



Tensions Between Education and Development in Rural Territories in Chile: Neglected Places, Absent Policies

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Abstract

This chapter addresses the relationship between education policy and economic development in rural territories in Chile, and the resulting influences upon school practices and secondary students’ subjectivities. The study is based in the rural settings of Chile, a country with an internationally recognized educational policy frame, as one of the pioneers in introducing radical market mechanisms, with large consequences for educational inequality and segregation. Based on a

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qualitative study developed between 2014 and 2017, and using a poststructural theoretical approach for the analysis, the chapter presents a critical review of the main discursive influences and features in relevant policy frames regarding rural development and rural education policies in Chile and beyond. Additionally, the chapter analyzes voices of academic and policy stakeholders' close to rural education. Together these analyses provide a practical insight to the topic. Rural schooling is presented as an invisible educational reality under an unarticulated policy frame, producing dissimilar educational dynamics in such geographical settings. The absence of focalized educational policies to rural spaces generates diverse assemblages between educational and business institutions, in what can be called as an "intimate relationship" between schools and industrial companies of the zones, where schools, especially through their TVET curricular alternatives, try to fit their educational frames with the labor needs of the companies of the rural zones. This dynamic produces particular educational arrangements, which, concretely, forms particular educational paths for rural students. In those terms, these educational-economic assemblages have a productive power, as they, while influencing and conditioning students' future educational and labor horizons, produce certain type of subjectivities, establishing the margins of what is possible in such social and institutional scenarios.

Keywords

Rural education · Education policy · Rural development · Students' subjectivities · Policy discourses · Neoliberalism

Introduction

The influence of neoliberalism on the Chilean education system is an important and widely investigated contemporary issue. The problem of Chilean social inequality is closely related to a very unequal education system (Valenzuela, Bellei & De los Rios, 2008), which leads to problems of poverty and marginalization. Chilean rural areas epitomize important aspects of poverty and precariousness, and their inhabitants also suffer the consequences of serious inequalities in education provision. It is a task undertaken by this research to go deeper into the problems of these rural settings. State policies, and here educational policies, are understood in this research from a poststructural perspective as political devices – from the public and private spheres – that enact a dominant discourse (Larner, 2000) and seek to express values and worldviews, attitudes and skills, as well as a successful project of social insertion for the students of a particular nation.

Within the context of globalization, neoliberal policy frames have strongly influenced the Latin American political context. Nations like Chile, Peru, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, among others, since the 1980s and 1990s have been adapting and transforming their political and economic conditions in order to respond to their increasing dependence on global markets and neoliberal principles. Thus, the education systems of each country, with their specific

characteristics and modalities, are analytically rich indicators of the social and individual models each territory seeks to develop and consolidate. In Chile, during Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship (1973–1989), particularly in the 1980s, there was a strong diminishment of the public resources allocated to education. In this deep educational reform, the State transferred administrative authority from the Ministry of Education to municipalities, fostering the entry of private schools, and introducing market mechanisms in the system. One of the key factors was the introduction of a schools funding mechanism using vouchers distributed by the State, which in turn was based on a free school choice frame for the families, who, as consumers, would choose school rationally, and schools would improve their academic quality in order to compete and attract more students (and more vouchers with them). In the final years of the dictatorship, the SIMCE (system of education quality measurement) test was created as a tool which sought to assess all the schools of the country over the years to measure and control the development of the results of the system. Further policies in the Chilean education system included the design and implementation of a national curriculum in the 1990s, which has since undergone further changes. This sought to offer equal contents and skills to the whole population, which could thence be assessed by the SIMCE test. In this scenario, the proportions of public and private educational provision changed over time, from almost 80% public provision in 1980 to 53% private-subsidized in 2015 (MINEDUC, 2015; Paredes & Pinto, 2009).

This chapter show some analysis and findings developed during a qualitative research made between 2014 and 2018 (Oyarzún, 2018). In this chapter, the focus is on rural education policy – especially those initiatives related to secondary schooling – using Chile as the case of study. It begins by referring to some theoretical definitions about spaces and places considering the geographical scope of this study; secondly, it will then offer some Chilean rural definitions and its rural development strategy as a context for the main educational policy analysis and discussion of this study. Then, it will outline what is stated about rural education from international sources. The second part will show part of the policy analysis developed in this research, with a critical review of the Chilean rural education policy from the official documents and from the voice of academics and policy implementers. It will conclude with a brief discussion, stating the main findings of the analysis developed.

(Rural) Space/Place and Policies: The Spatial and Economic Chilean Context

Conceptually, from Doreen Massey's work, one of the key factors to understand the geographical and social configurations of places and spaces, and to comprehend their inequalities and positions of power, is related to the capitalist order of the economy, its industries, companies, and different chains of organization and production. The organization of work is settled in geographical ways, and it reflects as well the hierarchic (and therefore, unequal) order that each organization develops in itself. It is quite clear that in many instances the managerial positions

of a company are in certain cities, and the industrial work is in others (Massey, 2001). This organizational situation brings differences not only in the type and the quality of the labor, but in incomes, range of decisions, and labor stability, among other things. This recreates divergent cultures, wealth or poverty, modes of development, institutional practices, and, along with that, biographies and forms of subjectivation. Hence, inequality is a consequence of uneven economic distribution, throughout the chains of production of firms and industries, a matter of relations of production, which together generate a “new spatial division of labour” (Massey, 2004, p. 122), new configurations of space and place, a new “geography of the social structure” (Massey, 2004, p. 116).

From a geographical perspective, public policy definitions and implementations can be analyzed based on the core–periphery tension, in which the definitions and designs of specific policies are thought nationally from the center, from the capitals, from which the main offices of the State are governing and planning. The political economy of the State limits the financial possibilities of designing policies specific to each context and its particularities. With this dynamic, the core perspective becomes the true and only diagnostic of the national (and sometimes global) reality, forgetting or denying the marginal places, which for several reasons seem not to matter for the national approach: “you can’t have a ‘core’ region without the simultaneous and inter-related construction of ‘non-core’, or ‘periphery’” (Massey, 2001, p. 7). What ends up happening is the design of a *national* policy, with small modifications applied to limited local realities, and the national approach risks losing pertinence and efficacy depending on each context, offering wrong solutions to misdiagnosed problems, sometimes with unanticipated, untoward consequences. This is one of the issues that are addressed in this research regarding national education policies applied to diverse rural places.

Policies can perceive marginal areas as places where development should arrive through strategies which have succeeded in urban areas or nationally, because the rural territories are considered as stragglers of development who must be included in the national path, in the national economy, and the market. But these perspectives cannot acknowledge the relational tensions of (neoliberal) progress, in which inequality is produced by the same model of development, so different places are connected spatially more closely than they appear from an essentialist geographical view, where every place appears as isolated and possessing a unique and differentiated essence.

