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## **Enacting a New Curriculum: Chile's Social Uprising and the Reshaping of Physical Education**

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## **Enacting a New Curriculum: Chile's Social Uprising and the Reshaping of Physical Education**

The relationship between society and schools is deeply interconnected. One of the primary ways societies exert influence on education is through policy, especially curriculum reform, which reflects social values and shapes the educational framework. In the field of physical education, numerous examples highlight the complexities of reforming and enacting new curricula. This study builds on that literature, examining how societal changes and educational policies inform curriculum practices in contemporary contexts. Using a heuristic framework, we investigate the enactment of a new PE curriculum within the context of Chile's post-social uprising curriculum reform (Evans et al., 2024). A 14-month mini-ethnographic design (Fusch et al., 2017) was employed, divided into three phases: (a) familiarization with the context, (b) visiting and experiencing the context, and (c) reflecting on the findings. Data were generated through reflective diaries kept during the fieldwork (i.e., second phase; Emerson et al., 2011) and analyzed using a six-phase reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Three key themes were generated from the data analysis: (a) Navigating the Intersection of Comprehensive Pedagogies and the Chilean Sociocultural Context, (b) Exploring the Viability of Comprehensive Pedagogies in Chile: Opportunities and Challenges, and (c) 'Disoñando' Another Physical Education for Chile: Educational Possibilities from Comprehensive Pedagogies. This study exemplifies the challenges and opportunities of enacting a new curriculum in a Latin American context. While educators' views of physical education may align with the curriculum's aims, their capacity to adapt pedagogical practices to these reforms is crucial. The findings emphasize the importance of equipping Physical

Education Teachers, Teacher Educators, and Pre-Service Teachers with the necessary resources and support to adjust their practices to new curricular guidelines. Future research should prioritize teachers' perspectives to understand how to facilitate their adaptation to these evolving policies.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Policy, Physical Education, Latin-American context, Comprehensive Pedagogies.

## **Introduction**

The relationship between society and schools has long been recognized as deeply intertwined. Schools have traditionally been seen as powerful instruments for shaping and transforming society, but the reverse is also true: society itself plays a crucial role in reshaping schools. Scholars like Apple (2006) remind us that education is inherently a part of society, serving as a fundamental institution for both individual and collective development. In times of crisis (e.g., social uprising), as Apple (2013) further argues, this relationship becomes especially pronounced, prompting educators and policymakers to consider whether education has a role in addressing societal challenges and building a new social order. Similarly, Gutek (2006) emphasizes that educational institutions are expressions of the specific cultural, historical, and geographical contexts in which they operate. Together, these perspectives invite us to explore the reciprocal influence between society and education. The questions raised by George Counts in 1932, “Dare the School Builds a New Social Order?” and later expanded by Michael Apple, “Can Education Change Society?” form the foundation of our inquiry, but we shift the focus: To what extent can society (especially in times of social uprising) drive changes in education, and how can schools contribute to this transformation?

One of the most significant ways societies exert influence on education is through policy work, and especially through curriculum policy, the set of mandatory guidelines that schools must follow. Curriculum policy highlights how society not only interacts with but actively shapes the educational framework (Priestley et al., 2021). The process of renewing these policies is referred to as curriculum reform. Curriculum reform often arises in response to significant societal shifts, and the way these reforms are enacted reveals the dynamic and interconnected relationship between education and the broader society (Evans et al., 2024). In the specific case of Physical Education (PE), numerous examples regarding the process of reforming and enacting new curricula in PE can be found in the literature.

Those examples are primarily from Western and Asian/Australasian contexts. For instance, Norway recently reformed its curriculum, reflecting a broader societal movement towards holistic well-being and encouraging student-centred approaches (Tremoen & Lagestad, 2024). The transition from competitive sports to embodied learning and outdoor engagement aligns with cultural values that prioritise physical, mental, and social health over conventional athletic achievement (Aasland et al., 2024). Similarly, Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence exemplifies a shift towards a more flexible and holistic well-being curriculum, connecting also to social values and responsibilities through PE (Gray et al., 2022). In China, there have been recent reforms attempting to modernize PE with a focus on students, including objectives related to mental health and social adaptation as part of the curriculum (Meng et al., 2021). Finally, New Zealand has recently undergone a curriculum renewal process that prioritizes competencies like critical thinking and collaboration, reflecting societal values of inclusivity and holistic development (Hughson, 2022).

However, from a heuristic perspective, far from being a linear process, curriculum reform is seen as a complex and multilayered phenomenon (Priestley et al., 2021; Evans et al., 2024). Therefore, a curriculum reform does not imply a direct translation or a straightforward change within schools and society. In other words, implementing a curriculum reform is rarely directly observable or applicable without considering all the agents involved in its creation and application. It is therefore embodied and influenced at multiple levels, international (supra), national (macro), local (meso), and individual (micro; Evans et al., 2024; Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009).

