

THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT MOVEMENT IN CHILE AN APPROACH FROM COMPLEXITY

El movimiento estudiantil secundario en Chile abordado desde la complejidad

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the high school student movement in Chile from a transdisciplinary approach, as a complex phenomenon insufficiently investigated and reflected on by the social sciences and humanities. The general problem in which this objective is inscribed is that of the crisis in the institutions of liberal democracy, and more specifically, that of the relations between the concepts of citizenship and complexity, for the interpretation of the high school student movement. Starting from the distinction between that citizen participation that takes shape under institutionalized forms of delegation of power in a political elite; and a participative, critical and transforming citizenship, which promotes and is carried out in forms of egalitarian association and political organization, in the exercise of sovereignty as praxis committed to the construction of the public and the common good. The information has been analyzed using hermeneutic-comprehensive methods typical of the social sciences and humanities, the foundations of which dialogue with the tradition of complex thought, converging in the critique of positivist reductionism of knowledge. It concludes by establishing the existence of a trend or transition within the high school student movement, which goes from forms of association and organization typical of the liberal model, which delegates the sovereignty of citizenship to elected representatives, towards the preeminence of another current, Counter-hegemonic in character: a democratic model of direct and equal participation in community self-government.

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Keywords

Complex thinking, high school student movement, republican democratic tradition, education, citizenship, neoliberalism.

Resumen

Este artículo tiene por objetivo analizar el movimiento estudiantil secundario de Chile desde un abordaje transdisciplinar, como fenómeno complejo insuficientemente investigado y reflexionado por parte de las ciencias sociales y las humanidades. El problema general en el que se inscribe este objetivo es el de la crisis de las instituciones de la democracia liberal, y más específicamente, el de las relaciones entre los conceptos de ciudadanía y complejidad, para la interpretación del movimiento estudiantil secundario. Partiendo de la distinción entre aquella participación ciudadana que se concreta bajo formas institucionalizadas de delegación del poder en una elite política; y una ciudadanía participativa, crítica y transformadora, que promueve y se realiza en formas de asociación y organización política igualitarias, en el ejercicio de una soberanía como praxis comprometida con la construcción de lo público y del bien común. La información ha sido analizada recurriendo a métodos hermenéutico-comprensivos propios de las ciencias sociales y las humanidades, cuyos fundamentos dialogan con la tradición del pensamiento complejo, convergiendo en la crítica al reduccionismo positivista del conocimiento. Se concluye estableciendo la existencia de una tendencia o transición al interior del movimiento estudiantil secundario, que va desde formas de asociatividad y organizaciones propias del modelo liberal, que delega la soberanía de la ciudadanía en representantes electos o electas, hacia la preeminencia de otra corriente, de carácter contra hegemónico: un modelo democrático de participación directa e igualitaria en el autogobierno comunitario.

Palabras clave

Pensamiento complejo, movimiento estudiantil secundario, tradición republicana democrática, educación, ciudadanía, neoliberalismo.

Introduction

*Hope now lies in South America. The hope lies in a thought
from the South that integrates the positive
contributions of the North, but rejects the hegemony
of the calculation, of the quantifiable, of a vision
of the world in which mechanization
and profit dominate*
(Edgar Morin).

We live in times when, following Castells (2017), the liberal democratic institutionalism is no longer able to channel the conflicts caused by the expansion of the ideology of equality in dignity and rights of human beings, and the survival of privileges, subordinations and exclusions of different order, inherited or engendered by contemporary societies.

The social movements that have emerged throughout the planet during the twenty-first century are the protagonists of a convulsive political scene of a humanity that, subsumed by the logic of the permanent increase in the rate of profit of capital, sees the ecological limits of an increasing production and consumption of goods, which today threatens our own well-being and survival.

We believe that the concept of citizenship, in Chilean reality, makes it possible to formulate a critique of the existing neoliberal democracy, based on concrete historical experiences of its exercise, such as that of the high school student movement itself. This approach means looking into the episteme that underlies the movement during its historical appearances, diving into its discursive depths, following the inner currents that traverse it and the waves that provoke when they emerge to the surface. An issue that reconfigures complex relationships, as well as multiple interactions between the student movement and other social and institutional actors.

Complementing the argument put forward by Rodríguez, Betancourt and Varas (2018), regarding the process of re-politicizing the student issue, aimed at the democratization of society and the re-evaluation of education as a human right, we situate this work. We will now argue that the Chilean high school student movement transits from forms of association and organization typical of the liberal model, which delegates popular sovereignty to representatives via elections, towards the pre-eminence of a democratic republican model based on direct and equal participation in community self-government.

Given the high complexity of this conflictive process for the construction of socio-political projects alternative to neoliberalism, this work

aims to analyze the Chilean high school student movement from a trans-disciplinary perspective, through the analysis of relevant documentary and bibliographical sources. This analysis points to the reconceptualization of this movement as a complex phenomenon, which has not been sufficiently reflected on by the social and human sciences. At the same time, we consider that this work has significant critical potential for the formation of a new political institutionality in Chile, capable of guaranteeing the right to participation of civil society in the construction of the public and the common good.