Outlining “Rural” in the Chilean Case

The rural space today is more than a reality lagging behind urban development; it is constituted by complex spatial relations, through nonlinear processes of development, and representing particular cultures, practices, and social relations. The rural is alive beyond its territorial official frontiers; it is present also in the urban as a rural-urban dynamic where populations live with their own

understanding of the world, their history, projecting their future as individuals and communities. The geography of the rural is changing; it is hybridizing between rural and urban characteristics; it is disconnected internally across countries and regions. Thus, the rurality, more than retreating, is being transformed and located in diverse settings, rural and urban sites which influence each other. From this point of view, agricultural work, for instance, rather than diminishing, is diversifying in new and hybrid ways where the traditional activities are being combined with others derived from further industries. From the OECD's (2006) conceptual attempt to establish a "new rural paradigm," the "new rurality" is a conceptual effort in response to the changes provoked by the global and neoliberal order, a way to offer solutions and opportunities to the new problems generated in the rural sphere by the internationalization of the markets.

There are different perspectives around what defines a rural territory; for instance, the UN recommends not adopting uniform criteria to assess diverse realities, avoiding the application of external rationalities and calculations to particular realities and their contexts. In the case of Chile, urban areas are defined by a population living in concentrated housing with more than 2,000 inhabitants, or between 1,000 and 2,000 with at least 50% working actively in secondary or tertiary activities. So rural is everything that is not urban. From the official records, rural lacks its own definition; it is understood by opposition and is ultimately a residual category. From this national official definition, the rural population in Chile reaches 13% (out of 17 million approx.).

International bodies contribute with different definitions and calculations of a rural territory. Applying each criterion to the Chilean case, its rural population varies in important ranges. The OECD defines a density criterion (a density below 150 residents per km²), and applying this measure in Chile, 42% of the population would be considered as predominantly rural. The World Bank adds to the OECD threshold of 150 people/km² a criterion of remoteness, including zones a distance of more than 1 h travel time from cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants (De Ferranti, Perry, Foster, Lederman, & Valdés, 2005). With this approach, the rural population in Chile reaches 36%. The CEPAL approach states that a rural area is defined by the OECD density definition (<150 inhabitants/km²) plus at least 35% of the population being economically active in agricultural activities; in that case, the Chilean rural population is represented by a 21% (Dirven et al., 2011). Based on a methodology by clusters, and centering the analysis in the agricultural practices, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states that the rural population in Chile is as high as 39% (UNDP, 2008).

The different definitions and calculations presented of what is rural nowadays, and the different outcomes in their applications in the case of Chile show that this is an ongoing matter, an unresolved issue. Every definition gives a different version of rurality, calculations with different and crucial consequences when identifying territories, which bring different rationalities to designing and planning public (and educational) policies.

Economic Development Perspectives for Rural Areas in Chile

The absence of a development model for rural zones in Chile is one of the key conclusions of the OECD report about rural development in Chile (OECD, 2014), which is shared by other researchers such as Pezo (2007). This last author describes the scenario for Chilean rurality in three levels of production with their main actors and roles: First the big companies, highly modernized, linked to the exportation and the global agricultural markets, associated with other economic sectors of the country or international investors. Second, big or medium units of production, moderately modernized, oriented to the national market. Third, small, family producers oriented to direct consumption or local markets, in low-profitability sectors, in an asymmetric relation with big productive and commercial chains, in situations of poverty, with low education levels and marginalized from the agricultural modernity. According to official records (INDAP, 2014), this agricultural sector is composed of 278,000 small units of production and 1.2 million people approx. (Pezo, 2007, p. 93).

Viveros Zapata (2010) outlines a discourse analysis of the rural development in Chile and points out discursive elements towards the politicization and economization of the rural population during the second half of the twentieth century onwards. The rural development strategy was based in an economic perspective, and the market was in charge of the well-being of the people and the development of the country. During the last four decades, economic policies replaced the notion (discourse) of the peasant by that of the small farmer, the first understood from his social and political condition, the second from his productive possibilities, as an economic agent (Viveros Zapata, 2010). The peasant was politicized during the agrarian reform period (1962–1973) and debate, and commodified during the dictatorship (1973–1989) until the present day. This last period constitutes a process in which the rural development takes place in the “macro scenario of market integration, which means that [the State] transforms its guidelines and subsidizes the transfer from a family subsistence economy towards a rural family microenterprise” (Viveros Zapata, 2010, p. 13).

Territorially speaking, Moguillansky et al. (2013) argue that the rural and productive development policies in Chile have not considered a territorial approach; instead they have implemented a single national productive policy, ignoring or obscuring the big differences among regions and sectors of the industry. The disparities between regions in terms of diverse economic indicators, such as poverty, employment, and productive development, among others, are not visualized as a matter of public policies but as a market regulation issue, providing information for the agents’ decisions (Moguillansky et al., 2013, p. 5).

What Is Rural Education? Discourses About Rural Education

One question that could arise from this discussion is whether rural education is something clearly different from national or urban education modalities or just adopts some adjustments of those main components. Considering that this question

can have different answers and positions, the UNESCO/INRULED report tries to provide an idea of what rural education is:

- Integrated system composed by literacy education, basic education, vocational/technical education and adult/continuing education.
- A comprehensive change agent and an integral part of the rural socio-economic development.
- Package of academic knowledge and practical skills.
- Common endeavour demanding coordinated inter-departmental/cross-sectional cooperation via education, labour, agriculture extension, health, population welfare, trade, etc. (UNESCO/INRULED, 2001, p. 8).

The definitions offer different perspectives to analyze what rural education is conceptually. First, rural education can be seen as a combination of established education modalities (basic, technical-vocational, continuing), which in rural settings should be integrated and applied in a specific manner. Then, rural education also is part of a wider range of policies under what can be called a *development model*. This range of policies considers the necessity of coordinated cooperation from different policy fields around rural issues, mainly around agriculture and other economic activities. From a collaborative work from UNESCO and FAO (2003), the development – education scheme is understood as the contribution of education to the development of rural zones, in terms of supporting the economic growth through the agricultural activity and training. In practical terms, the contribution of education to the economy can be explained in:

Three forms:

- Education can improve the quality of farmers' labor by enabling them to produce more with their available stock of production factors (other than labor);
- Education can increase the efficiency of resource allocation;
- Education can help farmers to choose more effective means of production by adopting new techniques. (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003, p. 56).

