



**Public Policies in Education in Chile (1985-2018).
Participation of Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro¹**

Políticas Públicas en Educación en Chile (1985-2018).
Participación de Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro

Políticas Públicas em Educação no Chile (1985-2018).
Participação de Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro

Jaime Caiceo Escudero
Universidad de Santiago de Chile (Chile)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2808-140X>
jcaiceo@hotmail.com

Abstract

During the period 1985-2018, there were a series of public policies in Chile in which Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra participated directly, either promoting or directing them, either from the Center for Research and Development of Education (CIDE) -where he was responsible for the Research Area-, from the Ministry of Education -where he was Director General of Education- or from the Alberto Hurtado University in his capacity as Dean. Among them, the Program for the Improvement of the Quality and Equity of Education (MECE), the Program of the 900 Schools, the General Law of Education, the Montegrande Project, and the Law of Inclusion, inspired by popular education in contact with Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci, stand out. His approach was that the educational system had to be discriminated against 'positively' to overcome the crisis in which it was left by the military dictatorship. Some biographical features and his philosophical training with two doctorates obtained at the University of Louvain, considering a significant number of publications, will be addressed in this qualitative paradigm study with phenomenological episteme and hermeneutics. It's historical research in which primary and secondary sources are used, with interviews with the protagonist himself and those who worked directly with him.

Keywords: Educational policy; Educational History; Educational quality; Compensatory Education; Biographies.

¹ English version by S.Iacovacci Translation Service. E-mail: siacovacci@gmail.com

Resumen

Durante el período 1985-2018 hubo una serie de políticas públicas en Chile en las cuales Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra participó directamente, ya sea promoviendo o dirigiéndolas, ya fuera desde el Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación (CIDE) -en donde estuvo a cargo del Área de Investigación-, desde el Ministerio de Educación -en donde fue Director General de Educación- o desde la Universidad Alberto Hurtado en su calidad de Decano. Entre ellas sobresalen el Programa de Mejoramiento de la Calidad y Equidad de la Educación (MECE), el Programa de las 900 Escuelas, la Ley General de Educación, el Proyecto Montegrande y la Ley de Inclusión, inspirado en la educación popular en contacto con Paulo Freire y con Antonio Gramsci. Su planteamiento consistía que al sistema educativo había que discriminarlo 'positivamente' a fin de superar la crisis en que quedó por la dictadura militar. Algunos rasgos biográficos y su formación filosófica con dos doctorados logrados en la Universidad de Lovaina, considerando un importante número de publicaciones, se abordarán en este estudio de paradigma cualitativo con episteme fenomenológica y hermenéutica. Es una investigación de carácter histórico en que se recurre a fuentes primarias y secundarias, con entrevistas al propio protagonista y a quienes trabajaron directamente con él.

Palabras clave: Política educacional; Historia de la Educación; Calidad de la educación; Educación Compensatoria; Biografía.

Resumo

Durante o período 1985-2018 houve uma série de políticas públicas no Chile das quais Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra participou diretamente, seja promovendo-as ou dirigindo-as, seja do Centro de Pesquisa e Desenvolvimento da Educação (CIDE) -onde foi responsável pela Área de Pesquisa-, do Ministério da Educação -onde foi Diretor Geral de Educação- ou da Universidade Alberto Hurtado na qualidade de Reitor. Entre eles, destacam-se o Programa de Melhoria da Qualidade e Equidade da Educação (MECE), o Programa das 900 Escolas, a Lei Geral de Educação, o Projeto Montegrande e a Lei de Inclusão, inspirada na educação popular em contato com Paulo Freire e Antonio Gramsci. Sua abordagem era que o sistema educacional tinha que ser discriminado "positivamente" para superar a crise em que foi deixado pela ditadura militar. Algumas características biográficas e sua formação filosófica com dois doutorados obtidos na Universidade de Louvain, considerando um número significativo de publicações, serão abordadas neste estudo de paradigma qualitativo com episteme fenomenológica e hermenêutica, trata-se de uma pesquisa histórica em que são utilizadas fontes primárias e secundárias, com entrevistas com o próprio protagonista e com quem trabalhou diretamente com ele.