The socio-political relevance that the high school student movement in Chile has acquired in this century is becoming increasingly evident. It has been society, before the academy, that has recognized its role as the driving force behind different popular demonstrations, including the recent popular uprising of October 2019. Today, in circumstances in which the people of Chile have opened the possibility of an unprecedented constituent process, it becomes vital to know the episteme that structures the knowledge of the high school student movement and its potential contribution.

The analysis begins by establishing the theoretical-methodological distinction between, on the one hand, citizen participation, which takes the form of institutionalized forms of delegation of power (of sovereignty) to a political elite, and, on the other, participatory citizenship, autonomous, critical and transformative, which promotes and carries out egalitarian forms of political association and organization, exercising sovereignty as a praxis committed to the construction of the public and the common good. Following these distinctions around the concept of citizenship, the historical eruptions of the high school student movement from the 1970s onwards are characterized. Such a historical reconstruction deepens its complexity, linking external contextual factors with internal factors that determine it and on which it has influence.

The information collected has been analyzed using hermeneutic-comprehensive methods characteristic of the social sciences and humanities, whose foundations are in dialogue with the tradition of complex thought, converging in the critique of the positivist reductionism of knowledge. In this sense, a divergent theoretical-methodological distinction is introduced, which separates episteme from complex thought, and episteme from the sciences of complexity, bringing the former closer to hermeneutic-comprehensive presuppositions. We conclude by establishing the existence of a trend or transition within the high school student



movement, towards the preeminence of a current of a counter-hegemonic, participatory, and community nature.

Confronting positivist rationalist metaphysics, complex thinking relates to counter-hegemonic projects, which according to Morin (2004), pose alternative proposals to organize a new science and a new civilizational era, open to chance, to the multiplicity of causal links existing between different phenomena and their potential developments. The interpretation of complex thought carried out in this article is a conceptual framework that does not pretend to be exhaustive or innovative in theoretical terms, and seeks to articulate epistemological, methodological, ethical and political criticism and self-criticism with which the high school student movement is problematized and analyzed. This formulation seeks to establish a logic and provisional principles, to be debated, that allow us to interpret the emergence of the high school student movement as a complex empirical phenomenon. In this sense, the conclusions of this communication include a brief reflection on the contributions of complex thinking to the development of knowledge on the proposed research problem.

The high school student movement in the 21st century

Since the 1990s, there has been a crisis of legitimacy in the Chilean institutional system, characterized by a disaffected attitude of young people towards electoral participation. This disaffection then gives way to a series of more or less isolated social mobilizations. Its turning point is 2006, with the *Penguin Revolution* (OPECH, 2010), which triggers successive demonstrations, linked to environmental, local and student issues, and which will be stronger in 2011. In Chile today, as a result of demonstrations by high school students, according to Soto (2014), a much more massive and extensive social and political movement can be identified, which gathers around criticism of the institutional system, demanding its structural change.

The highest point of popular mobilizations related to education took place in 2011. The worldwide dissemination of the ideas and actions of the Chilean student movement gave international visibility to student leaders, such as the university student Camila Vallejo, who was qualified by the magazine *The Guardian* as a person of the year. At that time, high school students occupied up to a thousand educational establishments throughout the country between June and October. The occupation of

establishments was accompanied by multiple internal activities and interventions in various public spaces.

The students expressed local demands for the most urgent needs in each school and high school, and proposed reforms to the national education. They thus succeeded in establishing an extraordinarily broad debate, which ended up linking the school system, based on competence and profit, with institutional responses, or lack thereof, in view of the needs and aspirations of citizens in other areas of human life, such as health, social welfare and political participation. According to Araujo (2019), criticism of the commodification of rights spread in the population, to the point that various social movements and political organizations converged in the demand for a Constituent Assembly.

The growing mobilization and the permanent public debate ended up positioning different sectors of civil society in the demand to put an end to a neoliberal order protected by the 1980 Constitution that was imposed by the civic-military dictatorship of Pinochet. This made Chile, according to Ulloa (2013), the only country in the world that inherited a constitution from a dictatorial period, without repealing it and creating a new one.

The activities and proposals of the mobilized high school students, emerged from assemblies where they deliberated and sanctioned each of their demands, positions and actions, with their ideas and decisions being exposed to society through multiple day-to-day exchanges with people who, either, expressed solidarity with them or rejected them. Also, before other social actors, in meetings organized for discussion, deliberation and/or coordination of actions, before the political authorities or through the mass media, through spokespersons elected to fulfill this function in a contingent and revocable manner.

According to Arrué (2012), in barricades, marches, artistic-cultural events, marathons, performances, as well as in occupations of public offices, of official political parties, of international organizations, or during hunger strikes; The students' spokespersons stated that their struggle was not for personal gain. They were aware that they would not be able to enjoy the changes they demanded in education, rather the new generations of boy and girls that would be able to enjoy their rights.¹

This is how the students and their demands won the general support of the population. Free education and the end to profiteering in education, so that it could be realized as a right, were the most striking demands of the social movement from 2011. At the same time, the participation of all the actors who made up the educational community in the administrative and pedagogical management of each school or high



school, and the right of the citizenry to influence the formulation of educational policies, were demanded.