Evans et al. (2024) emphasize that understanding the interaction between context, actions, and meanings is key to implementing educational policies effectively. In doing so, they propose three interconnected concepts: contextual rules that shape policy enactment, action rules that guide how educators adapt policies, and meaning rules, highlighting that policies are

open to interpretation. Together, these concepts show how reform efforts depend on the dynamic interplay between context, actions, and meaning. Accordingly, this work utilizes a heuristic theoretical framework to illuminate how the interplay between societal changes and educational policy can inform and shape curriculum practices in contemporary contexts. Acknowledging that universal explanations may not apply across all nations and times and highlighting the critical importance of context in education (Apple, 2013; Kirk & Macdonald, 1998), we approach this study by focusing on a specific setting, Chile, during a significant socio-political period, the curriculum reform after the social uprising<sup>1</sup>.

### ***Chilean context and comprehensive pedagogies within a heuristic framework***

The first time that PE was a compulsory subject of the Chilean educational system was in 1889. Since its inclusion, PE has been associated with hygienic and moral perspectives influenced by the ideas that come from Europe (Poblete et al., 2014). In this scenario, the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in 1973 resulted in the biggest reform of the Chilean education system in its history. Under this regime, teachers were strictly monitored and guided by the government, and the curriculum embraced individualistic values (Ruiz Schneider, 2012). Consequently, the legacy is an unequal and health-focused PE embracing traditional approaches, such as teacher-centered and sport-technique-based versions of PE (Moreno-Doña, 2018). However, similarly to what is happening internationally (e.g., Aasland et al., 2024), a new *pedagogical discourse* (Bernstein, 2003) has been under construction over the past decade.

The latest full PE curriculum reform in 2012 introduced new overarching goals, such as promoting healthy lifestyles and fostering students' holistic development (MINEDUC,

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<sup>1</sup> The 2019 Chilean social uprising (known as *Estallido Social*) is a complex phenomenon that began with protests over a subway fare hike but evolved into widespread demonstrations against social inequality and neoliberal policies. Citizens demanded reforms in healthcare, education, pensions, and wages, and a new constitution. The protests marked a pivotal moment in Chile's political history. For more information on the historical, political, and social phenomenon, you can search for the keywords "*Estallido Social*" of 2019 in any search engine. Numerous news articles can be found to help you understand the event.

2013). Further updates took place, the last one in 2019, coinciding with the social uprising. It emphasized the importance of fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, inclusion, and diversity within PE.

Currently, Chile is undergoing a new curriculum reform process at the macro level (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009) to help build the desired (physical) education (MINEDUC, 2023). With advice also at the supra level (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009), a Council for Educational Reactivation (CRE, 2023) in collaboration with UNESCO, has been established to publish a report of global recommendations for the future of education in Chile. Thus, the latest curriculum reforms and official documents can help us observe the new direction desired for Chilean PE. Building on that, we would like to explore how these new steps taken toward holistic development and critical thinking in Chilean PE influence the adoption of aligned pedagogical resources at the meso and micro levels (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009).

To do so, we investigate how contextual factors inform the goals and expectations of PE, such as the emphasis on holistic student development (i.e., contextual rules). Contextual refer to the socio-cultural and institutional factors that shape the enactment of policies, influencing the overall goals and expectations in a given educational context (Evans et al., 2024). Also, how teachers in Chile are adapting pedagogical practices to align with the new curriculum requirement (i.e., embodying action). Embodying actions focuses on how educators interpret and apply policy directives within their specific contexts, adjusting their teaching practices to meet the needs of their students (Evans et al., 2024). Finally, how Chilean stakeholders perceive the reforms and intended benefits of using new pedagogies (i.e., embodying meanings). Embodying meanings highlights the process through which policies are interpreted and understood by various stakeholders, revealing that policies are open to negotiation and can lead to diverse interpretations and practices (Evans et al., 2024). Furthermore, we explore the possible interrelations between these concepts, illustrating how

the dynamic interplay of contextual rules, embodying actions, and embodying meanings affects the enactment of the new curriculum.

As stated by Meyer and Gunter (2021), a common language fosters better communication, reduces misunderstanding, and ultimately enhances collaborative efforts in implementing educational reforms. In an effort to avoid misunderstanding, and after studying the Chilean curriculum, we decided to use “comprehensive pedagogies” as a vehicle for our discussions with various PE stakeholders. In Spanish-speaking countries, the term “comprehensive pedagogies” emerged from the translation of “*modelos comprensivos*” which was the term that refers mainly to Teaching Games for Understanding and other Game Based Approaches. However, the term “Comprehensive Pedagogies” has evolved to denote pedagogical models or teaching approaches in general, that align with the critical elements and learning aspirations of other pedagogical models such as critical thinking or student-centered approaches (Casey & Kirk, 2020), but do not adhere strictly to concepts like fidelity-checks or reference specific forms in their application.

