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Book Review

Policies Based on Privatisation, Standardisation, Examination and Educational Accountability: The Anglophone Experience

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Andy Hargreaves & Dennis Shirley (2009), **The Fourth Way: The inspiring future for wducational change,** published by Corwin SAGE Company, NY, pp. 143.

Diane Ravitch (2010), **The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education,** published by Basic Books, California.

Robin Alexander et al. (2010), **Children, their world, their education: Final report and recommendations of the Cambridge primary review**, published by Routledge, London.

Andy Hargreaves & Michael Fullan (2012), **Professional capital. Transforming teaching in every school**, published by Routledge.

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What common message is provided by these publications?

These four books discuss the impact of policies based on mechanisms of deregulated privatisation, excessive standardisation, overuse of census-based testing and high-stakes external accountability (abbreviated here as PSTA) that have been implemented over the past 20 years, especially in the UK and U.S. As stated particularly by Alexander (2010) and Ravitch (2010), these four books base their arguments on robust scientific evidence, the result of hundreds of investigations that have studied the effects of adoption of these policies rather than ideologies, fads, beliefs or discourses. These four publications, separately or together, are enormously topical for Chile, a country that is showing marked activity in the design, debate and implementation of educational reforms at all levels of the school system and its actors (teachers, school heads, schools, financing, regulations and assessment).

Taken together, these books agree on five substantive arguments: (i) PSTA policies have not proven to be reform strategies that improve the quality of schools, the quality of teaching or the learning of students; (ii) on the contrary, they have had side effects by introducing deskilling of teaching into school systems, excessive state supervision, overuse of testing in classes, mechanical learning among students, school segregation, narrowing of the curriculum and simplification of pedagogy; (iii) as a consequence, these educational reforms fail to respond to the demands that the economy, society and democracy together make of education in the 21st century; (iv) the insistence on their value by policy makers and educational organisations or foundations is not based on scientific evidence, but primarily on ideologies, private interests and stereotypes; (v) and finally, in contrast to PSTA policies, evidence has emerged of alternative strategies for reform and school improvement that lean towards greater desegregation, reskilling, curricular innovation and training in creativity, critical thinking and citizenship.

The publication of these four books is relevant to Latin America and particularly to Chile, whose educational institutions have recently been reinforced and whose internal logic points to the mechanical application of PSTA policies. Although some of these strategies were implemented during the civilian-military regime ('privatisation') and then not only maintained and deepened, but also extended by the governments of the *Concertación* coalition ('testing', 'standardisation'), the recent institutional setup has allowed the combined application of all of them to be crowned off ('accountability').

In Chile's case in particular, these books generate countless questions about the likely consequences that PSTA policies could have on our education system and those of other Latin American countries attracted to PSTA-type reforms. Although it is clear that each policy takes its own shape and specificity in each educational system, these books provide convergent evidence from different school systems. They therefore give us a comparison of the impact that PSTA reforms have on education systems in general and school organisations in particular. The four books will be of interest to undergraduate and graduate students, policy makers, activists and professionals from educational foundations and especially to educational researchers.

Hargreaves & Shirley (2009)[1]

The Hargreaves and Shirley book (*The Fourth Way*) is divided into four chapters and its central argument is that there are few, but significant examples of a Fourth Way of educational reform that point to a way to replace what they call the promise of a Third Way of educational reform, which has proven to be ineffective in addressing the damaging consequences produced by the Second Way of reform. The Fourth Way of educational change would be based on a substantive shift in each of the dimensions covering the movement of a school system (change, control, funding, purpose, curriculum, teaching, learning, professional community, assessment, accountability, lateral links) via *six pillars of purpose* that activate and support educational change, *three principles of professionalism* that lead the change, and four catalysts of coherence to sustain it. This system of reform, they argue, promotes and responds–in school systems that have put it into practice– to the demands of economic prosperity and democracy in the 21st century.