Going back to the question about what rural education is, and what its specificity is, the answer seems to highlight features of coordination, spatiality and economic activity. The rural policy design is – or should be, from these studies – based in the coordination and adequacy of different policies – some of them national policies, others maybe at other regional or local scales – in certain places and zones defined as rural. The possibility of a rural policy exists as long as there is strategic coordination and contextual application; both components can constitute a rural policy. So, a rural education policy falls in the same rationale, and rural education can be understood as coordination of different education policies, applied contextually to rural settings; and at the same time – and this is another particularity of this definition – rural education is more than just education and is connected with other policy fields, mainly labor, agriculture, and development. The linking of education and development could be problematized depending on the approach applied to this field; in a development strategy understood mainly as economic development, education

would again be subsumed within the economic imperative and understood from that perspective through different discourses and technologies (Lemke, 2007), coming together in disarticulated *assemblages* (Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015). This disarticulation can be illustrated in the case of rural technical education, which from UNESCO/FAO's perspective: "Within the public sector, [rural educational] institutions are in most cases affiliated to various ministries and government agencies, often without clear overall coordination" (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003, p. 248). This last topic will be addressed in more detail in later discussions about the Chilean case, and the idea of assemblage will be problematized as well.

Technical vocational education and training (TVET) policies appears as crucial in resolving the current problems of rural areas and populations. The diagnosis, again, is based in the transformation of the rural in the context of a changing and global economy – again, education appears at the service of the economy. The process should adapt efficiently to the context in order to follow a successful developmental path. In this scenario, TVET systems appear as an ideal tool in order to enhance people's possibilities:

The last-changing dynamics of rural-urban interaction and the long shadow of the global market that has touched some of the remotest villages generated demands for flexible and adaptable skills and opportunities for their renewal even in the rural communities. Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) has to be seen in the perspective of lifelong education learning continuum and has to be responsive to both formal and informal economic sectors. (UNESCO/INRULED, 2001, p. 39)

And the UNESCO/FAO research team adds:

Globalization and the need to maintain, through skill development, international competitiveness appear as the strongest force. Associated with globalization is the deep transformation of labour markets, including in rural areas, and the need to adjust training systems and policies accordingly. (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003, p. 249)

Such rhetoric and its assumptions allow the interpretation of two main trends in relation to rural education. First, the "global market" with its "international competitiveness" discourses can be translated, in practice, into the creation of new industries with related working skills and requirements. And second, TVET systems should restructure their educational schemes in order to update their modalities to these new requirements. Both elements lead to a closer relation between industries and education, closer because while the economy constantly changes – crisis being one type of change –, the industries' dynamics are reconfigured permanently, so permanent updating of the educational curricula and pedagogies is more indispensable:

Implications of the transformation of rural labour markets for skill development are critical since training for agriculture, as an explicit goal, is increasingly challenged by the need to prepare for non-farm employment as well as for coping strategies in a rapidly changing environment (. . .). The rapid and deep transformation of jobs and skills is probably the most powerful motivation to change training provision. A lot of attention has been given to the occupational transformation in industry, as a result of both changing work organization and new technologies. (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003, pp. 245, 249)

That permanent updating happens through a closer relation between education and economy, schools and companies (UNESCO/INRULED, 2001). This education–industry linkage in the TVET spectrum expects to offer a proper transition between both domains, where pedagogies and training can be more connected with the actual skills needed in the workplaces, a perspective strongly connected with the principles of the human capital approach.

Moreover, these documents address the problem of centralization regarding the curriculum policy design process and decisions, as such logic imposes national criteria on all social and geographical spaces, forgetting the diversity and particularities of different settings: “The centralized control of curriculum development and state-produced textbooks, the norm in many developing countries, fail to recognize the reality of diverse rural circumstances” (UNESCO/INRULED, 2001, p. 34). This diversity is expressed “in terms of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, gender and hybrid identities,” respect of which “is an essential aspect of human rights and a measure of progress towards building a democratic society” (Ibid., p. 35). Accordingly, a constant exercise of contextualization of the curriculum to rural settings is needed, in order to respond to the demand for and goal of recognition of the diversity and pertinence of the contents, where the role of the agriculture is crucial for rural areas. The centralization of the curriculum definitions and the application of a national testing system – both technologies deployed through specific governance modalities and rationalities – are also issues in the Chilean case, and a systematic and flexible adaptation to rural contexts is still a pending task.

The invisibility of rural space and population as “voiceless,” or that rurality is a secondary concern in the governments’ agendas, is caused by an excessive centralism, accompanied by a disempowerment of those who are beyond the boundaries of the capital/urban/central areas of regions and countries, in a relation that recalls Massey’s postulates regarding spatial inequalities (Massey, 2004). The particularity of this power inequality is portrayed, along with the differences in resources allocation, in spatial visibility/invisibility, in relation to governmental priorities, and in terms of how rural areas are formulated by the State, regarding residual categories of naming and understanding rurality. In several ways in this research, the rural is represented by its negation, oblivion, invisibility, or voicelessness.

Rural Education Policies, Programs, and Initiatives in Chile

Educational policies applied in rural contexts have been developed according to an education established in line with national and urban needs. In Chile, as in other countries in Latin America, primary rural education is based on multigrade schools, where students at different educational levels and ages share the same classroom and are educated through didactic practices adapted to the diversity of the group. According to the Ministry of Education (2013), this type of rural school in Chile accounts for 3,876 of a total of 12,114, but students at primary and

secondary levels comprise 250,000 of a nationwide total of 3,000,000. This different ratio is explained by the lower number of students per school in rural areas, which ranges from 1 to 500. Forty-two percent of these schools had only one teacher (San Miguel, 2005).

Furthermore, rural education encompasses these primary schools, besides 281 secondary schools recognized as rural by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC, 2013). All the programs that are going to be presented later in this section refers to rural primary education, because all the secondary schools operate like every other school in the country. In other words, for the Ministry administration, rural education is mainly primary education in rural settings, deployed through multigrade schools; rural secondary schools are officially acknowledged, but there are no official focalised policies or programs to organize or support them. Besides this, there is another group, called “agricultural” schools, which coexist among other related TVET specializations; some of them are rural, others are not. In Chile exists 139 agricultural secondary schools in the country; this means schools which actually impart agricultural studies in their TVET alternative (MINEDUC states that there are 169 agricultural schools, but is understood as a wider agricultural scope, which involves agricultural and maritime specialities) (MINEDUC, 2013). The agricultural schools are mainly recognized as rural and are located in rural areas, but there are others in semiurban settings, towns, and small cities located in zones which are eminently rural. This complex distribution and nomenclature starts to speak of a rural education policy which lacks clear structuration, and a lack of comprehensive understanding of what rural education is.