Palavras-chave: Política educacional; História da Educação; Qualidade da educação; Educação Compensatória; Biografia.

Received: 2025/03/07

Approved: 2025/10/30

Introduction

Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra was born in Santiago, Chile, on October 14, 1940. He completed his primary and secondary education at the San Ignacio Alonso Ovalle School and is a philosophy professor. He holds two doctorates from Leuven. In 1969, he joined the Center for Educational Research (CIDE), where he promoted popular education alongside Paulo Freire, who was exiled in Chile.

He explored this topic in depth in his doctoral studies from the perspective of Gramsci. He applied these ideas to programs in low-income areas. For example, from 1985 to 1989, he ran an experiment in the most disadvantaged schools with the support of tutors who worked with students on alternate days to their normal classes. This experiment formed the basis for the 900 Schools Program, implemented when democracy returned in 1990. He served as Coordinator from 1990 to 1993 and later as Director of General Education at the Ministry of Education from 1994 to 2000².

In August 2000, he joined Alberto Hurtado University, where he held various positions until the Faculty of Education was established from CIDE. He served as dean from 2006 to 2012, and in 2017, the university named him professor emeritus. He held several government positions, including chairing the Presidential Advisory Council for Education Quality (2015), serving on the UMCE Board of Directors (2015–2018), and serving as Director of General Education (2016–2018)³, the year he retired from academic and professional activities to move with his family to Puerto Varas. On August 24, 2023, he was honored with the National Prize in Education Sciences for his work in public policy in education for the country and Latin America⁴. More specifically, it is noted that

The jury based its decision on his contributions to education in Chile over the last fifty years, his efforts to develop a more just and equitable education system through public policies, and his promotion of an end to exclusionary practices. Additionally, the jury considered his intellectual work, dedication to teacher training, support for designing public policies, and participation in various commissions and forums for debate (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 2023, n/p).

For its part, The Clinic states:

Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro was recently awarded the 2023 National Prize for Educational Sciences by the Ministry of Education. He has been a fundamental pillar in the transformation of the Chilean education system over the last 50 years. His commitment to building a fair, inclusive, high-quality education system as the foundation of a democratic society still resonates

² During the administration of Eduardo Frei Ruiz Tagle.

³ During Michelle Bachelet Jeria's second term in office, in her first term (2006-2010), he had been President of the Presidential Advisory Council, which helped to resolve the change from the Constitutional Organic Law on Education (LOCE), inherited from the military dictatorship, to the General Education Law, enacted as law on August 17, 2009, with No. 20,370 (CAICEO, 2022).

⁴ The jury was composed of the Minister of Education, Nicolás Cataldo; Rosa Devés, rector of the University of Chile; Elisa Araya, rector of the Metropolitan University of Educational Sciences; Ignacio Sánchez, rector of the Catholic University of Chile; and Nolfa Ibáñez, winner of the 2021 National Prize for Educational Sciences.

today with undeniable force. Fifty years after the coup d'état and the changes it entailed for the Chilean education system, this award is a reminder of García-Huidobro's legacy and reaffirms the role of educators as drivers of change in students' lives and the country's history. The award also serves as a call to defend democracy and value its achievements, such as the career of Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro (LATORRE⁵ and ROJAS, 2023, n/p).

This article aims to describe Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra's biography and analyze his professional and academic work at CIDE, now the Faculty of Education at Alberto Hurtado University, and at the Ministry of Education. There, he promoted public policies that benefited low-income sectors and aimed to achieve equity and inclusion in the education system. This qualitative study employs a phenomenological and hermeneutic epistemology (CAICEO, 2018). The study is a historical investigation that draws on primary sources, such as the author's writings and analyses of his publications, as well as secondary sources, such as interviews with individuals associated with his academic and professional activities (CAICEO and MARDONES, 1988).