[1] A Spanish version has just been published: Hargreaves, A., & Shirley, D. (2012) *La Cuarta Vía. El prometedor futuro del cambio educativo*. Barcelona: Ediciones Octaedro. Translation: Manuel León Urrutia.

However, the authors are careful to suggest that this is not about the *tabula rasa* of previous reforms, but rather they believe it is necessary to identify, in every method of reform, the valuable aspects that they produce, so they can be 'retained', as well as the aspects of policy that cause unnecessary damage and are at odds with the purposes of justice and excellence to which democratic societies aspire so they can be 'abandoned'. In Chapter 3 (p. 48), Figure 3.1, they explain which aspects to retain/abandon in each way of reform. From the Second Way, they propose *retaining* the 'sense of urgency' to improve school performance and reduce the gaps between social groups that inspired many of these reforms; but they also recommend *abandoning* excessive mechanisms of 'competition' and 'standardisation' that stifle creativity and cooperation at the core of education itself. Meanwhile, from the Third Way they suggest retaining the re-involvement and activism of governments in creating educational policies seen during the '90s, increased and heavy public investment in education, the use of better evidence and the creation of professional networks; but they also recommend *abandoning* persistent 'autocracy' in the management of education policies (where they are designed without consultation), the growing and oppressive imposition of targets, the obsession with data and the 'effervescence' that amplifies the importance of superficial and illusory achievements.

The first chapter covers the bases and effects of each of the *Three Ways of Change* implemented since the '60s to the present in more developed countries. These three types of policies are identified as the old ways of pushing educational change, where their ineffectiveness would require them to be abandoned in contemporary school systems. The *First Way*, part of the post-war drive, refers to state support and total professional freedom where the main problem was inconsistency and incoherence between purposes and actions on every one of the levels of the school system. The *Second Way*, characteristic of the '90s, refers to the incorporation of market mechanisms, competition and educational standardisation, where the effect was the loss of professional autonomy, dumbing down of the curriculum, and segregation. The *Third Way* emerged as a combined response to the previous two ways in an attempt to moderate market effects, but with limited public responses, as well as to balance the simultaneous momentum of professional autonomy with methods of accountability. Although the Third Way relaxed the rigidity and control of the Second Way, it also continues emphasising standardisation of the curriculum, mechanisms of census-based testing and high-stakes accountability.

In the second chapter, with multiple examples of studies of the impact of education reforms, whether in countries, regions or states in federal countries (e.g. NCBL in the U.S. or LNM in the UK), Hargreaves & Shirley conclude that the *Third Way* succumbed to the combination of three aspects that characterise the method of implementing these policies by policy makers. First, an 'autocratic' imposition designed from the centre for the local space with targets and testing that ignore that educational change requires the appropriation and construction of capacity at local level. They refer to the management of technocrats and policy makers, who, from the viewpoint of their political management, have ignored and mistrusted local actors and the view they have of their own practice. Second, a 'technocratic obsession' with data, testing and central monitoring devices that tended to invert the relationship between means and ends in education. Data have become the purpose itself. Educational and curricular priorities have been reorganised and have undermined any hint of inclusive, dialogic or innovative pedagogy. Third, an 'effervescent indulgence' to secure quick lifts in test gains on unstable and superficial standardised tests that fail to ensure substantive changes in learning and do not build sustainable professional skills in schools. This effervescence shown by incumbent policy makers, politicians and education activists, say the authors, is complacent, short-termist and unrealistic about the major educational purposes to which any democratic and creative society should aspire. The authors note that these strategies, limited in their vision of the future, are transforming education in a direction that prevents promote greater quality of both teaching and learning, both of which are necessary in promoting higher-order thinking skills and greater civic virtues and values.