As was described earlier, the educational system in Chile financially works through a voucher mechanism, so the monetary transfers from the Ministry to schools are based on the number of students inside the classrooms daily. The agricultural voucher or subvention is the highest among TVET schools, which means many schools seek to offer this type of education in order to receive this higher income, schools that in many cases lack minimum standards. There is also a special subvention for multigrade schools – otherwise it would be impossible to sustain schools with one teacher and a few students. This, again, confusing set of supports under the umbrella of a multifaceted voucher policy constitutes an unstructured – or absent – conception of rural education. Rural education receives higher economic support if the TVET specialization is more expensive to provide – as seems to be the agricultural case – or if the school is located in extreme zones; the criterion in this last case is not the rural nature of a school but its distance calculated in relation to urban places. Both subventions function as technologies of incentives under economic logics (expenditure, costs associated with matters of distance and transport).

Besides these structural policies, there is another group of partial initiatives which seek to contextualize the national educational scheme into the experience of rural settings. The first and main attempt of contextualization of the education system to rural zones over the last 25 years, following the dictatorship of Pinochet, was in 1992 in an initiative called the Programme of Rural Primary Education. It was inserted into the “MECE plan” – “Improvement of the Quality and Equity of Education” – and sought to adapt the guidelines of this national

plan to rural contexts (so it was called “MECE rural plan”). The program gave special funding to develop strategies to train teachers so they could acquire the skills and methods which would adapt the educational process to their schools’ contexts, to generate spaces of connection and common thinking between teachers around teaching practice via “microcenters,” and to provide materials and insights into schooling. This educational program has been the main one focused on rural contexts and synthesizes the policy developed to address this issue. Since 2011, this group of initiatives has partially continued, but not under the name MECE – reflecting updated nomenclature since the 1990s – among other actions, mainly through the strengthening of the microcenters program, the delivery of updated didactic materials, and the development of planning guides for curriculum content adapted to rural settings. Besides this, in 2001, the *Enlaces Rural* – Rural Liaison – program, an extension of the original *Liaison* program developed largely for urban areas, was launched with the purpose of spreading information technology nationwide by the strategy of training of teachers to use these advances.

This last set of efforts is nowadays organized through an (apparently) unique program for rural education, whose only official space for information is a website titled *Educación Rural* (rural.mineduc.cl). Analyzing this source, the program consists mainly in curricular support for teachers, through the supply of contextualized material and guidelines in order to implement adequately the national curriculum. This program and the “microcenters’ are the only initiatives operating in relation to rural education. The website also provides “supporting material” and is focused on the teacher’s role; but it is a tool delivered to all public schools, so it is not contextualized or designed specifically for rural teachers. In addition, the only formal document available to be downloaded from the website is a public decree – No. 968, two pages in length – which allows and regulates in general terms the operation of the microcenters. Finally, there is a broader statement under “Teachers’ professional development in rural territories” which presents the purposes that the current educational reform seeks to achieve in relation to rural teachers. But besides the microcenters and the curricular support, there is nothing new regarding rural education policies or programs. This online statement is focused mainly on multigrade schools, and includes declarations such as:

The purpose of education in these schools is to offer to all students the opportunity to access the skills and learning referred in the national curriculum.

Also:

Teachers’ professional autonomy is related to the necessity of revitalizing the teachers’ rural professional organizations for the informed design of teaching and not only the reception of predefined instructions and procedures.

The importance of this statement in terms of this analysis is that it offers a sort of official discourse regarding rural education. Aside from the fact that the text has

grammatical errors – this detail is mentioned as indicates a lack of care regarding this matter – the statement presents a consideration and understanding of rural zones and their multigrade schools, acknowledging their cultural and geographical particularities; but in practice, there are no other policies or programs than those presented above. And, as the quotes above refer, the practice is problematized by the prevalence of a national policy and the consideration of its contextualization. There seems to be more in the words than in the policies and practices, and in the meantime the national assessment system, based on SIMCE and PSU (University Selection Test) tests, remains unchanged; these are not contextualized, so the curriculum adaptations to rural settings are marginalized from the assessed contents. That is why these programs have been evaluated under the criteria of coverage and the results on the SIMCE test. While the first indicator of coverage showed an efficient territorial extension of each program, the second about results did not show promising outcomes, only relative improvements. In brief, rural education policies appear to be more an adaptation of didactics than a substantive refocusing of the model of education, the curriculum, and its main purposes and strategies. This aligns with the UNESCO/INRULED diagnosis where one of the problems in terms of relevance in rural education is linked with the centralism in the programs' design and governments' perspective.

Before continuing, some words to what can be understood as a rural education policy will be outlined, and why despite its discoordination and unsystematic design – if there is an actual design, or just a sum of isolated initiatives – it will continue making reference to a *policy*. Using the INRULED definition outlined in a previous section of this chapter, it assumes rural education as a set of coordinated policies, applied and contextualized in rural settings. So, recapping, there are two principles here: one, the policy as a coordinated intervention; and secondly, the policy as a contextualized strategy. It is possible to postulate a third way, that there could be a traditional, specific rural policy, a policy with its own structure and purposes, like the Chilean curriculum policy for example, or the rural education policy of Uruguay (ANEP/CEIP, 2016). Regarding this last option, there is no independent rural education policy in the case of Chile. But the other two principles provoke a deeper analysis in order to make a fair judgment. First, regarding rural education policy as a coordinated initiative, in the Chilean educational policy frame, there is not a coordinated set of national policies with a rural approach. There are isolated and disconnected programs and different supports for rural education and its teachers, and in the Ministry of Education, there is no formal department in charge of those actions. Regarding the criteria of contextualization, there are curricular tools directed to primary rural teachers, such as the micro-centers, which is an initiative focused only on primary rural teachers. From these cases, it is possible to talk about contextualized actions. But there still are two points that prevent us from talking about an established rural education policy. The first is that the INRULED definition refers not to a coordinated *or* contextualized set of interventions, but rather a coordinated *and* contextualized group of policies. Even if we accept that there is an application of a sort of contextualization principle, it is not united by a coordination to identify a rural education policy.

And second, all the contextualization efforts are focused on primary education and the multigrade schools, the secondary level is not considered, much less the tertiary one. This last point again speaks of a very fragmented set of actions, without a clear, coordinated plan and purpose. In the same way, all these strategies are far from the conceptualization offered by UNESCO/FAO, which relates rural education to a wider strategy of rural development – a strategy which, as was previously analyzed, is considered as “absent.” There is a lack of a coordinated and systematic State rural education policy, and the government’s approach lacks any concerted relation to an idea of rural development.