Therefore, the term “comprehensive pedagogies” serves to help stakeholders (especially those acting at meso and micro levels) to concretise new holistic pedagogies, centred around critical thinking and student-centred approaches, in the new Chilean curriculum. Thus, the explained approach of the study enables us to effectively explore policy enactment, due to their alignment with the new education policies in Chile. Our aim is to investigate the reform and enactment of this curriculum, introduced after the social uprising, with a focus on enhancing quality and equity in Chilean PE (MINEDUC, 2013; Moreno-Doña, 2018; Evans et al., 2024).

In so doing, we aspire to contribute to understanding how new pedagogical approaches can be integrated into educational settings. Our examination will shed light on a unique Latin



American context (UNESCO, 2010), often overlooked in English-language research. We will facilitate a pedagogical reconceptualization of the curriculum, allowing teachers and future educators to share their insights and ideas for implementing the new curriculum (Kirk & MacDonald, 2001). Additionally, we will highlight the opportunities and challenges encountered during the curriculum enactment in Chile, particularly regarding new pedagogical strategies. These insights may prove valuable for comparative studies in other contexts worldwide and can help inform future decisions in (Chilean) PE.

To guide readers through this paper, the work unfolds as follows: we outline our methodology, including the authors' positionality in data interpretation. We present the study design in three phases, detailing each process. Following this, we describe data generation and analysis methods. Finally, we present our findings and discussion in a single section, focusing on three main themes that integrate data excerpts, analysis, and existing literature. We conclude with a summary of the key insights from this work.

## **Methods**

Evans et al. (2024) note that the heuristic framework supports exploring diverse methodologies in Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE). Particularly, ethnographic designs provide insights into the rules and embodied nature of policy work. Traditional ethnography, however, often requires extensive fieldwork, which can be limited by time and funding. Contemporary approaches show that meaningful data can be generated without adhering to these traditional timeframes, leading to the development of mini-ethnographies that achieve similar objectives in a shorter duration (Fusch et al., 2017). In light of these considerations, we used a 14-month mini-ethnographic approach in our work, divided into three phases. Within these phases, the authors played different roles.

### ***Authors' roles and positionalities***

Regarding the authors' roles, Carmen and Marina were particularly instrumental in the research, spending a month in Chile, while Alberto and David contributed significantly through their extensive experience and knowledge in the field. Although the four bring diverse expertise to this work, they share a common commitment to enhancing PE as a socially just, meaningful, and holistic subject.

Carmen and Marina are early-career Spanish scholars based in Ireland and Norway, respectively, both focusing on PE pedagogy from different perspectives. Carmen emphasizes comprehensive pedagogies and pedagogical models, while Marina focuses on critical pedagogies. In contrast, Alberto and David are experienced scholars in Chile and Scotland, respectively. Alberto is recognized for his active involvement in new curriculum design and critical research in Chilean PE, while David specializes in policy, pedagogical models, and critical pedagogies, contributing to the development of the TGfU model and curriculum processes in various countries, including Qatar.

### *Phases*

The study comprised three phases: (a) familiarization with the context, (b) visiting and experiencing the context, and (c) reflecting on the findings.

- (a) Familiarization with the context. This phase included 9 months. Carmen and Marina, acknowledging their outsider status, focused on understanding the context and building relationships with local stakeholders to enhance data relevance and foster empathy, trust, and rapport; essential elements for successful ethnographic research (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). They first analyzed the curriculum and met with Alberto five times for discussions on its understanding. They further engaged with David to align their thoughts on the curriculum with the

comprehensive pedagogies' conceptualization. Then, they met each of their five Chilean contacts once.

- (b) Visiting and experiencing the context. Here, Carmen and Marina conducted a month-long research visit across Chile, which has significant regional differences from north to south. They selected regions from three main governmental zones: the southern region (Magallanes/Chilean Antarctic to O'Higgins), the central zone (Metropolitan Region of Santiago to Valparaíso), and the northern region (Coquimbo to Arica and Parinacota). In each zone, they visited one to two regions, interacting with PETEs, Pre-service Teachers (PSTs), PE Teachers (PETs), and policymakers through both informal (coffee breaks, lunches, guided visits, dinners) and formal meetings (department talks, committee sessions, seminar discussions).
- (c) Reflecting on the findings. In this phase, all authors participated in analysing the context. Carmen, Marina, and Alberto held three online meetings to discuss the generated data, feelings, and experiences from Chile. Following these discussions, Carmen met with David and Alberto to determine the best approach for data analysis, with the aim of making deep sense of them. In total, this phase consisted of 4 months.

### ***Context and participants***

The context was highly varied, as the regions covered in the study faced distinct challenges due to the country's length and geographical range. For example, in the south, there is a strong service sector and schools with a German influence can be found, stemming from previous immigration after World War II. In contrast, the north has a significant influx of immigrants from neighbouring countries, a strong economy tied to mining, and schools marked by diversity of students, with immigration from countries such as Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela and Colombia.