The Fourth Way, as the book is entitled, is described in detail in the third chapter, with contemporary examples of new initiatives and alternative programs to the Third Way, all of which is conceptualised in the fourth chapter. This chapter describes the six pillars of purpose to support change in schools, the three principles of professionalism to drive this change, and the four catalysts of coherence that hold it together. The Fourth Way, identified as the age of post-standardisation, is characterised by overcoming the above and emphasises high professionalism of teachers, innovation, autonomy, confidence in the capability of schools, lateral cooperation and public centrality. It is particular to countries that have never implemented reforms like those described (Finland, France, Sweden and Singapore), or countries or school systems that have recently dropped them (Alberta in Canada, Wales or Scotland in the UK).

Hargreaves & Shirley give a description of recent school improvement strategies at the systemic level, which have challenged the old ways of reforms based on PSTA and which are proving their effectiveness in promoting fair and high-quality education. In this sense, this book helps to show the errors of the past in a set of educational reforms that are still underway or in full implementation in different parts of the world, such as Chile, while at the same time offering an informed explanation of effective educational reforms that different school systems could adopt. Although much of the evidence to support what the authors call the Fourth Way has been widely reported previously, the value of the book is to provide a comprehensive, synthetic, structured and historic overview of the types of educational reforms that have been tested by societies over the last 50 years.

Ravitch (2010)

The American historian Diane Ravitch makes a thorough review of the best empirical research on the impact of educational reforms in the U.S. over the last 20 years. She concludes that reforms based on standards, accountability, intensive testing, and market mechanisms are undermining American public education and jeopardising the future of the nation. Diane Ravitch is a distinguished historian of education in the U.S. who, during her career, has reconstructed the beginnings, subsequent development, and cycles through which American education has gone since the 18th century, as well as the relationships it has had with the processes of industrialisation, formation of states, and racial and religious struggles. The fundamental contribution of Ravitch's historiographical work is the confirmation of the strength exerted by fads and ideologies in shaping various waves of educational reform over different decades. In her book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education* she critically examines educational reforms in the U.S. over the last 20 years, making use of an extensive and systematic review of the literature on their effects and impacts. What is most notable about this work is that she analyses educational reforms that she initially promoted herself. Her review is compelling and informed to the point that its method and analysis lead her into self-critical territory regarding the active position that she herself adopted in favour of this body of policies. The author convincingly involves the reader in her arguments, analysis, data, and hypotheses to meta-communicate how an academic practice can itself become phenomenological. This because careful examination of the evidence in each chapter leads her to warn that *she herself* was convinced by the persuasiveness of these policies while she served as adviser to President George Bush in the early '90s. From that position she pushed for the implementation of these reforms in the U.S. that have also served to shape Second Way reforms around the world. The academic attitude that has led Ravitch to reconsider her previous approaches makes the book particularly interesting by illustrating the value and power of academic criticism when exercised genuinely to the point of reconfiguring identity itself and position in the world beyond any particular interest or consideration.

Ravitch's book is divided into 11 chapters. These chapters systematically examine the best evidence generated in the U.S. on the effects of standardisation and testing policies (Chapter 2), privatisation initiatives in San Diego and New York (Chapter 4 and 5), or the impact of a variety of accountability measures (Chapter 8). However, most of all Ravitch focuses on collecting evidence about the limits and regressive effects in different states and districts of what are probably the two most important educational policies of the U.S. in recent decades: No Child Left Behind (NCLB) implemented in 2001, which introduced penalties for failure to meet standards (Chapter 6), and the creation of incentives for private sector participation in the provision of education with public funds through charter schools (Chapter 7).

In each chapter of the book, Ravitch's line of argument and her historiographical method follows a strategy where the configuration, implementation and sinuosities of the reforms described are presented in their full complexity through links that bring them to life via an amalgam of political actors, laws, interest groups, educational agents, public debates and disputes between interest groups. Each chapter provides details with political and educational figures and agents, specific periods of time, the role of the media, and the creation of laws and rulings, all of which allows us to understand how each government strategy emerged, took hold and structured education in each district and school. In addition, for each initiative every chapter systematises in detail the empirical evidence generated, the disputes arising from disagreements between researchers and the way in which the statement 'there is no conclusive evidence' dominates debate and promotes the status quo regarding important reforms that affect the fundamental purposes of education, such as equality or exploration. This situation encourages Ravitch to clearly reveal the logic of the debates and the forms of discourse used, and also strips away the ideological blanket covering much of the academic discussion on the impact or effect of PSTA policies.