1. Biographical details and personality of Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra

As previously mentioned, Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra was born in Santiago, Chile, on October 14, 1940. His parents were Eduardo García-Huidobro Vial and Alicia Saavedra Pinto. His father held various jobs, including managing his parents' estate and driving the first Santiago trolleybus. His mother was a housewife. After her husband's death in 1952, however, she became a civil servant and ran a sewing workshop that produced overalls for companies, party dresses, and other items. In addition to his parents, the family consisted of his siblings, Alicia and Francisco. Regarding that period, he recalls

Despite their different beliefs, they were very close to their siblings. They lived on a plot of land where they enjoyed the outdoors, being in contact with nature, and doing farm work. They had a commercial chicken coop with laying hens on the plot and distributed their eggs to different areas of the city. They used a "cabrita," a horse-drawn carriage, to get around. However, when I was ten years old, we moved to a house in Providencia opposite the current Sculpture Park. As an adult, my sister Alicia took over management of the family farm, while my brother Francisco became an executive (García-Huidobro, 2024, p. 1).

He completed his primary and secondary education at the San Ignacio Alonso Ovalle School, graduating in 1957⁶, and

⁵ Dean of the Faculty of Education at Universidad Alberto Hurtado.

⁶ His school issued the following statement upon receiving the National Prize for Educational Sciences: It was with great joy and pride that we received the news yesterday that our former student from the class of '57, Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra, was unanimously awarded the 2023 National Prize for Educational Sciences. He also taught at our school in 1964 and 1965. As a school, we value all the contributions he has made to Chilean education through the Center for Research and Development in Education (CIDE), the Ministry of Education, and various universities and educational institutions. As an Ignatian community, we send him our warmest regards and congratulations (NEWS,

immediately entered the Society of Jesus⁷ as a seminarian, obtaining his bachelor's degree in philosophy from the San José Maximum College in Buenos Aires in 1963⁸. Choosing not to continue in religious life, he taught philosophy and religion at his former school (1964 to 1965), as well as at the German High School in 1967 and the Marshall School (1967 to 1972). (MILOS, 2023). During this time, he joined the Pedagogical Department of the Federation for Research and Development in Education (FIDE) and edited the organization's *Revista de Pedagogía Journal of Pedagogy* (1964 to 1972)⁹ (MILOS, 2023). The Catholic University of Valparaíso recognized his philosophical studies, and he completed his pedagogy in philosophy. He obtained the title of professor of philosophy and a degree in education in 1972. In the 1970s and 1980s, he taught and served as an administrator at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. He has directed master's and doctoral programs at Chilean and foreign universities, including Leuven, University College of Cardiff (Wales), Sherbrooke (Canada), and San Andrés (Argentina). From 2008 to 2012, he was a consultant on educational reforms at the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education (OEI) (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 2023). Thanks to the efforts of Fr. Patricio Cariola, SJ, was the first to apply for the agreement signed by CIDE with the Catholic University of Leuven, obtaining a doctorate in educational sciences¹⁰ with the thesis "Education, Consciousness, and Society."

He earned a Doctor of Philosophy in 1976 with a thesis titled "Antonio Gramsci's Educational Thinking." In this work, he explored the various facets of Antonio Gramsci's thinking. Together with the ideas of Paulo Freire, these ideas would guide his actions in favor of popular education, which was his main concern in his academic and professional life. He carried out important work when he took charge of the scholarships awarded by the Catholic University of Leuven to support the training of young researchers in the 1980s. His commitment to the scholars produced a dozen Ph.D.s and several master's degrees. The scholars received the scholarships from the moment their projects were approved, and they awaited and celebrated his visits during their time in Belgium (MILOS, 2023, p. 50).