Additionally, the universities visited were part of different faculties, some with a conception of physical education more closely linked to health, while others were aligned with the humanities, which also led to a diversity of opinions.

The participants included the PETEs, PSTs, PETs, and policymakers from three distinct regions of Chile. While all the groups were highly heterogeneous, the policymakers formed a less varied sample due to access challenges. Only a limited number of policymakers were able to participate, and as a result, their perspectives were less diverse compared to those of other stakeholder groups. The groups in each of these areas were diverse ensuring a balance in terms of gender, professional experience, and educational background. Among the PETEs and PETs, there was variation in years of teaching experience, while the PSTs represented a range of stages in their academic careers. The participants included individuals from both public and private universities and schools, with diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, the study involved participants who had emigrated from other countries (e.g., Colombia), but were integrated into the Chilean educational system. Members of Chile's largest indigenous community (Mapuche) also participated. All this, aimed to reflect as much of the country's socio-cultural diversity as possible.

### ***Data generation***

Data were generated through reflective diaries maintained by Carmen and Marina during their fieldwork (i.e., second phase; Emerson et al., 2011). These diaries documented observations and notes from both formal and informal meetings with PETEs, PSTs, and PETs across the three zones. Specifically, the data were generated as follows. One author led each discussion while the other took notes on key points, and afterward, they collaboratively reviewed the insights recorded. This process allowed Carmen and Marina to anonymously capture their observations and reflections on various interactions without identifying specific

individuals. Participants were informed about the study's objectives and willingly engaged in the research.

Data generation during formal meetings was strategically aligned with the nature of the events. For example, seminars prompted the generation of information on the state of PE and the potential for implementing comprehensive pedagogies. In contrast, informal meetings yielded unexpected insights from spontaneous discussions, named *accidental moments* or *revelatory moments* (Fujii, 2015). In those moments, Carmen and Marina employed a bottom-up, inductive approach (Swain & King, 2022) to explore informal topics, ensuring critical elements of conversations were documented as accurately as possible.

The insights in the diaries were informed by knowledge gained in the initial phase, including the study of the Chilean curriculum and previous online meetings with Chilean stakeholders (Birnkman, 2020; Patton, 2014), and were enriched by reflections from the final phase discussions (Birnkman, 2020).

### ***Data analysis***

The generated data were analyzed to reflect on and make sense of the Chilean situation in PE using a six-phase reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). First, Carmen familiarised herself with the 31-page dataset, extracting relevant information related to the research questions and condensing it into a 15-page document. She then shared this document with Marina and Alberto, who also familiarized themselves with it. Next, the three of them individually started an initial coding. Subsequently, they met to discuss their initial codes and themes. They then returned to the data for a second coding round, introducing deductive lenses (e.g., heuristic framework) and further developing the themes. Afterward, they met to

collaboratively enrich the themes and refine them. Lastly, all authors engaged in an active process of reconstructing and shaping the themes into the findings.

### ***Credibility***

The study followed Ellingson's (2009) concept of crystallization to ensure credibility. In that respect, our findings are based on multiple sources (e.g., revelatory moments, seminars) that enriched data generation methods (i.e., diaries), and analysis. We also recognize that knowledge is always partial, contextual, and interconnected. Hopefully, through our explanation of the methods and our reflexive examination of our positionalities as authors, we can display methodological rigor and contribute to understanding the relational dynamics that shape our findings and, therefore, our manuscript.

### **Findings**

From the analysis of the data, three main themes were generated: (a) Navigating the Intersection of Comprehensive Pedagogies and the Chilean Sociocultural Context, (b) Exploring the Viability of Comprehensive Pedagogies in Chile: Opportunities and Challenges, and (c) *'Disoñando'*<sup>2</sup> Another PE for Chile: Educational Possibilities from Comprehensive Pedagogies. Each theme is presented, unpacked, and discussed below.

#### ***Navigating the Intersection of Comprehensive Pedagogies and the Chilean Sociocultural Context***

*"I believe the challenge is because education in Chile continues to be militarized, tied to conservative military discipline". Immediately, another TE intervened in the conversation, stating, "I believe it is related to the logic of capitalism and modern*

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<sup>2</sup> *'Disoñando'* is a play on the Spanish words *'diseñar'*, which means 'to design', and *'soñar'*, which means 'dream' and was coined by Calvo (2018). Due to its uniqueness, we have decided to keep the term in its original form.