For example, Chapter 7 provides an in-depth discussion of the emergence of the idea of school choice in the '60s, its subsequent evolution and transformation into its contemporary variants (charter, magnet, voucher schools) and their effects in terms of school performance, innovation, and school segregation. Ravitch gives evidence for the higher quality that public schools should have regarding charter schools. However, she also highlights the fact that there is no conclusive evidence (widely accepted) or even a consensus on the poorer performance of privately-managed schools and, therefore, the ineffectiveness of market mechanisms in education. The convention is to state that there is "mixed" evidence and that academic disputes become circles of methodological controversies in which battles are fought over disseminating results that show marginal gains in terms of educational performance.[2] Instead there are marked consensuses regarding the impact of market mechanisms in terms of social and academic segregation. Ravitch therefore asks, why insist on a policy that has not proven that private provision of education gives clear benefits and contributes substantially to the quality of the school system? And that exhibiting its adverse effects on areas that are critical to democratic society, such as social cohesion, continues to have academic, political and intellectual support. In response, Ravitch offers a solid demonstration of the mechanisms that have made market policies in education no more than just another historical example of educational policies dominated by ideologies, fads, dogmas or allegories, which to be overcome require long periods of time and discursive rifts that come from outside the educational field.

Ravitch concludes that these policies as a whole have failed to improve the quality of education; instead they have restricted the possibility of providing an enriched and broad curriculum, they have transformed schools into places to rehearse for and sit standardised tests that blur the breadth and richness of the curriculums and have redefined the very purpose of school systems in modern societies. Ravitch underlines that this set of policies is not supported by scientific evidence showing their efficacy or their advantages, but merely by the power of dogmas, ideologies and fads that have historically pushed and sustained many failed educational reforms in different historical periods.

Ravitch's intellectual attitude of critically challenging her own previous public positions in light of new diagnostics and information is fascinating. As a result of this exercise, and in an unusual act of academic self-reflexion, Ravitch *herself* becomes the object of analysis, thus allowing us to learn about the productive and absorbing power of the discourses and dogmas that underlie and drive educational reforms. Using the words of John Maynard Keynes on how changing facts require a change in previous opinions, Ravitch argues that the strength of the evidence–which she details at length in this book–led her to change the opinion that previously allowed her to support, defend and disseminate policies based on standards, testing, accountability and the market.[3]

Alexander et al. (2010)[4]

This book is the result of an investigation called *Primary Review*, which was independently funded (Esmée Fairbairn Foundation) and carried out over three years in the UK, being conducted from the Faculty of Education of the University of Cambridge, England.[5] The results of the research have recently been published in this book, which is a detailed academic report with evidence on the impact of the wave of educational reforms implemented in the UK in recent decades. The *Primary Review* is not a fully empirical investigation as such, but rather the systematisation of research conducted previously. In effect, the authors reviewed the evidence produced over the last 50 years on pedagogy, the school system, learning, development, inclusion, funding, equity, standards, and assessments, as well as other aspects. More than 50 British educational researchers participated in the investigation, all leaders in their specific fields of study and from a dozen universities in England (Bath, Bristol, LSE, Cambridge, Oxford, IoE, Durham, Manchester, and Sussex, among others).

Primary Review established three central perspectives or concepts that, in the authors' opinion, express the substantive relationships between learning and society: (i) children and their childhood, (ii) culture,

[3] Diane Ravitch visited Chile during the '90s as a guest of the Centro de Estudios Públicos to give lectures on the appropriateness of implementing educational reforms in Chile based on standards and with consequences on educational actors as the main driver of improving education. See: Ravitch, D. (2001) 'In search of standards in education', *Revista del Centro de Estudios Públicos* Nº 84.