COLEGIO SAN IGNACIO, 2023, n/p). He remembers his school for "participating in the Scouts, how fun the games were, and best of all, the camps. The work in the neighborhoods, where we basically taught catechism to children preparing for their first communion and organized campaigns to collect food to give to the most deprived areas of Santiago" GARCÍA-HUIDOBRO, 2024, p. 1). "The teachers I remember from school are Andrés Cox, who was my spiritual director, and Carlos Peña, who was my head teacher. Both were very close to me and were good teachers. It was an education closely linked to the Jesuits" (IDEM).

⁷ Because "the Jesuits had a profound influence on me, instilling in me a desire to support others and a passion for teaching" (IBIDEM, p. 2).

⁸ Remember that it was marked by philosophy professor Miguel Fiorito. This was a Jesuit religious school that was considered a House of Formation, with a Faculty of Philosophy and Theology, for Argentine, Chilean, Uruguayan, and Paraguayan students; Pope Francis also studied here.

⁹ At that time, the institution was under the authority of the Archbispopric of Santiago and was run by the Jesuit priest Patricio Cariola Barroilhet, who also received "(...) on August 23, 1999, the National Education Award as the crowning achievement of all his work aimed at human development and the construction of a more just society" (CAICEO, 2015, p. 156). The same ideology guided Juan Eduardo García Huidobro.

¹⁰ He remembers André Berten, his philosophy thesis advisor, from Leuven.

Returning to his personal life, he married Mónica Torres Bahamondes, a primary school teacher, in 1968. They had two sons¹¹ and a daughter¹², and she tragically died while swimming at the beach. Later, in 1984, he married Liliana Vaccaro Carrizo, a doctor of education who helped him raise his children. She passed away a few months ago, in 2024. As a father, he says, "I am a concerned and present father who respects the space and decisions that children make" (García-Huidobro, 2024, p. 2).

Regarding the influence of the National Prize on popular education, Cristian Cox—another pillar of the educational policies of the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia (Coalition of Parties for Democracy), the ruling group after the military dictatorship—notes:

He was a leader in Popular Education, an important field in the 1980s. He was undoubtedly one of the best, most well-rounded, and most professional intellectual leaders in that field. Alongside Sergio's terms of research, he is significant in the Latin American field (Cox, 2024, p. 2).

Dr. Cox himself (2024, pp. 5-6) notes that the National Prize winner's leadership and personality enabled his rapid acceptance by MINEDUC officials:

Wherever he went, he encountered an educator or philosopher who spoke about the essence of education and its treasures in a way they had never heard before. They had endured seventeen years of dictatorship under bosses who were commercial engineers with little training in education. The impact was immediate. This was no surprise because he was simple and immediate in his personal interactions, which contrasted radically with his intellectual stature and the previous moment.

CIDE, led by Jesuit Patricio Cariola, focused on popular education during the dictatorship as a way to help the dispossessed. In this regard, one actor from that period recalls:

It is a refuge and a place for research, knowledge generation, and intellectual reflection. At the same time, it was also about the masses and the whole neighborhood. These were small actions financed by specific international cooperation resources: a small seed in a mothers' center here, a weaving and burlap center there, and a hairdressing workshop for young girls who needed to find jobs cutting hair and earn money to support themselves during the PEM and PHOJ.¹ I have known Juan Eduardo since that time, and we have worked together. There was a lot of international collaboration. They combined support for solving problems of poverty, exclusion, and political persecution with material actions. We also worked in rural

¹¹ José Luis, born in 1969, is an environmental engineer. Today, he has several businesses in the Los Lagos region, where he lives with his four sons and one daughter. Juan Eduardo, born in 1978, is a designer. He works for an urban planning corporation and also lives in Puerto Varas (GARCÍA-HUIDOBRO, 2024).