With this, the students argued that they would overcome the mercantilization and authoritarianism prevailing in education and in Chilean society, which was manifested in the disregard of student approaches within high schools and their exclusion from political citizenship, granted to the population over the age of 18 through the right to vote.

During the social unrest, which began in October 2019 in Santiago, it is the high school student movement itself that, in the face of the unjustified increase in subway fares, organized massive evasions to access the urban train without paying for its use. After five days, the students gained the sympathy of the citizenry and generated adherence to the practice of evasion among urban workers. The massive evasion made possible by high school students opened the way to a social rebellion against the injustices caused by a ferocious hegemonic neoliberal policy. This creates a situation of massive social manifestations of various kinds, which bring with them new forms of territorial organization. In this process, the promulgation of a new constitution quickly became the unifying element of social protest.

In this context, from the tradition of complex thought, it is interesting to ask the question: where does this ideal of education, as a public good that must be defended and exercised collectively as a universal right guaranteed by the State, argued by the mobilized high school students, come from?

Delimitation of the issue at hand

The descriptive and reflective reconstruction of the high school student movement, from the perspective of complex thought, allows it to be characterized as the manifestation of a renewed citizenship. Taking into account that the concept of citizenship, as well as those of education, society, politics, democracy, sovereignty and participation, function as normative principles that organize and give meaning to human action, are used here to interpret the thought and praxis of diverse subjects. Subjects who, in turn, incorporate them into their frameworks of action as tools to understand the reality that surrounds them and to evaluate, justify or criticize their own and other's situations and actions.

These are concepts associated with heterogeneous systems of action and interaction that precede the subjects, and that they adjust, introducing innovations to adapt them with a greater or lesser degree of ratio-

nality to the particular circumstances in which they develop and adapting them to their wishes, purposes and interests. The understanding of the meaning of such concepts requires the reconstruction of the meaning attributed to it by the subjects who appropriate them in their historical emergence. The meaning of the world and his work within it become the prism through which the individual observes his own history, interpreting it with the categories with which he organizes or prioritizes its attributes. The meanings, organized in a symbolic field, allow to order the individual and social world through discourses, messages and representations. This organization constructs its own ideology. That is why, according to Betancourt (2019), when talking about meanings, it is necessary to make an approach to the ideologies of the investigated subjects, based on the stories, reflections, and actions of the individuals who use them.

The activities of the high school student movement to defend and promote the right to education can be understood as processes of subjectivation, which are reconstructed, as praxis of interactions and everyday experiences full of meaning with which they give life to the collective subject they constitute.

In this process, and according to Bourdieu (2013), people's behavior has a symbolic function, which is interpreted with the same system of symbols that, as an instrument of communication, is conventionally used to formulate it. This becomes an agreement on the meaning of the world, as a logical and social integration of collective representations that have the capacity to produce relationships of meaning. Then, the social individual who relates to social institutions and structures, obtains a particular configuration of meanings that gives him access to his culture. This individual being, in turn, is a social being, as conceived by Martuccelli and Araujo (2010), since the meanings that construct the individual being, the future, the past, the present, come from his culture, collectively constructed. Thus, the individual becomes a subject in the simultaneous action of his ideal and his social experience.

The comprehensive social sciences make it possible to highlight the structural aspects of the social whole of which the particular phenomenon of the high school student movement is part, conditioned and interpellated to its members, towards its reproduction and/or transformation of the current status quo.

In this context, one of the axes of analysis established in this article refers to the principles of associativity and organization of the high school student movement, as well as to the social and political projects that support it. This axis of analysis needs to characterize the forms of struggle



or repertoires of action that give them public visibility, but, above all, its positions in the face of the contingencies and/or structural aspects of the educational system, their demands and the proposals that give meaning and unity to their action in favor of the right to education. But, above all, it must describe the ethical-political principles, and the moral norms that incite and regulate the interactions between its members, which can be called, following Fauré (2015), the inner dimension of the movement. It is this dimension that endows the movement with identity and uniqueness, in its internal diversity and in its relations with other subjects. It also provides the meanings with which “us” is defined, who we are and who we should be, and therefore how we should act, what we should do to remain who we are and/or to become who we want or should be.

Congruence between the norms of sociability promoted by the high school student movement, its forms of association and organization based on the principles of freedom, equal rights and democratic participation; support the hypothesis that the development of the high school student subject is a praxis linked to complex thinking itself, recognizing a collective subject that actualizes the republican, democratic and socialist tradition. Following the reflection of Coutinho (2011), it is a praxis that is defined as such not only because it symbolically articulates in a whole human situation and actions, but also because it has an emancipatory and counterhegemonic orientation or character. A character that gives it specificity and allows a better understanding of its existence and the type of citizenship that its members exercise by mobilizing for the right to education.