So, why still using the word “policy” in relation to these disarticulated initiatives? Because the understanding of policy applied in this research draws on Ball’s analysis (1993), where policy can also be a disorganized group of actions, run by different actors, influenced by stakeholders and put into practice differently in similar or dissimilar contexts. Rural education is still going on in rural settings, even if this happens in tension with a lack of coordinated or unified State policy. And this analysis will allow a critical discussion about the features of the rural education as a policy, pointing out its tensions, problems, interests, and particularities.

Perspectives from Academics and (Private) Policy Makers

In this qualitative research (Oyarzun, 2018) were developed a series of interviews to key actors of educational policies in Chile; in this chapter will be used those interviews directly related to rural education. As an introduction to the interviewees, presented in the chronological order of the interviews during the fieldwork, the first – to be referred to in this research as “RuralAc-1” (Rural Academic) – is a teacher and academic, coordinator of an undergraduate program about rural education and local development at a public university in Chile; the second – “RuralAc-2” – is a PhD in Education and coordinator of the master’s program about local and human development at another public university in the south of Chile; and the third is in this case a group of three persons, members of the educational office of a relevant agricultural business association (all these interviews will be called as ABA onwards) in the country, which administrates more than 20 of the 132 agricultural secondary schools in Chile. The first two interviewees are considered experts in their respective fields: RuralAc-1 in rural pedagogy, and RuralAc-2 besides rural education in topics of development and intercultural and indigenous education. In relation to the ABA, during the Pinochet dictatorship, the transferring of State schools to municipalities excepted 20 of the agricultural schools, which were transferred to this ABA because of its knowledge in rural education and agriculture (a similar process occurred with another 50 schools, which were transferred to other associations and corporations.). So, from this point of view, this ABA will be considered, besides its expertise gained from its experience, as a policy implementer, and from that position as a policy designer too, as it develops its own plans and strategies in rural education, a function permitted by the Chilean law of education under the principle of teaching freedom

(article 3). Continuing, in the next section will be analyzed the main passages, ideas, discourses, and perspectives from the interviewees towards the Chilean rural education policy.

An Absent Policy

Have you ever heard someone talk about rural education in Chile? (ABA)

(. . .) in any public discourse, he has never mentioned the word *rural*. Never. It has been a year with this minister [of education] and he hasn't mentioned the word *rural*! (RuralAc-1)

These quotations show the interviewees' mood regarding the relevance of rural education in the Chilean context. A sense of oblivion and lack of importance in the perspective of the State in relation to rural education influences the diagnosis of rural education as a low priority for governments, and the current state of rural schools is a reflection of that lack of attention, which translates as a nonexistent formal rural education policy. The interviewees offer different hypotheses in relation to this issue. RuralAc-2, for his part, explains this absence by an equality principle among all schools, "without any distinction (. . .). [H]ence, I think that there is no policy in rural education." Here appears a sense of centralism in the policy, which also appeared in the national curriculum policy and in UNESCO's perspectives, where the national prevails over the regional and local, erasing special or different treatments of schools, populations, or zones. This centralism is connected with a lack of sensitivity towards social diversity. This issue is also linked to the rural development model, where the rural and distant (from the main cities) zones and their particularities are also erased.

Against this oblivion and neglectment towards rurality, from the interviewees there is a rural culture, locally and historically developed, linked to geographical and social-relational aspects strongly connected with the agricultural activity. This activity is a medium between rural inhabitants and the land where they live, so inasmuch as the agriculture modalities and organization change, the rural life changes too. The issue about the development model is important, because, as was analyzed earlier, in the Chilean case it appears as historically and politically imposed in the last 50 years, through policies which in different ways make visible or invisible the rural voices. The current neoliberal model organizes a market-orientated development based on private investment, which has provoked changes for the rural inhabitants, in their work possibilities and in their relations to the land and the urban settings around them.

These rural particularities are being neglected by the State policies in Chile under what is defined by RuralAc-2 as a "political-theoretical approach which does not recognize the territorial diversity of the country," which is translated in the educational field under the notion of a "unique school," that is, "the idea that in Chile there is only one school [and] any modification has to do fundamentally with certain

curricular adaptations (. . .) but no more than that.” This has neglected the possibility of a particular policy for rural areas, because “if it weren’t for the multi-grade schools, they would be all the same.” This view is shared by the ABA managers, who perceive that the policy consists in “programmes which are basically national, and which do not have much relation to what is happening to a young student, or how to take advantage of the resources of their locality.” So, from these perspectives, the rural educational policy is based on uncoordinated initiatives, curricular adaptations made, paradoxically, by the central government, and in primary education on the establishment of multigrade schools, which logistically have brought increased economic costs to the State, provoking the closure of many of them in recent years. These rural school closures can be considered as another serious symptom of the lack of sensitivity of the central government towards distant locations, “because the view that they have in Santiago, where all the policies, programmes and projects are identified, does not understand that [rural] schools, even if they are very small, play a key role in the territorial development of regions” (RuralAc-2). Again, rural voicelessness and invisibility are consequence of these strategies based on economic rationalities applied through a model of distance governance.

The diagnosis can be outlined in educational policies designed with a “strong urban character” (RuralAc-2), and the rural schools are limited, in the best of the cases, to adapt “policies that are implemented for urban sectors” (ABA). The urban is understood here in curriculum contents framed by urban experiences, an urban perspective which is translated in rural education policies with a lack of systematic rural teachers’ support, as there is no systematic policy regarding this matter, poor understanding of the multigrade classroom, lack of support to rural secondary schools, and agricultural TVET education – and TVET education in general – left in the hands of private or isolated initiatives.

But even the supposed curriculum flexibility – claimed by the “freedom of teaching” precept, stated in the Chilean law – fails in its practical implementation (by this precept, the national curriculum and its study programmes are not compulsory for the schools, so they can develop their own curriculum programmes, based only on the key principles and objectives of the national one.). The case of the ABA is illustrative in this point. Before the implementation of the 1998 national curriculum – the main curricular design in the last decades – the management of SNA organization were accustomed to design and teach their own curriculum, as they have the resources to do so. But after the 1998 curricular reform, they argued to the Ministry of Education that the national curriculum was excessive: “it was not possible to move forward as we don’t have any freedom to adapt it to the [rural] localities.” As that discussion did not get a significant response from the policy makers, this ABA decided that the curriculum was going to be updated internally, because it could not wait for the eventual official updates, which if they ever came, could already be outdated in terms of disciplinary contents and skills. But then, though the SIMCE national test had been implemented since the late 1980s, only in 2008 this assessment became “an important tool in the measurement of our schools”; so, one effect of this was to insert logic of competence in and between these schools.