*societies that do not require critical people; they do not want reflective people. They need docile, disciplined, politically docile people. These ways of teaching and learning [referring to comprehensive pedagogies] do the opposite; they seek critical and reflective people". So, clearly, education in Chile, traditional schooling, responds to these logics that society is demanding. These types of proposals are counter-proposals to a conservative system. Carmen's notes, Valparaíso (central zone), 14/July/2023.<sup>3</sup>*

These notes reflect something that has been extensively discussed in the Chilean literature, the competitiveness and individualism characteristic of post-dictatorship Chile, where Pinochet first and the Chicago Boys later, imposed a neoliberal model that today is more than just an economic logic but is a collective sense (Zurita, 2021). This sense facilitated the transition into an individualistic society, adhering to institutional bureaucracy and the idea of homogenization within society. Within this homogeneity, the difference is considered the opposite (not just distinct), being therefore negated. According to Calvo (2018), these ideas have become deeply entrenched in the educational system. Hence, this *contextual* reality (Evans et al., 2024) reaches schools, creating difficulties for comprehensive teaching models to be implemented in institutional and professional practices. Delving deeper into these difficulties, three main elements are highlighted.

First, there is a strict adherence to control. This strictness comes without properly considering the diverse subjectivities present in the educational school context, and stems from a hierarchical perspective where restriction and order are substantial elements of educational purposes (Moreno et al., 2018):

*"Those [comprehensive pedagogies] don't fit into the more behaviourist model that PE classes tend to have here. You also have to think we are very focused on classroom*

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<sup>3</sup> The data for this work was originally generated in Spanish, but those presented in this paper have been translated into English as faithfully as possible to the original language.

*management, group management, group control, so perhaps giving greater 'freedom' for play could, in the eyes of the teacher, mean less control" This PET's comment make me think about the importance of appearances and control. Marina's notes, Valparaíso (central zone), 14/July/2023.*

This idea of control is also closely related to the Chilean educational evaluation system and associated bureaucracy, as can be seen in the following comment and in the official education documents:

*"Our curriculum doesn't give the teacher the possibility or freedom to have another form of assessment. For Chileans, evaluation is a rank that is granted to you in society. We are constantly evaluating. And in teaching, we are in crisis with evaluation... We have to respond to a thousand things. If the conception of evaluation was different, we could dedicate ourselves to other forms. It's so standardized ... It doesn't understand diversities." We can easily see at any geographical point how evaluation and assessment is a huge thing in Chile. Carmen's notes, Valdivia (south), 13/July/2023*

We find that evaluation is misunderstood as mere grading, becoming the primary tool for teachers to control the students with whom they share educational time and space. This understanding of evaluation and its uses constitutes the first difficulty for comprehensive pedagogies. This issue has been highlighted internationally. Conceptions of assessment are one of the main barriers for teachers when enacting a new curriculum in PE (e.g., Tremoen & Lagestad, 2024). According to Kirk (2017), misconceptions about assessment as an element of control, or drawing assessments apart from the teaching-learning process, hinder the application of comprehensive or student-centred pedagogies.

The second element that emerged as one of the main difficulties to enact new approaches to teaching aligned with the new curriculum, was the dichotomous logic from



which anything deviating from the 'normal' is excluded, and where differences are denied. This dichotomous logic fragments reality into its constituent elements, failing to recognise that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and that finding a way to work together is necessary:

*TEs are clear that they must recognize that they can achieve meaningful learning for the students by supporting each other. They said it is key viewing learning from multiple cultural perspectives makes it more impactful and powerful. Marina's notes, Iquique (north), 25/July/2023*

Hence, as some teachers pointed out, there is a strong emphasis on, almost an obsession with, subject specialization rather than collaborative work among different professionals. This logic of separation and specialization is experienced within each subject. Consequently, there is a preference for separating the technical elements of specific games, which distances PE from the holistic approach that the new curriculum aims to address. This is because it is mistakenly believed that this approach will lead to an understanding of the game, as has been assumed in other contexts previously (Butler, 2006).

The third element that emerged was how schools, in general, and PE, in particular, are understood.

*A PET said, "our culture is like this, you do something because you have to do it, and that's it". After discussing with Marina we found interesting the use of the work culture as it seems something really difficult to change. Also, they described PE as something really connected with biology, mentioning the German model of sportivism and that everything has been focused on the biological aspect, training theory, and physiology. Carmen's notes, Valdivia (south), 12/July/2023*

Thus, as pointed out in this extract, 'tradition' and 'what has always been done' become obstacles to educational transformation and change (Calvo, 2018). This topic is discussed in

the literature, revealing that inherited tradition and entrenched values in schools and society cause significant resistance to change (Gutek, 2006) and consequently make difficult the incorporation of new pedagogies.

From this first theme, we observed that from a historical perspective, contextual factors in Chile hinder the implementation of new pedagogies as the values of society, and consequently of the school, were shaped in the post-dictatorial era (Moreno & Gamboa, 2014). So, their deep-rootedness in Chilean culture struggle the implementation of comprehensive pedagogies, mainly due to three elements: a control understood through a systematized evaluation, a separation and specialization of knowledge that does not allow different points of view to interact, and a conceptualization of PE as something primarily biological and not related to social aspects. Nonetheless, there are expectations and optimism for an improved PE system, and the social context is evolving alongside the curriculum. The sociopolitical context shapes the course of education and, as Apple (2006) argued, "education is part of the society". In other words, education is not an isolated organization, it is an integral institution within society.