The right to education and freedom as self-government

The system of ideas that, hypothetically, encourages the high school student movement in Chile, has as a key concept in its articulation, the notion of the right to education. It is essential to consider the critical position of the high school student movement in situations where the right to education has been violated and in relation to alternative forms of restitution or guarantee of that or other rights, that arise from the governmental sphere or from the popular sphere.

This concept of education as a universal human right, present among high school students mobilized in Chile, links the subjects of research with the principles of dignity, freedom, equality and fraternity, to which, from a republican perspective, education should contribute, forming autonomous citizens responsible for their community. The idea of

democracy, from this republican perspective and as a social and political regime that makes possible the realization of human rights, is inseparable from the idea of education as a right, both in the light of this article and of the international standards established by the United Nations.

Article 13 of the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights and article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966) are devoted to education. In 1999, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the UN Economic and Social Council (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) issued General Observation 13. Which today it is the most precise international normative reference in the definition of the standards that the exercise of the right to education must meet, linking it in an indivisible way with the right to participation.

La Observación del Comité comienza reafirmando lo manifestado en el artículo 13 del PIDESC: “La educación es un derecho humano intrínseco y un medio indispensable de realizar otros derechos humanos” (p. 1). It then specifies its normative contents, in terms of purposes and objectives, and its four interrelated characteristics: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability, with references to different levels and educational modalities. Finally, it identifies “special topics of broad application” (p. 8), including non-discrimination and equal treatment, discipline in schools and “academic freedom and autonomy of educational institutions” (p. 9). With regard to the latter, the Committee states that “the right to education may be enjoyed only if it is accompanied by academic freedom of faculty and students” (p. 9). This was not expressly included in the Declaration of Human Rights or in the ICESCR. This emphasizes that its content is valid for “teaching staff and pupils throughout the education sector” (p. 9), and is therefore generally applicable, and not exclusively for higher education.

This definition of academic freedom is supplemented by the Committee’s assumption that the autonomy of institutions, understood as “the degree of self-government necessary for effective decisions by educational institutions” (p. 9). This democratic and participatory approach, formulated by the Committee, links the concept of self-government with academic work, the establishment of living standards, administrative management and other related activities. Forms of self-government of educational institutions which, in addition to being open to the scrutiny of their communities, must be compatible with the systems of control of State funding.

The movement of high school students can be interpreted as an experience of struggle, even if partial, for this ideal of self-government. The



ideal considered by the Committee to be the condition and expression of academic freedom and an essential aspect of the right to education.

In this sense, complex thinking is observed in the demand for protection of the right to education that the high school movement defends in Chile, criticizing the simplification that neoliberalism makes of education, transforming it into a commodity, an object of personal consumption, and reducing the human being to its individual dimension. Thus, the ideal of complex thought, of a civilization open to the complexity of the Universe, becomes evident in the demand for the right to education, by claiming a sense of academic freedom and assuming its many implications for the organization of educational institutions and community life.

It is precisely in the appreciation of freedom that the high school student movement is linked to the idea of a community-type government for educational institutions, which can overcome the relations of subordination that characterize education today.

Epistemological, methodological, political and ethical dimensions

Complex thought cannot be synthesized into a few phrases, and its systematic characterization seems to have no limits. Not surprisingly the paradigmatic exponent of this approach, Edgar Morin, has formulated 6 volumes of his *La Méthode* to outline the meaning of complex thought. As Martínez (2018) affirms, the notion of complexity is constantly being developed and involves dozens of ideas, principles, terms and properties in increasing transdisciplinary conceptual hybridization.

In the perspective of the exercise of analyzing the high school student movement, it is necessary to articulate the concept of complexity with that of science, being able to organize its meanings in a schematic way, around the following distinctions:

a) Epistemological: Complex thought emerges as a critique of the simplifying thought of nature and human existence that sustained modern positivist and enlightened philosophy and science. The simplifying thought of modern science is based on Cartesian metaphysics, today in crisis, but still hegemonic. Complex thinking is situated on the margins of contemporary scientific practice.

b) As Morin (2004) points out, for Descartes and Newton the world is perfect because its origin is divine. Consequently, reality for them is characterized by possessing an order (mathematically formalizable), re-

gulated by general laws that govern all its parts through external, linear, mechanical, simple and stable relations of causality, which explain the phenomenal regularities and reiterations. Discontinuity, error, deviation, and uncertainty are interpreted by simplifying thought as reflections of our ignorance of what, like the new, science still fails to explain through a general law.

c) The classical science of modernity, as Morin argues (2004), is governed by a simplifying thought that only recognizes the general properties of the objects or phenomena it studies, inscribed within a previously known systemic order, without contradicting or exploring their interactions with objects or phenomena of other systems, or with their environment. Simplifying thought that also separates the object that is known from the subject that knows, pretending that any individual can experiment with it in different contexts, under a sequence of standardized and controlled actions.

d) Generated in the midst of the European imperial prosperity of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the simplifying thought carries the idea of an inevitable progress, necessary and guaranteed by a legality inscribed in nature, appreciating the new and positive character that it attributes to the future. For this kind of thought, in the words of Morin (2004):

The role of knowledge is to explain the visible complex by the invisible simple. Beyond agitation, dispersion, diversity, there are laws. Thus, the principle of classical science is, of course, to legislate, to propose the laws that govern the fundamental elements of matter, of life; and to legislate, it must disunite, that is, effectively isolate objects subject to laws. Legislating, disuniting, reducing, these are the fundamental principles of classical thought (p. 1).