As the SIMCE, and PSU as well, are aligned to the national curriculum contents, the ABA has to abandon its idea of adapting the curriculum to the rural particularities of its schools and stick to the official curriculum. This experience can help explain rural education policy, where even the small margins of adaptation are absorbed by the pressure of the national tests. This case shows the overwhelming centrality of the education policy in Chile, the devastating power deployed by its assessment technologies, and how through this system the rural component in rural education is made irrelevant; there is a lack, ultimately, of a systematic or coordinated rural education policy.

This point is also raised by UNESCO, regarding the lack of political prioritization of rural zones in the agendas of governments. This can be related to the previous strand associated with economic reasons, which have led to the previously mentioned closures of rural primary schools. It highlights a type of treatment from the State towards rural populations and education. RuralAc-1 states that:

We are invisible (. . .). Nowadays [the idea] has been installed that it's better to buy a bus, take the children [out of] rural schools and take them to study in the city, and to close rural schools. Because it is more economical, children are going to learn more, they are going to be in the city (. . .). [H]ere what matters is the economic issue.

The political and economic invisibility of rural places and education is connected with historical processes, to which RuralAc-1 provides some insights on this matter. Since the half of the 19th century, the Chilean State established the teacher education in the so-called normal schools, which also offered training for rural education in particular. That system was stopped at the beginning of the dictatorship in the mid-1970s, and the teacher training was transferred to universities, which did not consider the urban/rural distinction in their programs. This brought the oblivion of the rural education, and “between 74 and 97, nobody, nobody cared (. . .) about rural schools. And when we returned to democracy (. . .) the most unprotected schools, in the worst situation, with teachers with problems of alcoholism, teachers without certification, etc., were the (. . .) rural schools.” The reference to 97 is in relation to the implementation of the mentioned rural initiatives towards education, MECE and microcenters, and the beginnings of tertiary educational programs about rural education. As has been pointed out in this study, the dictatorship is a key period in defining the current rural status, the rural policies, and rural education; and as RuralAc-1 claims, this process of oblivion has brought several consequences in the rural life, in teachers' and students' subjectivities, and in the whole educational process and institutions, in a system under highly precarious conditions.

Moreover, RuralAc-1 also refers to the division of the rural education in primary and secondary, but with different supports and administrative units between them, along with the presence of “agricultural” schools. This intricate organization and terminology is related, again, to a disarticulated system and uncoordinated rural education policy, or even confusion about what a rural school actually is. Besides, the ABA also argues there is a lack of articulation between

educational cycles, where there is little communication between primary and secondary rural/agricultural schools, and less between secondary and the options in tertiary education. As a last point in relation to the disarticulation of the rural educational policy, RuralAc-2 points out that there is another strand in relation to rural education, which is intercultural education, a policy focused on indigenous populations. Without going further into the unique problems of this last policy – or asking, again, whether this initiative can be called a State “policy” – the indigenous population in Chile is generally located in rural zones, but this intercultural strategy is disconnected from all the efforts regarding rural population. Explicitly, the rural programs do not incorporate intercultural elements, and the intercultural programs do not integrate rural components developed in rural programs; so, both initiatives run in parallel inarticulately. Hence, again, the coordination feature argued to identify a rural education policy does not appear in this case, and the system operates under different logics, through isolated actions and different understandings of dissimilar strategies.

As was explained earlier, the agricultural subvention is the highest among TVET schools, schools that present many problems, as the ABA argues: “What is an agricultural school? It is a group of houses, a couple of hectares, and hopefully a tractor. And that is what they call an ‘agricultural school’.” This issue is linked with the previous problem of precariousness and an incentive technology, based on an economic or market logic, with contradictory effects, in a context where education can be seen as a potential opportunity for business and profit (The current educational reform initiated by president M. Bachelet (2014-2018) still in process, pursues the elimination of profit in education, but years of experience and evidence will be needed to analyse how effective this new measure is resulting). So, schools managed by private bodies and supervised at a distance by the State – supervision based on technologies of general accountability and the control of the class attendance voucher – generate a system with very variable outcomes, and in rural cases, those outcomes tend to be precarious. Instead of a technology of incentives, it becomes in many cases a technology of precarization.

One positive critique from RuralAc-1 is related to the microcenters program, described as a space where teachers meet to share and debate their strategies and problems, building a pedagogical supportive network. The academic states that this strategy, despite being formalized by the Ministry of Education, is an initiative which has its roots in other international experience, such as the Colombian case, where “the small rural schools, in order to subsist, group themselves.” Its origins are therefore with teachers and rural communities; and in the Chilean experience “through the microcentres (. . .) teachers start to revalidate themselves, start to realize that they also can do it, they have the solutions for the problems that they have in schools.” The microcenters program can be understood as a policy borrowed from other national contexts, but it has its impulse beyond the border of the State, even acts against the oblivion of teachers’ needs in the State context. It can be understood, in its original and foreign causes and purposes, as a strategy of resistance against their discursive irrelevance, which, once formalized as State policy, can provoke institutional dynamics that could be problematized as well. In the case of Chile,

regardless of its *top-down* implementation, the policy has brought autonomy and an institutional self-support space to teachers, and has had fruitful times in the last two decades, although the recent closure of schools has brought a weakening of the microcenters along with it.

Rural Transformation

The apparent freezing of the rural–urban migration (12–13% steady in the last decade) has not stopped the reduction of family-based small farming activity and the growth of agri-business production developed by big companies. So, settled rural populations, generally speaking, must now either work in these large estates or find a job in nearby semiurban surroundings. This phenomenon has brought a situation, in RuralAc-2's words, where:

(...) we have fewer people [working] in rural zones, fewer peasants, fewer small farmers, fewer agricultural workers, and that implies that the basic condition of regional development is compromised, and, I will say, in the most capitalistic way possible: the use of a human resource, of a natural resource for development (...). As long as people continue emptying the [small] farms, these are going to be occupied by bigger producers, which are going to apply a more extensive economy.

This can be understood as one practical facet of the so-called *rural transformation*, the *new rurality* or *rurban* experience, which has been reconfigured socially and economically by the free neoliberal markets, as the main strategy for rural development. As was analyzed above, the Chilean rural development model has been based on the forces of the market under a neoliberal strategy, which replaces the local farming, and the family tenancy of the land, by the industrial farming and the transnational tenancy of the land. This is how the Chilean rural landscape is being transformed in a process that has been happening during the last three decades and is still occurring at different velocities.