[4] Authors: Robin Alexander, Michael Armstrong, Julia Flutter, Linda Hargreaves, Wynne Harlen, David Harrison, Elizabeth-Hartley-Brewer, Ruth Kershner, John MacBeath, Berry Mayall, Stephanie Northen, Gillian Pugh, Colin Richards and David Utting.

[5] Consult the following webpage and publication: www.primaryreview.org.uk for reports on each sub-theme.

society and the global context, (iii) primary education or the first few years of formal education. Ten themes for study were also established and leading experts were assigned to each of them. It is important to mention them so as to display the depth and extent to which education is analysed in this text: 'purposes and values',' learning and teaching', 'curriculum and assessment', 'quality and standards', 'diversity and inclusion', 'settings and professionals', 'parenting, caring and educating', 'children's lives beyond the school', 'structures and phases', and 'funding, governance and policy'.

Following the aforementioned themes, the book contains 24 chapters organised into five parts. Among the key findings, it is argued that policies based on rigid curriculum standards, examined using standardised learning tests, have restricted students' educational experience, reduced opportunities for child development, stressed schools, teachers and students, and have basically lost their way in strengthening the pedagogy and education that contemporary society demands. It also provides evidence to challenge certain assumptions that inspire reforms, as well as other suppositions, that the classification of schools with consequences and their systematic inspection and will activate virtuous and professionally solid responses from schools and teachers. Or, on the evaluative level, the authors criticise the notion that periodic, early and census-based measurements contribute to raising standards, while also refuting that standardised measurements are the only way to monitor learning on a large scale, or that the focus on language and mathematics contributes to better learning in other subjects or skills.

In particular, by way of example, Chapter 15 (*Re-thinking pedagogy*), Chapter 16 (*Assessment, learning and accountability*) and Chapter 17 (*Attainment, standards and quality*) go into depth on the problems caused by policies that have relied on PSTA reforms. Alexander et al argue that there is negative evidence on the impact of standards on children in aspects such as motivation and interest, involvement, enjoyment, integration of skills, and autonomy and self-regulation in learning. Without all of the above–the willingness and attention of the children–there are no reforms or measures that can produce learning. But in particular, when studying the curriculum that this political practice encourages, the authors warn that students are not receiving an education that allows them to think for themselves, or the fundamental tools that are required in the 21st century. They also stress that there are a number of methodological problems that national tests in England, classification systems or inspection procedures in schools may have. This has led to opacity, confusion and mistrust among educational actors and in the elemental processes that are developed in schools. Similarly, the evidence concurs that the political-technical architecture on which educational standards and related technologies are sustained is based on shaky empirical foundations, while public confidence in its discursive bases is becoming increasingly weak. For example, there is a set of key ideas supported by these policies that is completely undermined by the evidence: that intensive testing of learning itself contributes to improve educational standards; or that parents give sustained support to educational testing; or that standardised tests are the *only* way to hold schools accountable; or that establishing increased achievement in the basic subsectors of mathematics and language as a priority limits, excludes and makes it incompatible to achieve a broader, more balanced and enriched curriculum; or, in short, that such subsectors (the 'basics') are valid indicators and have the power to synthesise the whole curriculum, or summarily illustrate the 'quality' of education that is produced in every classroom and school.

The book thus argues, maintains and insists on the need for a group of distinctions whose absence has weakened the educational debate among academics, politicians, the media, foundations and interest groups. Crucially, the question is not whether children should be evaluated or not (they should), or whether schools should be accountable for their performance (they should), the fundamental issue *is how* (the mechanisms, the type of consequences) and in relation *to what* (skills, purposes, educational outcomes) these first-order questions should be articulated and projected. The main consequence that the *Primary Review* underlines is that these policies have produced collateral damage and have generated an enormous cost on the preparation of future generations and the professional development of teachers. The report provides countless and detailed recommendations for each of the aspects on which is makes critical judgment. It is, therefore, a book that not only clarifies the current problems, but also proposes evidence-based mechanisms and strategies to resolve them.