It is in criticism of this tradition of the simplifying thought of modern classical science that the tradition of complex thought is constructed. Najmanovich (2018) indicates that the simplifying tradition conceives man confronted with a nature that he must know in order to dominate, while the tradition of complex thought understands knowledge as an encounter between nature and the human being, in a common universe, both unique and infinitely diverse. As this author points out, to overcome the simplifying stage of thought and move to a complex one, a change of attitude is required first of all: to shorten the gap between us and that which we are to know (the transcendent gaze) recognizing the relationships of mutual interdependence with the totality of which we



are a part, taking as a starting point the interaction between objects and subjects (an immanent and implied look).

From the perspective of that which dies, what is born is disorder, deviation, disarticulation of your being. From the perspective of that which is born, the disorder that disorganizes what dies is only part of the order that enables the existence of the new. Everything depends on the system, the moment and the segments of the same that you want to know with greater detention. Any system, as Morin (2004) indicates, “can be considered as part of a poly-system and surrounded by an ecosystem” (p. 21).

The dialectic of life and death, which requires making explicit the level of organization of life that will be analyzed in a simple or complex way, implies that the high school student movement cannot be understood except by situating its praxis in the educational and social system that it integrates. At each level, the totality that contains the system is in some manner present in its parts: the part is in the whole and the whole in the part (hologram principle). The parts are possible to distinguish, that is the requirement from the everyday life, the interaction of the human being with nature and of knowledge. But, according to Morin (2004), the parts should not be separated by science without being united again to know the relations that they establish among themselves at a necessary moment of their concretion, of their cosmic existence, of their understanding and eventually of their life.

We perceive the parts of a whole through mental schemes with which we cut out the undetermined reality, a segment organized under a paradigmatic principle that must be assumed and that a science, open to complexity, should know and reflect on taking into account the practical, ethical and political dimensions and implications of the knowledge that originates or regenerates. By interacting with it, we cannot separate the world we inhabit from the structures of our knowledge.

A first source of complexity emerges from the recognition that each object or phenomenon we know is part of a whole that is, ultimately, unknowable, as it would require considering at the same time its unity and that of each of its parts, with all its internal processes and interactions.

Every time we intuit or know a new determinant of an object, we make our understanding of it complex. Morin (2004) proposes to explore the complexity involved in complementing or contradicting the determining and random aspects of any phenomenon, taking into account the order-disorder-interaction-organization tetragram.

In this sense, the high school student movement can be perceived as part of the order or disorder of the Chilean educational and social sys-

tem, attributing a hegemonic or anti-hegemonic character to its struggle for the right to education. Organization and disorganization are constitutive moments of the cosmos and of life. Life, living beings and their ecosystems are a particular order, because, on the one hand, they have the capacity and the need to produce themselves, and on the other, they tolerate certain degrees of disorder. This also applies to the systems of ideas that guide the action of individual and collective agents.

Moreover, as Luengo (2018) points out, in complex thinking it is fundamental to consider that, in any living organization, including social or political reality, there are no unilinear causalities, but rather multi-causal and recursive dynamics. This causal multiplicity and dynamism of living systems incorporates a complexity that can only be known by the circular and uninterrupted movement of thought. At the same time, Morin (2004) says that “the parts are known, which allows us to know the whole better, but the whole allows us to know the parts better. Thus, knowledge has a starting point when it is set in motion, but it has no ending” (p. 6).

The dialectical movement, which sustains contradiction without its synthesis implying the overcoming of conflicting terms, is called dialogical according to Morin (2004). It is homologous to the circular movement of knowledge produced by complex thought. The dialogic includes the fragmentation of reality for the study of its parts separately, which then confronts and complements, with the knowledge of the existing relations between them and with the totality that they make up. A combination of disjunction and relinkage of portions of reality that relate within a totality that is also part of one or more systems.

Methodological: The dialogic and the theory of complexity constitute a method of thinking that can, and intends, to base a method of research to know empirical phenomena articulated as complex social problems, that is able to advance towards the articulation of the parts with the whole. However, this is still an emerging task. In order to produce knowledge about complex problems, it is not enough to take an ecological view, which expands the number of its potential determinations. Strategies and instruments, research methods, consistent with the postulates of complex thought, must be developed and implemented to overcome the simplifying perspective in the construction of knowledge that broadens our understanding of the studied realities.