Under the scope of a rural neoliberal transformation, schools – and the education policies in them – can serve as a medium between places and spaces as well as between rural localities and rural spatial transformations. In this medium different movements in relation to the economy, the rural–urban connection, the educational and labor possibilities for students, and the configuration of an uncertain future converge. Because the education policies here analyzed present a discourse of the world and society, and constitute technologies that shape individual subjectivities, in an image of a life path to be followed through education and work.

Furthermore, going back again to the relation between education and development in rural places, and also related to the mentioned rural school closures, RuralAc-2 analyzes the link between schools and their geographical contexts, as places where people live and organize their social life. As it was said before, the gravity of the school closures has to do mainly with the role that they have in rural communities as gathering places in zones where houses are remotely located. A

school closure affects the communitarian life of rural people (Nuñez et al., 2014), and the new alternative, to take a bus to go to an urban school, is illustrative of a policy which does not consider rural life, and transfers it, violently, towards the city. Together with that demonstration of a lack of support – the impersonal central decision to just close the school – there is a lack of perspective about the role of rural education, in rural schools, for rural development. If it does not matter where the school is, there is no spatial connection between the educational process and the rural life and its development.

Furthermore, as the development is driven by the markets, also schools are influenced by that social and economic environment, an environment marked by a stronger rural–urban connection and a fact that also challenges the schooling process in these settings. Even acknowledging that “rural education [should] be intimately related to its context,” today “the rural context has changed brutally (. . .). [W]e are passing towards an occupation of the rural scene which is (. . .) industrialized, with forestry companies in all the south of Chile (. . .)” (RuralAc-2). This industrial occupation in rural areas is happening with forestry and salmon companies in the south, large vineyards in the central valley, and enormous mines in the north, as examples of this contemporary development model. How do education policies and schools respond to this economic context? Along with the loss of land, families’ and students’ subjectivities are affected by surroundings marked by the presence of big industries, which because of their size, covering the largest parts of the rural economic landscape, limit the labor possibilities for the zone.

Regarding the previous issue about the responses of rural education policy under this development model, the ABA’s testimony is, again, very illustrative. They were active witnesses of the changes imposed in education during the dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s: during that time there was the assumption that the technical-vocational education was not being effective, because of its disconnection with industries, so the government decided to give part of the schools’ administration to business associations, which, as they were part of the industries, better knew their own needs. One of these business associations was this ABA, as the representative of the agricultural industry. This transfer process, known as “delegated administration,” resulted in a transfer of 20 schools to this ABA. The problem addressed was about “the low labour insertion of students in Chile,” under a diagnosis which assumed “that there was a poor relation between the industrial or business world and the educational world, so putting the business associations in [charge of] schools was the end of the problem.” The delegated administration constituted a policy which strongly linked the business entities with schools, a technology that links the industrial activity with the schooling process, as an initiative which was pursued to promote better employment rates among youth and in rural zones. This was a solution through “an intimate relationship between the business world and the educational world.” This issue around this *intimate relationship* between schools and industries is encompassed in this research as one of the key factors in the rural education in Chile; this is the dynamic that seems to be more present in these settings. This fact also resembles one of UNESCO’s perspectives regarding the

recommendation of an *effective partnership* between TVET schools and industries in rural settings (UNESCO/INRULED, 2001). Beyond the delegated administration, this research inquires whether this intimacy is part of what is understood as rural (education) transformation, and how this neoliberal relation operates as it impregnates deeply the economic activity in the educational field, along with the market logic in it.

As long as few big companies and industries populate rural areas and places, a strong dependency of schools on big companies may be probable, in a context where education policies and the rural development model are based on market logics and private investment. In the case of the ABA, it developed its own model of technical-vocational education in its schools – as a diffuse TVET policy operates here again. This ABA's model, nowadays, works through a technical curriculum designed in modules, from which the schools select those that are more pertinent to their economic environment. That design responds “not to what we believe students should learn. It is what the productive sector says to us in relation to the requirements of the profile of the student.” This curricular TVET guideline is set in accordance not with educational foundations but economic ones, transforming the schools in a neoliberal *dispositif* (Bailey, 2013) which, more than educating, trains for specific workplaces demanded by the big companies. This modality is also a technology of subjectivation (Foucault, 1988), as the industry states the requirements of the profile of the student/worker; so, in the ABA case, the profile of the student to be educated is merged with the profile of the worker needed by the companies, in a deep economization of the educational process and the students' subjectivities promoted by the schools. But even though this ABA managers state that they offer more than what is available in the industry, they also state that these options are “too risky” for students, as they may not find a job later, and for schools, as they could fail in their employability goals. In a context where the schools compete for students' enrolment, the strategy is to expand towards those areas of the rural economy where there are options to undertake further business and entrepreneurship. So here it is possible to outline a profile of the worker and a profile of the entrepreneur, both institutionally produced through a complex *dispositif* in which come together educational strategies, economic needs, and development and educational models based on market logics.

The Profile of the Rural Student from the Rural Education Policy: The Prefigured Worker-Employee

Continuing from the final point of the previous section and following from the perspectives towards rural education policies and issues around rural transformation and development, the profile of “the student to be educated” will be outlined, as represented and constructed within the initiatives and programs discussed. This topic responds to the characteristics of the (absent) rural educational policy and the current rural transformation, and it deals with the relations and tensions produced by this situation.

RuralAc-1 provides some historical background to this “student to be educated” inasmuch that during the twentieth century, rural education was focused on the training of peons or large-estate workers; this underwent change during the period of the agrarian reform which promoted an educational perspective conceiving of the peasant as an active citizen. Further changes during the dictatorship were focused on the small farmer as the object/subject of neoliberal policy. Now, during the period of democracy, MECE Rural and other initiatives have sought to increase quality in rural education and educate a well-prepared student for the world of work or subsequent studies. RuralAc-2, from his side, has a very categorical view in relation to the type of student that rural education seeks to educate; a complex tension between explicit purposes and subtle strategies coexist in rural education, whereby the purpose of rural schools is:

(...) from a more capitalistic logic, fundamentally in the training of labour and productive skills in all their levels, [from a] basic level, [through] a more qualified level, until the expert level mainly oriented to the formation of a labour productivity, which in the discourse is associated with business [capacity], but in practice is the training of salaried employees.

This point is developed further by RuralAc-2, who states that rural students graduate from schools:

(...) with a, and I am going to say it harshly, proletariat mentality (...). [T]hey leave schools as [false] entrepreneurs (...). [M]any can use the words *innovator*, *entrepreneur*, and that sort of thing (...) [but they] should be replaced by *proletariat*. Period. Because, ultimately, they end up being that. Studies (...) showed that [students who learned the vocation of agricultural technician at secondary level] are not working as such, none of them has power over anyone, all of them were instructed by others; they didn't give any jobs to women because they (...) were too weak to carry weight, then, that kind of thing. I think that it is a falsehood.