Hargreaves & Fullan (2012)

The authors make an in-depth study of the nature and future of the teaching profession in a growing environment of pressure politics and deskilling. The book is divided into seven chapters which are focused

on conceptualising the notion of professional capital through theoretical premises from the sociological theory of social capital and organisational psychology. The book also uses numerous examples of case studies to illustrate the concept of professional capital. Subsequently, the authors offer proposals to re-build the entire teaching profession.

Fundamentally, Hargreaves & Fullan formulate a powerful argument about the excessive academic and political emphasis given to 'human capital' as a unique factor in improving the teaching profession. The authors argue that, although this is key capital, this view has been exhausted and has been shown to be ineffective in making a lasting, extensive and systemic transformation of the teaching profession *as a whole*. By contrast, "professional capital" is based on the construction of groups, teams and communities, all of which are privileged and enriched social spaces that enhance and sustain the human capital of each teacher.

The book is aimed at and written for a wide audience. The central argument is that no teaching development policy will be effective if it uses principles of competitiveness, individual incentives and pressure. On the contrary, what is required is continuous heavy investment, construction of collective capacity and the development of collaborative cultures between professionals. The authors use the adage that "when a man dies, a library is burned." Put another way, training a teacher over time requires the commitment of an entire community and needs a particular political culture. Therefore, the authors stress that none of the world powers in teaching quality and academic performance use any notion of teaching related to 'business capital' or merely an individual and short-termist notion of teacher development.

Hargreaves & Fullan consider that "professional capital" is the combination of three types of capital and fundamental components of pedagogy: *human capital* (expert knowledge, that goes from the psychology of development and cultural theory to didactic and disciplinary knowledge), *social capital* (associative resources of mutual influence expand human capital and make it sustainable both within school organisations as well as in its lateral links), and finally *decisional capital* (the ability to make well-founded professional judgments, the interface between theoretical knowledge and contingent practice that requires well-based improvisation; the line that divides a 'profession' from a mere technical 'job' that is susceptible to standardisation). Much has been said about the human capital of individuals and little about the other two types of capital. Training, circulation and expansion of professional capital requires each of these three kinds of capital: absence of one of them weakens the others. In the long run, the basic assumption is that teaching is a situated, collaborative and incremental practice.

Conversely, unlike school systems (Finland or Singapore) that understand the teaching profession to be one of the most valued assets of society, the U.S. and UK have structured policies that individualise, isolate, disconnect, and weaken the teaching profession. Under this scheme, education is conceptualised as an activity of rapid returns and low investment, thus producing a flexible and temporary teaching force, with low initial training costs and that has no significant costs even in its conditions of performance and professional development. Instead, Hargreaves & Fullan argue that "Countries and communities that invest in professional capital recognise that educational spending is a long-term investment in developing human capital from early childhood to adult life, to reap rewards of economic productivity and social cohesion in the next generation. A big part of this investment is in high quality teachers and teaching. In this view, getting good teaching for all learners requires teachers to be highly committed, thoroughly prepared, continuously developed, properly paid, well networked with each other to maximise their own improvement, and able to make effective judgments using all their capabilities and experience." (p. 6).

The authors emphasise that current policies have only focused on human capital and in an individual manner, neglecting the other forms of capital: "Teachers are at the heart of the quality agenda, but we have demonstrated that this matter is being horribly stereotyped as policy makers in more and more countries opt for individualistic, competitive and coercive solutions through a combination of sticks and carrots." (p. 149). Instead, they suggest that the proven agenda is to rebuild the profession *as a whole* through the transformation of initial training, as well as the professional conditions of all teachers and throughout their professional development. The central point is to build an entire profession strengthening collective and associative capabilities, and not by dispersing or individualising them. An activity as complex as teaching requires constant investment in the whole process of the teaching profession, from its beginnings until its end; but all of the above requires a significant amount of resources–both economic and political–that cannot be obtained without the vision and determination of the political elite and its institutions.