The method of complex thought does not correspond to the methodologies of the sciences of complexity, as these, ultimately, adhere to the thought of simplification (Rodríguez 2018). So where to find



the keys for developing strategies and research instruments consistent with the precepts of complex thought? The research methodologies that correspond to complex thinking are those of the comprehensive social sciences or qualitative method.

In the absence of explicit methodological proposals to develop empirical research consistent with the perspective of complex thought, Rodríguez (2018) proposes five principles of method for empirical paradigm research, which in turn come from the tradition of the comprehensive method in the social sciences, namely:

- Analyze a system of networks or heterogeneous practices to infer the organizing principles that connect them, their modes of organization.
- Mapping the multiple processes and constructing observables. Here the plurality of sources and techniques for producing quantitative, but, above all, qualitative and empirical information acquires special relevance.
- Specify the short, medium or long duration of the timescale.
- To specify the temporal dimension of processes: the past, the present and the future of the paradigm.
- Stratified levels of organization (micro, meso, macro), the elements and processes that make up each level depend on the leading question and the adopted scale of observation.

These principles were followed and applied in the production and interpretation of fragmentary information on some features of the movement of high school students, that allow glimpses of the totality that it constitutes as a collective subject and which serves as the context with which it interacts.

Along the lines of the ideas presented, from the point of view of the methodological approach, the historical reconstruction of the concept of citizenship and of the collective subject that constitutes the high school student movement in Chile, was approached from a qualitative research design, as it incorporates in the investigation the meanings that the actors attribute to their action, elements that constitute the object of knowledge. This object of study acquires specificity in the forms of association and organization of the mobilized high school students, and in the social and political projects they support.

The analysis processed these distinctions as components of a praxis of struggle for the right to education, in which all these elements are merged. In view of the length of time covered by the historical reconstruction

of the student movement, secondary sources of information were used to search and review bibliographic and related documentary material.

In the absence of previous studies addressing the research problem from the theoretical perspective, the objectives and the historical breadth tested here, the present analysis acquires an exploratory character, seeking to identify historical recurrences and novelties in the praxis of the high school student movement since the 1970s, which can be interpreted and described as forms of citizen participation and/or participatory citizenship, in the terms proposed by Paredes (2011). A distinction is made between the empirical manifestations of citizenship that serve to explore the predominant or alternative system of ideas and actions, and to detect and characterize the presence of the republican democratic tradition, in its liberal or socialist version.

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The partial reconstruction of the history of the concept of citizenship, based on the references present in different analyzed works, allowed through the systematization of the convergences and divergences of the data provided, describe or explain one or more aspects of the object or problem under investigation (triangulation), which in this way was reformulated to become the one elaborated here: the high school student movement as a counter-hegemonic movement that in its complexity articulates democratic republican traditions, in a context of a crisis of legitimacy of liberal democracy.

In this sense, the knowledge generated is descriptive. The revision of the categories used by researchers in their reports, and by the subjects investigated in their testimonies, positions, projects and proposals, allowed the characterization of the practices and the constitutive meanings of the associative and organizational forms of high school students. Descriptive knowledge of these elements was privileged over identifying causal relationships and offering explanations about their situation and behavior. Without testing hypotheses about the incidence of one element of the movement on another, or the effects of external variables on internal factors of the movement or vice versa, it was rather to generate a type of comprehensive understanding of the actions and meanings that, articulated, make up a praxis located in a complex context where, in a conflictive and controversial manner, the existence of the movement and its tasks makes sense.

In the hermeneutical exercise of interpreting the discourses, actions and experiences lived by the members of the student movement, the first-hand documentary information and that contained in interviews and conversations held with mobilized students, carried out by various

journalists and researchers, is addressed by recognizing the complexity of the subject of study and in the understanding of the researcher as a social being that participates in the processes of citizenship.

In the collection and analysis of empirical and theoretical information, we proceeded by identifying and interpreting the native and scientific categories with which the analysts and subjects involved in the research problem give meaning to the investigated reality. In a transdisciplinary effort, the classification of the obtained information began by distinguishing that relating to the internal dimension of the student movement, in its different categories, from that relating to the external dimension of the movement, to then establish new analytical and conceptual distinctions emerging, product of the advance in documentary and bibliographic exploration (transdisciplinary).

In this way, the methodological approach that made possible the analysis provides an understanding of the multiplicity of the components of the movement, which are articulated in a whole, which interact with each other, but also with entities of other systems, within a larger organization, being part of the internal diversity and plurality of connections existing between its parts and those of other subjects or systems.

The principles of method proposed by Rodríguez (2018) to empirically investigate paradigms, are useful for the analytical (distinguish), synthetic (reflexive-dialogical-integrator) and practical exercise proposed here. To this end, the practice of the high school student movement distinguishes a system of ideas and practices that in the daily life of human experience are fused and organized under a perceptual, conceptual and interactive paradigm that organizes the world of life.

Politics: The problematization of the paradigmatic principles that organize modern scientific thought, its possibilities and limitations, allows the high school student movement to be placed on the horizon of an epochal change (Morin, 2004). Change that tends to overcome simplifications in the understanding of their world, opening itself to complexity, including overcoming the crisis of liberal democracy, wondering about its significance as a historical event the form of organization that is becoming extinct and the one emerging.

