-0001-6 .

<sup>5</sup> Torche, F. Economic Crisis and Inequality of Educational Opportunity in Latin America. *Sociology of Education*: (2010): 85-110. doi:10.1177/0038040710367935 .

<sup>6</sup> "Education at a Glance – 2011: Highlights." *OECD Publishing*(2011): 1-98. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag\\_highlights-2011-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag_highlights-2011-en).

<sup>7</sup> "Tertiary Education in Chile." *Reviews of National Policies for Education – OECD and World Bank*. (2009): 1-306.

reforms will focus on highlighting the structures and strategies of the past reforms that had the potential to affect equity in the access of secondary and tertiary-level education. There will be focus on the contrast between market-driven vs. equity driven orientations of these reforms.

Sources for this qualitative analysis include documents like the Brunner Report<sup>8</sup> which became a framework agreement for the modernization of Chilean education in the mid-1990s, as well as scholarly articles like that of Brunner, Delannoy and Gonzalez that have broken down and analyzed these past reforms and have been able to link aspects of the reforms, such as the private/public competition mechanism, the voucher system, etc., to inequality levels in Chile. Brunner presents the changes underwent during the military regime of the 1980 reforms and their main effects on the Chilean education system. Delannoy addresses the reforms of both the 1980s and 1990s primarily analyzing how the equity-driven reforms of the 1990s are a response to those of the 1980s in trying to reconcile the market approach. Gonzalez also maps out the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, particularly addressing how elements like the voucher system/funding mechanism of the reforms have affected inequalities of educational opportunity.

To continue building on Chile's educational profile, there will be a section mapping out the Chilean education system quantitatively in a longitudinal manner since 1990. Data from Chile's CASEN household surveys will provide data measuring indicators like literacy levels, education level, school attendance, educational coverage by types of studies and average level of schooling for people over 24 by household and income – all indicators being distinguished by region and income level (broken down into quintiles). Data from the OECD will help map funding levels and break down who is paying for what within the Chilean education system. The OECD breaks down educational expenditures by funding source and transaction type, private expenditure on education, household expenditure, as well as funding from other agents. The

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<sup>8</sup> Brunner, Jose Joaquin. Brunner Report.

OECD also presents data on expenditure by levels of education as well as the service provider, i.e. expenditures from public or private institutions. Lastly, data from the CNED (Consejo Nacional de Educación) details the difference in funding available to students by presenting the exact direct and indirect public grants per student to each individual university, scholarships and loans awarded. These data from the CNED are divided by region and socioeconomic level and detail the difference in funding between private and public institutions.

Quantitative data from the PISA studies as conducted by UNESCO and Chile's SIMCE surveys will help determine the changes in the quality of Chilean education over time. PISA is an international assessment program that evaluates the reading, mathematics, and science literacy of 15 year olds within each respective country and will particularly help in placing Chilean education on an international context. The SIMCE is the National System of Evaluation in Chile (Sistema Nacional de Evaluación) funded by the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). These SIMCE tests are national evaluations broken down by language, mathematics and science and can be analyzed by rural vs. urban data and socioeconomic level.

The next chapter of my thesis will focus on the state of education in Chile today and where the country stands in regards to its educational inequality. It is important to fully understand the educational crisis that prompted the student protests have revealed. Using data from the previous section, I will assess the primary indicators contributing to inequality of opportunity in access to quality secondary and tertiary education today. I will use the differing responses and opinions of reforms needed and requested by key actors in the country (i.e. the demands). I will do this by doing a brief content analysis of primary web blogs of student activists like Camila Vallejo, president of the University of Chile Student Federation (Fech) and main spokesperson of the Confederation of Chilean Students (Confech), as well as former

political actors and scholars like José Joaquín Brunner, the ex-minister of the state under Eduardo Frei and academic and consultant.<sup>9</sup> Then I will further break down the current laws and reforms in place (i.e. the government response), looking at the General Law of Education (*Ley General de la Educación*, 2009) passed during the presidency of Michelle Bachelet and the tax reform recently passed into law September 2012, to highlight what exactly is being targeted with these reforms by the Chilean government within the education system.

In the conclusion, I will return to my overarching research question: What is the promise of current reforms in addressing remaining inequities in the Chilean educational system? By combining policy recommendations internationally and of Chilean actors with Chile's educational profile, I will assess the promise of the current educational reforms of the Chilean government.

### **Preliminary Findings/Hypothesis:**

My preliminary hypothesis is that the current policies, particularly the recent law allocating more resources to education through tax reforms, will not help or will only have a slight impact on inequities within the educational system. Based on preliminary data analysis of educational funding over time, the change in funding appears to be too minimal to have any sufficient impact in addressing the inequality of access to quality secondary and tertiary institutions and does not fully address the real problems that maintain the inequities. It appears that Chile will need to address the segmentation between private and public rather than just continue raising the levels of educational funding to adequately address any remaining educational inequality.

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<sup>9</sup> "José Joaquín Brunner blog, The." *El Foro de la educación chilena: información, análisis y discusión sobre educación y políticas educacionales*. mt.educarchile.cl/MT/jjbrunner.