It is very important to mention that the book is clear and emphatic in breaking countless stereotypes and misunderstandings about the teaching profession that come from policy makers and from the profession itself. For example, the authors develop arguments about how unproductive a private classroom is, the lack of professionalism and judgment on how important it is for individual teaching autonomy to be replaced by professional teaching autonomy. Also, at the school level, they argue against deformations and misconceptions about the real meaning and operation of a collaborative teaching culture (i.e. Balkanisation, constrained collegiality, professional communities, inefficient networks, see p. 106, Chapter 6).

While professional capital refers to collective and public building of teaching, business capital is focused on individual improvement of teachers, even though teaching involves collective interactions. This gives rise to notions that the authors consider to be the incorrect way to rebuild an entire profession: incentives, merit payments, penalties and remuneration based on performance are a mechanical and private sector way of viewing the teaching practice. In contrast, professional capital implies that teaching is a collective construction where systemic improvement requires investment in relationships and permanent structures to support them.

For this reason, the authors heavily criticise certain key ideas that predominate over teaching, for example:

- That 'individual teacher' effectiveness is the most important factor to explain differences in performance (ignoring their collective basis)
- That teaching consists of vocation and talent (reducing it to mere features, simplifying its complexity and ignoring its professional cultivation)
- That individual pressure will improve teaching (ignoring its incremental nature, the high cost of investment and associative development)

The book is well-founded theoretically. Indeed, the substantive ideas in the book follow a tradition of seminal empirical educational studies. The work of James Coleman (1989), *Social capital in the creating of human capital*, which empirically illustrates the way in which relational social capital impacts on academic achievement, establishing the principle of co-dependence between different types of capital and the importance of social ties and cooperation in organisational effectiveness; also, the Bryk & Schneider (2002) study, *Trust as a resource for school improvement*, on the impact on performance of interpersonal and relational trust in schools (trust between teachers, between teachers and managers, between managers and families, between students and teachers), and subsequently the work of Robin Alexander (2000), *Culture and Pedagogy*, whose comparative and longitudinal research over 10 years in 5 countries (India, UK, U.S., France, and Russia) pave the way for a definition of pedagogy as a situated practice, that is culturally shaped, contextually challenged, professionally structured and prepared to respond with expert judgment to the broad educational needs of students. This form of practice would not be susceptible to standardisation or automation, or over-testing, or universal prescriptions for action, without threatening its fundamental nature.

Thus, the authors provide conceptual architecture of immense value for the design and assessment of policies, both at the systemic level and in each school. Drawing on compelling evidence and empirical sources, they offer cutting-edge analytical tools for the teaching profession. For this reason, this conceptualisation illuminates the debate that Chile is undertaking on the teaching profession. There are more than a few followers who are inclined to introduce assessment mechanisms with consequences, individual promotion, high prescriptibility or variable salaries in accordance with performance. This is a scheme that, if used wrongly, could restrict cooperation, collaboration and exchange, and promote competition, self-isolation and professional demoralisation.

Conclusion: The Anglophone experience and the Chilean way of school reform

As Ravitch states, the evidence for the U.S. suggests that these policies are undermining public education and the development of critical and creative thinking on the part of students. However, we agree that the evidence discussed here comes from school systems and societies that are very different from those in Chile in terms of their organisation, justice and funding–even when they have followed policies similar to those that Chile has progressively adopted. Hastily accepting revised information could lead to a kind of ecological fallacy where local evidence is extrapolated as a global pattern (*glocality*). The specific manner of national adaptation that global policies have corresponds more to an empirical question to be addressed. However, at the same time, as we cannot automatically accept this evidence and simply assume that it

reflects the inevitable direction for the case of Chile, it should also be accepted that this body of evidence at least is a robust diagnosis that flatly rejects the assertion that PSTA policies have been successful and effective in other countries, thereby supporting their unrestricted universal adoption (consider it a separate question to ask what arguments and evidence have been used to justify the implementation of the *Second or Third Way* policies that Chile is steadily expanding).