The current crisis of the mercantilist civilizing paradigm is part of the horizon of multiple crises, of different order, that appear in the contemporary world, of global character, threatening the well-being and survival of humanity. This epochal shift is a reflection of the inadequacies of the simplifying thought system and the modern world, as indicated by Morin (2004).



Thus thought becomes both an intellectual and a political problem. The consideration of the political dimension of epistemological criticism implies a reform of thought and institutions, in a need to learn to think and act differently in order to contribute to a civilizing change. In this sense, and according to Morin (2004), the political distinction of complex thought is linked to an ethical perspective, involved in learning a new way of thinking, knowing and acting, a new way of living.

The experience of the planetary age, with the multiplicity of interconnections between the parts of the whole that it makes possible, makes inevitable the transformation of knowledge and the organization of life. This experience and transformation is not carried out by an individual isolated in his solitude, but by a group, education being one of the main tools for managing change.

Thus, the activity of the movement, being part of a social whole, can be recognized from a paradigm where the cosmos and life are complex totalities produced by an entanglement of actions, interactions and retroactions of an incalculable multiplicity, of unassailable ongoing processes and random phenomena indeterminable by human consciousness. In this sense, insists Morin (2004), everything that can happen in one point of the globe can generate repercussions in other points. The political approach of the high school movement takes on meaning from complex thinking, as a detonator of a political dimension enriched with forms of participation, in a kind of unravelling of the complex problem, in the link with the community.

d) Ethics: It implies the reaffirmation of life as the responsibility of humanity. Morin (2004) places the evolution of life in a cosmos traversed by forces that tend to regenerate or degrade the ways in which humanity organizes itself. The evidence of the negative planetary effects of a science based on a self-concept that denies the active role of the cognitive subject, in the conformation of the object that researches, demands its responsibility for the unintended consequences that the use of the knowledge it produces entails. In this context, complex thinking brings a reflection on the scientific knowledge of the world, in the perspective of incorporating the ethical dimension in science and the evaluation of the consequences of its thinking in action.

In this direction, as Morin (2004) argues, the challenge of complexity is not limited to the scientific field, but calls for ethics, politics, education and other fields of reflection and human action. In line with what Ricouer (2002) points out, at the intersections between ethics and politics, the commitment of the citizenry becomes meaningful. The respon-



sibility of the high school student movement and the rest of the national community in defense of the right to education and participation can be interpreted as a form of citizenship. An innovation in the social bond, an experience of participation, even a test of civilizing change.

The transformation of the Student Movement as a Collective Subject

References to the origins of the high school student movement in Chile tend to place it at the beginning of the process of expanding the coverage of public high schools beyond the oligarch and aristocrat circle of the Chilean elite and a nascent middle class, who welcomed them until the first half of the 20th century. This expansive policy will increasingly involve the popular sectors in high school education.

In this context, “la chaucha revolution”, in the 1950s, is recognized as the first spontaneous mass demonstration, from the organizational point of view, that was carried out by high school students. The protest was against the increase in the price of public transport in the city of Santiago (in an action similar to what gave rise to the social unrest of October 2019). Demonstrations that gave the high school student movement indelible birthmarks, always visible in its later developments: the occupation of the streets and police repression. The participation of high school students in those revolts is a reality to be explored. At least from the theoretical and historical perspective offered here.

As Azocar (2014) points out, numerous studies on high school student mobilizations focus on the external dimension of the movement, seeking, for example, to characterize the communication actions in which the student movement in 2006, and especially in 2011, installed its positions in the public space. Some of these works conclude with praise for the innovative nature of the movement’s communication strategies, both through digital networks and through mass media. Among these analyses, several point to the high degree of adhesion generated by the students with their communication strategies, with adherence levels close to 90% of the adult population.

In another sense, there are studies that delved into the forms of struggle or repertoire of action of the student movement, and/or into the content of its demands, to the point of linking them with the social discontent that is transversal to Chilean society, as described by Lechner (1998) and criticisms of neoliberalism and the cracks in the model, ac-



According to Gaudichaud (2015). In turn, there are those who relate the student demonstrations to the challenge of influencing the political system and educational policy, where studies show more failures than successes, according to Azocar (2014). Finally, there are the minority perspectives that investigate the internal dimension of the movement, as proposed by Fauré (2015) in its forms of association and organization, and in the historical projects that sustain them.

Through the analysis of the praxis of social movements and what is anticipated in it from the social order they propose, the New Social History in Chile developed by Salazar (2012) has revealed the recreation that these collective subjects make of popular struggles and political projects of the past, which are appropriated and adapted with autonomy in every situation. Through practices and processes of self-education, especially in the emergency cycles of social movements, the popular sectors would bring knowledge of past struggles, constantly increasing their pool of community, productive and libertarian innovations, that they raise as alternatives to those established in the current system of production-domination.