This argument is very provocative, but it shows part of the intuitions of this research. The word *proletariat* evokes Marxist perspectives in relation to the working class during industrialization; that meaning and the one used by RuralAc-2 suggest lower – or even the lowest – hierarchical positions in labor organizations, as the destiny to be fulfilled by rural students after receiving education and training in rural schools – through education policies acting within them. This is not the isolated result of unjust labor structures but of a common logic, a discourse materialized in a smooth path between the educational and labor fields in these settings. Using the terms of the previous section, the profile of the student matches with the profile of the worker, or employee as distinct from an independent entrepreneur – in the lowest positions of a labor hierarchy. While Foucault employs the notion of *entrepreneur of the self* (see Rose 1996a), as the subject who continually works on himself under an entrepreneurial discourse; here, in contrast, it may be possible to outline a *prefigured worker-employee*, making reference to the condition of salaried worker mentioned by RuralAc-2. This subjectivity is produced throughout the rural educational process, as a subject meant to work in certain workplaces, in an economic context narrowed and dominated by a few big companies and industries, so their education corresponds to the skills needed by those workplaces.

From his academic and research experience, and from his knowledge about rural life, RuralAc-2 believes that the above issue generates conflicts among rural students' subjectivities. Even though there are students who "want to stay and [who] like the countryside," they will only work in similar tasks and under similar conditions to their parents; then they will ask: "I studied technical education. But, what were my studies for? To just go back to work like my dad?" This issue relates to the pertinence of the training offered by schools in relation to the needs of the large-estate production, which can provide a mismatch with rural students' expectations or with what people in rural places want to develop.

Discussion

The Absence of Policy as a Technology of Invisibility

The first discussion point of this chapter can be outlined through the collection of all those terms and references related to rural education policy as an absent policy, terms (as codes) related to *voicelessness*, *invisibility*, *disarticulation*, and *centralism/urbanism*, among others. The issue raised in every section of this chapter about a disarticulated set of programs and initiatives, which, under a broader understanding of the concept, can be likewise called *rural education policy*. Hence, from the discourse of rural education as an absent policy, it is possible to problematize its backgrounds and effects, in terms of the status which this *policy* gives to the voice of its individual beneficiaries, and the features of their places. In short: the rural education policy in Chile is a disarticulated set of uncoordinated actions, each centrally designed, planned, and implemented, which do not consider either the voice or the particularities of the rural population and their spaces; it is thus ultimately an *absent policy*, not only because no established policy can be identified, but also because this absence seems not to matter, and is not named in the governmental public discourse or agenda – a fact also reflected in the lack of research around this topic in the Chilean academic context. This discursive configuration on rural education, a discourse of neglect, constitutes a forgotten place, settings without voice and relevance, where the imposition of centralist discourses and policies enacts a governmental strategy which in its national visibility (curriculum, assessment) and its local-rural invisibility operates at the mercy of the free market, leaving schools – and their actors within them – under an asymmetrical relation to the forces of the economy.

The Intimate Relation and the Problem of Development

Secondly, one significant discourse seen in this section is the *intimate relation* between education and industries/companies/business in rural scenarios. This intimacy can be understood also as a dependency of the educational field on the economic one. This intimate dependency has effects on educational practice in

rural settings, practice that reshapes the absent rural education policy under the frame of the *rural transformation*. Here the ambiguity of the concept of *absence* acquires more relevance in relation to the rural education policy, as its presumed absence opens the field of practice in schools, where this set of isolated actions are deployed without any clear strategy. In other words, exploring the consequences of an absent education policy in the Chilean neoliberal rural context, it is possible to find a particular modality of education, in which coexists an intimate relation between schools and business enterprises. “This study” problematizes the consequences of this intimate relation in schools’ practices in the “local” implementation of national education policies, and how this situation resonates in students’ subjectivities. In addition, discourses from UNESCO and the interviewees, which link rural education into the broader field of rural development, become problematic while certain development models set the patterns regarding specific modes of development. In rural places, such as those in Chile, where the development strategy is mainly based on economic grounds, the role of schools in that strategy becomes eminently economic too and allows a dynamic such as has been mentioned with respect to schools and big enterprises.

Rural Education as an assemblage and Schools as a *Dispositif* Which Produces Subjectivity: The *Prefigured Worker-Employee*

Moreover, the intimate relation between schools and corporations, in the context of an absent rural education policy, provokes a particular dynamic in schools, which generates a permanent tension and movement in relation to the needs of the market. So, from the point of view of this research, schools become a form of a *dispositif*, an institutional place of the convergence of different discourses and technologies, both from the government – national policies – and from the private sector – big business – which operate as an assemblage of prescriptions and negotiations that affect the daily practice in schools’ management and their curricular implementation. While the rural education can be understood as a neoliberal assemblage, the neoliberal *dispositif* (schools) is the place of the production of subjectivities, and of a particular type of subjectivity, within which the profile of the “student to be educated” by the schools – and their inner policies in practice – corresponds to the profile of skills and attitudes needed by specific workplaces and enterprises. From this perspective, the rural student can be understood as a *prefigured worker-employee*, while schools provide a space where students work on themselves in order to become *successful* employees.

Conclusion

This study and its analysis have tried to problematize the rural education in the Chilean case, and how discourses, development strategies, policy articulations, places, and institutional interactions reshape education itself, and the ways in

which policies are deployed in particular contexts. The forgotten rural schools are also dispositifs where all the relations and influences of the centralized national curriculum and its interaction with the national educational assessment policy, in complement with the disconnected supports of rural educational programs, are immersed in a complex and voiceless schooling practice.

In addition, the particular rural educational dynamic is interpreted in this research as an assemblage of technologies, practices, relations, and influences, which enlarge the frontiers of the educational ambit towards the development, economic, and business spheres. The schools are institutional places where the outcomes of these relations and influences are deployed and enacted. The rural educational assemblage is based on the intimate and subordinated relation between schools and companies, which ends up in the adaption of the profile of the student to be educated by the school to fit the profile of the worker required. This is the main symptom of the aggressive intromission of the economic and business spheres into the educational one. There is an hybridization of the educational and the economic spheres, which my research, then, shows how, in the context of invisible places and forgotten educational ambits, the produced intimate relations between the rural school and the local companies are having significant effects on the educational policy implementation and in the functioning of schools.

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