Therefore, education contributes significantly to the growth and improvement of individuals and the community as a whole. Thus, education systems foster knowledge, skills, and values, shaping the future of both individuals and society. These knowledge, skills, and values taught in schools will be influenced by the political interests that determine what values are important for their citizens to have. Individualism, certainty, regulation or control were desired values for preparing students for 80s Chilean society, so traditional approaches were aligned with the demands of that time (Lawson,1998). Despite this, one could ask: could comprehensive pedagogies be aligned with Chilean contemporary values?

### ***Exploring the Viability of Comprehensive Pedagogies in Chile: Opportunities and Challenges***

Even though traditional approaches align with post-dictatorship values, new opportunities for including comprehensive pedagogies in Chilean PE are arising. Thus, when considering whether these pedagogies could work in Chile, it seems that the answer points to yes. However, as recognized in the previous theme, breaking away from normativity is challenging (Moreno-Doña., 2018). Therefore, this affirmative response is accompanied by "buts", "buts" that come in the form of potential challenges attached to those opportunities. Challenges that PETs, PETEs, PSTs encountered when trying to adapt their pedagogical practices to new curriculum requirements (Evans et al., 2024).

Starting from the opportunities, we observed that the different PE stakeholders around the country acknowledge the value of fostering reflection, autonomy, and critical thinking with their students, with all these aspects related to a reform of social and political ideals and values. Specifically concerning comprehensive pedagogies, the following notes were taken:

*I like the reflection made by a PST saying that "It invites them [students] to reflect. It helps them learn" Carmen's notes, Iquique (north), 25/July/2023 and PSTs seem to have clear benefits of this type of pedagogies affirming that "It enhances autonomy and self-confidence, because it makes you think for yourself and make decisions. This is important for life" Marina's notes, Valparaíso (central zone), 14/July/2023*

Moreover, it is important to highlight that many of the stakeholders understand PE is more than just PE:

*Talking with policymakers, they reflect that PE is beyond biology and must consider the needs of the country. It is important to explore how to approach PE and its contribution*

*to the development of individuals and citizens.* Carmen's notes, Santiago de Chile (central zone), 17/July/2023

This affirmation is of utmost relevance in the Chilean context, where new educational reforms embrace diversity throughout the territory:

*The relationship of the Chilean people with indigenous culture has been manifested on various occasions through interesting reflections, especially in the south. For example, one TE said, "In Indigenous cultures, what matters in teaching is the person, that's why I like to learn from them, because they have centuries of existence. We have to go to the encounter".* Marina's notes, Valdivia (south), 13/July/2023

This need for the 'encounter', has also been pointed out by other TEs (Moreno et al., 2018), given that it enhances opportunities to enrich society with different points of view. In this sense, there is a commitment to changing teacher education and challenging traditional notions of what it means to be a teacher, or what kind of teacher one wants to be. This is crystal clear reflected in this extract:

*When we were talking about what could be the future of education or if it would be different from the one we have today, one TE told me something that moved me, they said that "we have to reflect on what configuration we have of the human being because it conditions what we do, and based on that, what I will do in the classroom. Society and school have told us that unification is good, but richness lies in diversity." This idea definitely challenges some traditional conceptions and helps to better understand our global world.* Marina's notes, Valparaíso (central zone), 14/July/2023

This reflection shows us the wave of change that is emerging in contemporary education in Chile along with some social movements that happened recently in the country (Moreno, 2021). We can see here how PE stakeholders perceive the benefits and the meanings they want to

embody in PE (Evans et al., 2024). Concerning those new desired meanings, comprehensive pedagogies can help develop key life skills such as problem-solving and decision-making. However, despite this desire for change, there are significant challenges that delay the transition to comprehensive pedagogies in action.

First, it is interesting to note that, despite the aforementioned desire for change, there is resistance both from teachers and even from students in schools as reflected in the following comment:

*When talking about different types of pedagogies some PETs pointed out that even if they try something new, that's not everything as sometimes innovation is not welcomed. For example, one said "I have found myself discovering interesting models, but from words to action there is a long way to go. Moreover, students, due to the hierarchy they have already experienced in school for so many years, suddenly do not give space to those models. This is a little demotivating." Marina's notes, Valdivia (south), 12/July/2023*

Again we can see how the historical context and attached factors are delaying innovation. Additionally, the dissonance between theory and practice is highlighted:

*PETs are aware of literature and other approaches, and they know their benefits, however, they complain that everything remains at a theoretical level, and we are not being able to translate theory into practice. E.g., "It is customary and theorized but not put into practice; there is always this dissonance between theoretical and practical development. Nowadays, we are saying we need holistic approaches to PE. There is a lot of literature supporting a way of acting, but we are not getting there. There is always a gap between theoretical development and practical development, what we manage to turn into custom, into habit". Marina's notes, Valdivia (south), 12/July/2023*