Having cleared up the above, in this international setting, it could be argued that Chile is on the way to implementing what Hargreaves & Shirley (2009) have termed the 'Second Way', or what Sahlberg (2010) calls germ reforms or GERM (Global Educational Reform Movement), which are strongly opposed to the policies that have made Finland a world paragon. Regarding Finland, many international reports that extol its achievements *simplify* the set of interacting factors that explain its educational situation. For example, the McKinsey Report (2010) suggests that school systems follow linear paths where the intermediate steps are painful and necessary (standards and pressure).[6] This was never the case in Finland. As recently argued by Pasi Sahlberg–an influential Finnish academic and policy maker–the educational achievements of Finland have a double basis.[7] On one hand, the high level of professionalism and autonomy of the country's teachers and schools, who, despite basing their work within national standards, are not pressured or forced, obliged or monitored to ensure compliance. On the other hand, they have a strong public education system with high levels of funding in which society as a whole deposits its trust. Simultaneously, Sahlberg argues that the only basic consensus among Finnish society, its academics and policy makers is to avoid introducing testing policies, accountability and privatisation. Finnish schools are standardised testing-free zones, since there is a full consensus in Finnish society that the introduction of tests with consequences and which are census-based would hinder the development of creativity and lead to the de-professionalisation of teaching performance. Their conceptualisation of educational assessment is aimed at learning and collective professional development within school organisations.

Paradoxically, although the international evidence indicates it is not advisable, the country has made this set of reforms a reality in recent legislation (LGE or Law 20,529 on Quality Assurance in Education). Even though this set of regulations was considered in order to moderate the market from the beginning (Superintendency) and promote improvement in schools (Agency of Quality), what underlies its operational logic is the consolidation of market mechanisms in education, reinforcement of the principle of individual competition and pressure for school improvement, disregard for public education and the introduction of accountability devices with consequences as a driver for the creation of capacity in the school system. These *Second Way* policies are introduced despite the fact that there is limited or disputed evidence about their effectiveness.

In the meantime, there are many different recommendations that this group of literature provides to identify the likely limits, risks and side effects that such reforms could produce in our school system. The recommendation for policy makers and state education agents (advisors, regulators, supervisors) is to avoid taking decisions based on ideologies or dogmas and address the evidence. Although the new setup of the educational institutions in Chile has been legislated for and is now in operation, the debate about their operation follows other timescales and rationales where new information could reignite debate and introduce measures in time to mitigate the side effects that these policies could have. Meanwhile, at intermediate and local level, these books offer practical recommendations on how to adopt, adapt and co-design the foundations of this wave of policies that are underway. These books will also offer educational researchers a research agenda to study the domestic impact of the new policies under debate. If Anglophone experience is only an antecedent, then ahead lies an extensive agenda of exploration and inquiry into the impact of PSTA policies on the Chilean school system, its actors, schools and classrooms.

Through the publication of these books, Chile has the advantage of access to a detailed analysis of the impacts, risks and successes that these policies have had in other school systems. It is no bad thing to have a retrospective analysis so as to provide a glimpse of the future of the educational policies on which Chile is currently relying and has channelled all of its energy.[8]

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[6] A recent criticism of the McKinsey reports can be seen in: Coffield, F. (2012) 'Why the McKinsey reports will not improve school systems', *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(1), 131-149.

[7] Sahlberg, P. (2010) *Finnish Lessons- What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?*. Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

[8] An attempt to conceptualise PSTA policies in the case of Chile can be seen in: Carrasco, A. (2013) 'Mecanismos performativos de la institucionalidad educativa en Chile: pasos hacia un nuevo sujeto cultural', *Observatorio Cultural*, Nº 15, artículo 1. www.observatoriocultural.gob.cl