It is on the subject of this historical and theoretical problematization of the emancipatory meaning and potential of social movements, positioned from the point of view of complex thinking, that an overview of the high school student movement is constructed. This reconstruction combines different moments of public emergence with periods of latency, which in its complexity shows the survival of a collective memory that keeps alive the knowledge about concrete struggles and social projects conceived in the past.

Part of what remains alive in popular culture and is present in the high school student movement refers to the values and ethical and political principles of action of the republican socialist democratic tradition. This is a key element for understanding the particularities of the high school student movement in Chile. The movement, as a collective subject, organizes its identity and political activity supported by a critical and supportive popular culture that is not found in the official curriculum. These elements of popular culture remain in the collective memory, available yesterday and today to those who choose to confront an unequal educational, political and social order. At the same time, greater complexity is being added, renewing new meanings and forms of exercise of citizenship.

However, the relevance of the political dimension in the task of the student movement, linking the problems of education with the logic of the functioning of a broader social order, generated studies focused on



its relationship with government political institutions. This perspective does not largely explore their associative practices and forms of organization, their positions in the face of the reality they face, their educational proposals and the social projects they carry out. That is to say, they don't recognize its complexity. Rather, the interest is placed in the collective processes of youth subjectivation of the high school student movement, characterized by a strong political identity and plurality. This, according to Zarzuri (2018), in the understanding that the complex subjects that constitute the movement are young people whom society usually positions as lacking in commitment or without links with the citizenry.

However, the ideological and social heterogeneity of the high school student movement is a fact. It is present from its origins. The forms of association and organization acquired, in the 21st century, an extensive and strong fraternal and assembleistic character. Sociability relations, articulation and coordination practices, feelings of belonging and dynamics of participation. All elements based on the idea of equality in dignity and rights, and loaded with a strong political significance that challenges the absence of a participatory democracy in the relations between government, society and education.

The high school student movement was constituted as a collective subject through interactions conveyed by friendship, union, ideological identity. This struggle emerged from specific community contexts, where the main injustices that, due to the very complexity of the neoliberal model, expressed themselves in a multidimensional way were problematized. This was experienced as social spaces that sought greater democratic legitimacy in the increase of dialogue, promoting numerous assemblies and occupations of high schools. Each educational establishment was transformed into deliberative spaces and opened to the adjacent social and community space. All this was an expression of forms of self-government, which were articulated under the notion of the whole system, since their struggle went beyond the educational establishment itself. Discussions were taking place on principles to be appropriated in the practice of society as a whole. This is what we can call a new militancy, where young people, leaving behind the idea that the only form of participation is in the traditional political parties, create new spaces of affiliation with militant discipline and real commitment. Militancy, according to Zarzuri (2018), is a disciplined adherence to a cause that in this case moves away from the traditional representative hegemony, with the figure of the assembly articulating the social and the political.

Final considerations

The dynamism and relative continuity in the time of the high school student movement, characteristic of its systemic organization, authorizes the interpretive use of theoretical categories such as the emergence and latency of a popular social subject, as indicated by Salazar (2012). The ruptures and continuities with which this subject manifests itself in the different moments when it breaks out and acquires visibility on the public scene, can be recognized from the perspective of complex thought, as those that attribute to temporality a central place when it comes to reconstructing, analyzing and interpreting the political senses. Even in the struggles that give life to social movements in general, and to student ones, in particular.

To face this task, the categories of latency and emergence, together with those of the internal and external dimensions of the student movement, must be complemented with others that are capable of describing the political subjectivity that accompanies associative practices. It is about articulating the forms of organization and struggle, and the political projects that the high school student movement creates and/or recreates, when it breaks into the public arena, as what unites and organizes it.

At this point is introduced the use of the concept of socialist democratic republicanism to account for a set of principles, positions and procedures that characterize the high school student movement, in an incipient way in the 80's and 90's of last century, and more markedly in the 21st century; although rooted in the political traditions present in Chile since the 19th century.

This analytical exercise allows us to highlight specific contributions that complex thinking can make to the development of strategies of empirical knowledge of the high school student movement. These contributions can be synthesized following part of the conceptual proposal explained by Luengo (2018) to advance the knowledge of a complex reality. In this sense, complex thinking allows us to recognize the object analyzed by this article as a living organism, formed by the multiple interactions that are established between its components and the unity that it configures in the act of knowledge with the subject that investigates it. This unity, determined by the question about the potential contribution that the high school student movement makes to social change, demands a dialogue that, from an inter and transdisciplinary perspective, approximates the horizons of meaning in which researcher and researched subjects inscribe their work, overcoming the simplifications and reconstructing, in this case, their praxis as an expression of an innovative citizen.



Empirical knowledge that complex thought teaches us that we should never consider as complete and definitive, that we should always consider partial and provisional, and that, if we maintain interest, it is possible to broaden and update.

Note

- 1 Some of these references have been extracted from two documentaries that we recommend watching. These can be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/3h0UVEa>; <https://bit.ly/3gZUGD2>

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