This aspect is related to the importance of initial teacher training, and the need to receive adequate training to help to implement the change. This idea is represented in this statement found in Marina's notes:

*One PET said "I believe that there needs to be a change in university training. People graduate and get scared and disappointed and don't want to be teachers! We have a 30% deficit of teachers; people don't want to study pedagogy because the classroom is complex...But that is not being taught at the university. We need to bring everything down to reality, so they know how to work on school on those issues".* Marina's notes, Iquique (north), 27/July/2023

Likewise, from north to south, it is reiterated that being the person trying to challenge the *status quo* is arduous, costly, and requires resilience and empowerment. For instance:

*PSTs may require too much effort to be able to implement these pedagogies, as one PST said "In the long run, if you want to implement this [Comprehensive pedagogies], it takes too much time. Sometimes you have to be in many places at the same time and have to be putting in three times the effort when the system doesn't support you".* Carmen's notes, Iquique (north), 26/July/2023

Results suggested that, despite the recognition of new meanings for PE, teachers are encountering difficulties in adapting the directives provided by policies to their unique contexts. Thus, more help and resources are needed. This is something often reflected in the literature when implementing a new curriculum (Meng et al., 2021). According to Tremoen & Lagestad (2024), there is a need for competence development of teachers in connection with enacting new curricula. Also, this development should not be based on providing lesson plans or materials to reach the change as quickly as possible, rather, it takes time, and change should

be introduced step by step facing mistakes as a way of learning and adaptation (Aasland et al., 2024).

Schools reflect the values, norms, and practices of the society they belong to, and these factors can vary greatly depending on the period and geographic location. In this regard, both the opportunities and challenges described, are influenced by the cultural, social, and historical context of education in Chile (Guttek, 2006). On the one hand, we can see the challenges and values related to the post-dictatorial period in Chile that hinder the implementation of comprehensive pedagogies (Moreno & Gamboa, 2014). On the other hand, we can see also how the social movements that emerged in contemporary Chile prompted educators to reflect on the role of PE in society, opening opportunities for the inclusion of other pedagogies in the school (Apple, 2013). Yet, maybe another PE is possible.

***‘Disoñando’ Another PE for Chile: Educational Possibilities from Comprehensive Pedagogies.***

As seen before, stakeholders acknowledge the need to transition towards more comprehensive pedagogies:

*“Policymakers have a more holistic vision that according to them "involves others, reflection, emotionality, community, and not everything with biological purposes".*

Carmen’s notes, Santiago de Chile (central zone), 17/July/2023

Alongside this recognition, however, emerge the difficulties of implementing these changes in an educational system rooted in traditional and conservative approaches:

*“We must acknowledge that PE is the armed hand of the patriarchy; we are products of that, of capitalism and the patriarchy. I am referring to the origin we had in PE with those models. We now have new tools, and we need to transition”* When TEs reflected

*on their own system they acknowledged how difficult it could be the change but also that it could be a good moment to try.* Marina's notes, Valdivia (south), 13/July/2023

It has been noted that Chilean PE has a strong foundation in militarized culture, linked to conservative disciplines and a culture of obedience and conformity (Poblete et al., 2014). Still, there is also enthusiasm for other (non-traditional) pedagogies, and a desire to enact the new curriculum by using them:

*When I hear something like this affirmation "There is a mentality of change that put on the table the question of the type of teacher we want to be and how we can implement these approaches with our students", I observe that deep reflections are happening among the different stakeholders and specially among the TEs.* Marina's notes, Valparaíso (central zone), 14/July/2023

Therefore, even though militarized and hierarchical culture does not align with comprehensive pedagogies, it is precisely where this revolution is desired, coinciding with the historical moment of social uprising (Moreno, 2021).

For example, from the Ministry's curricular proposal, attempts are being made to transition towards an incorporation of comprehensive pedagogies in PE in particular, and in schools in general (MINEDUC, 2019). However, this curricular reform must be accompanied by teachers capable of adapting to the new pedagogical approaches. Thus, the idea previously mentioned that change requires encounter and agreement, is emphasized. The design of possible futures requires the involvement of all agents that build society, and the educational system as has been largely pointed out in the literature (e.g., Pill et al., 2021; Stirrup et al., 2024). Regarding possible paths to ensure that comprehensive pedagogies can have a greater and better presence, it is relevant not to forget some of the ideas raised by the various stakeholders with whom conversations were held.



First, there is a need to co-construct this presence of comprehensive pedagogies from the reconfiguration of the dichotomous view described above:

*“We need to leave behind the divisions; there are no good ones and bad ones—we have to do it together”*. TE’s comment in Carmen’s notes, Valdivia (south), 13/July/2023

This co-construction requires a strong reflective process, carried out collectively, which would allow the reconsideration of the epistemological foundation from which Chilean PE has been constructed. So of that, co-constructing the change is the only way to move forward in education, and society:

*“Here, we are young teachers, but not everyone always wants to build a new foundation. We need to agree, are we on the same page?—what are we going to do?”*.

PET’s comment in Marina’s notes, Valparaíso (central zone), 14/July/2023

From here, the second idea would be that this reflection leads us to the current curricular transformation work, which still requires greater collaboration from educational actors:

*According to curriculum developers, “The curriculum needs to have a broad perspective, it is being attempted, but the first step is to write it, and then we need to see how people adapt to it”. They need to understand how people understand and use their ideas. There is room for improvement, but they are trying to do their best.*

Carmen’s notes, Santiago de Chile (central zone), 15/July/2023

Finally, the vision of a more complex and integral PE is necessary, and this vision should be accompanied by a strong emphasis on differences, professional autonomy, and autonomy as an educational purpose for students, in addition to the transformation of evaluation systems, and learning towards more formative models. This can be translated in practice into two main demands. One would be improving or actualizing teaching programs:

*“We don't know how to do it [implement comprehensive pedagogies]. Teaching us how to implement models could help. We believe that reflecting is important, but we are not clear on how” It is impossible to build something new without help, PET need support, and that's something that we have observed in many places. Carmen's notes, Iquique (north), 25/July/2023*

The other one would be developing more and better professional development courses that link theory with practice, and help teachers to learn how to implement new resources:

*“The idea when we go to training is to think about strategies to reach the student. Many times, this is not considered from the teacher's role, and that's why there is a lot of resistance regarding training or other things because it's simply established as something theoretical, and many times we don't seek other strategies that we, as teachers, can implement” As this PET pointed out, If we want to break the space between theory and practice we have to consider a more practical approach in the professional development courses or studies. Marina's notes, Valparaíso (central zone), 14/July/2023*

In summary, this PE that is being *'disoñada'* considers the importance of fostering critical thinking and democratic principles (Dewey, 1980) through the inclusion of comprehensive pedagogies in education. By encouraging inquiry-based learning and promoting democratic reasoning, education can help cultivate a society that values collaboration, equality, and emancipation from old oppressive structures (Apple, 2006). The future of PE aims to develop individuals who are not only knowledgeable or motor competent, but also active and responsible stakeholders in a democratic society. The reflections that emerged in education according to the sociopolitical situation in Chile, suggest that education

should not only adapt to changing circumstances but also play an active role in shaping a better, more resilient society (Apple, 2013).

## Conclusions

*“The educator’s answer to the question ‘why teach it?’ determines ‘what is taught’”* (Butler, 2006, p. 251).

This quote encapsulates what this work aims to represent. When society is changing, even though it may have deeply rooted traditions, one can observe that *cracks* (Walsh, 2017) can open up, providing spaces for reflection and action toward a better society. The question “why we teach” is reconsidered, and the new answer determines the direction of the new education and society. By investigating the dynamics among context, actions, and meanings when designing and enacting the new Chilean curriculum, we conclude that there is considerable enthusiasm and a strong urge to adopt more comprehensive pedagogies. Indeed, although contextual factors have been historically hindering the shift towards these comprehensive pedagogies, in the contemporary context all stakeholders are embodying a new meaning of PE. The main difficulties, however, occur when enacting the new curriculum within the teaching action.

This work extends existing knowledge in curriculum enactment by integrating a theoretical framework that connects the interplay of context, action, and meanings. Approaching the study within this framework demonstrated the complexities involved in policy enactment, shedding light on how contextual factors and socio-cultural influences shape the ways in which curriculums are interpreted and applied. Particularly, the study offered an example of how a new curriculum is enacted in a Latin American context, specifically Chile. Findings highlight the gap between the intentions of the new curriculum and its implementation in practice. It underlines that, even when educators' responses to the question ‘why teach it?’

align with the new curriculum's aims, 'what they actually teach' will depend on their capacity to adapt their pedagogies to the new policies. This underscores the critical need to provide PETs, PETEs, and PSTs with the necessary resources, tools, and time to effectively adjust their teaching practices to the evolving educational landscape.

With the above in mind, looking ahead, future research should further explore how stakeholders construct meanings and interpret curricula or other policy documents across different contexts. It is important to understand the perceptions they have of these documents, how they receive them, and whether they are willing to use them in their practice. Additionally, further investigation is needed into the gap between educators' alignment with the goals of the policy and the challenges they face in enacting these policies in practice. Identifying the tools educators need, and working to create and provide them, is crucial to enable educators to become active agents of the changes they wish to see in PE. Furthermore, it is particularly important, as highlighted in this article, to recognize the local particularities in the implementation of educational reforms. In diverse contexts like Chile, where regional differences and historical influences play a significant role, understanding these nuances is essential for the effective adaptation and application of policy.

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