¹² Antonia, born in 1971, publicist; today she owns a café in Puerto Varas, where she lives; she has two daughters (IDEM).

communities, combining this with adult education in Freirina, for example. We provided materials to help the community manage their finances and teach literacy so parents could educate their children, engage in dialogue, and learn the importance of language in the Father and Son Program [2]. The program was small and limited to rural and urban poverty (COX, 2024, p. 3).

One of his disciples, whom he supervised for his doctoral thesis, explains:

Popular education deploys a set of important strategies based on Paulo Freire's initial ideas. These strategies incorporate people with no formal training into a more sophisticated type of reflection. Games such as role-playing and card games could be used to explore real-life situations and how we solve problems. This playful approach helped Popular Education. I knew this because the research involved gathering more conceptual information from the practical side. In other words, it focused on how Popular Education is implemented. It was developed in the non-formal sphere, particularly in trade unions. There was extensive work with Huilliche organizations on the Osorno coast, for example, as well as with neighborhood associations and many territorial organizations. There were also productive workshops in towns and training of leaders in organizations. Additionally, there was significant work in parishes and with social organizations operating under the auspices of those parishes. (Maureira, 2024, p. 7).

Regarding his personality and academic approach, a professor at Alberto Hurtado University who worked with him notes:

He is the opposite of intellectuals or politicians who work for their glory. He shines on his own, but through collective action. He manages to bring people together, allowing them to discuss and contribute to debates on education, but he rarely backtracks. The intention was to generate knowledge and contacts in the academic sphere. He sought and succeeded in getting people to connect with each other and share their ideas, without necessarily having to agree; there was tolerance (CORVALÁN, 2024, pp. 4-5).

In turn, regarding his contribution to education, he notes:

He understood education as part of a political and social process in society and fulfilled it accordingly. He belonged to a generation that was very different from the current politically dominant one. He believed that all actions should be undertaken with political knowledge and a strong educational background. He understood that knowledge of philosophy and history provides a strong intellectual foundation for

influencing decision-making and management. His thinking spans all areas of education, seeking balance and justice in society. I believe this is a very Jesuit influence—a powerful intellectual training for debates, studies, writing, and work (IDEM, p. 5).

Another academic from Alberto Hurtado University, who worked with him, describes his working style as follows:

I would say that he is a person with a great ability to form work teams and develop initiatives. He is a delegated leader who does not concentrate power in a few hands, but rather has a great capacity to bring others together. He is persistent in achieving the objectives he sets for himself (Sepúlveda, 2024, p. 7).

2. Professional and academic work¹³ at CIDE and the Ministry of Education

As mentioned earlier, our award winner started implementing his approach to popular education in disadvantaged schools at CIDE. With the help of tutors who worked alternate days outside their normal class schedule, this approach was implemented between 1985 and 1989. This formed the basis of the 900 Schools Program, the first program in the field of

¹³ Some of his publications that attest to his academic interests and professional work are:

- (1998). (Editor). *La Reforma Educacional Chilena*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Popular.
- (2002). *Nota sobre las estrategias de acogida a los nuevos estudiantes en la Universidad Alberto Hurtado*. *Revista Calidad en la Educación*, Núm. 17, pp. 165-173. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31619/caledu.n17.412>.
- (2004). *Políticas educativas y equidad en Chile*. *Persona y sociedad*, Vol. 18, Nº 3, pp. 95-106.
- (2006). *La reforma educacional chilena y la educación pública en Globalización, educación y pobreza en América Latina: ¿hacia una nueva agenda política?* / coord. por Xavier Bonal i Sarró. Editores: Fundación CIDOB, pp. 187-218.
- (2007). *Desigualdad educativa y segmentación del sistema escolar. Consideraciones a partir del caso chileno*. *Pensamiento Educativo*, 40(1), pp. 65-85. Recuperado a partir de <http://146.155.94.136/index.php/pel/article/view/25489>.
- (2007). *Énfasis y disensos de política educacional*. *Mensaje*, Vol. 56 Nº 556, pp. 8-11.
- (2007). *La experiencia de REDUC (Red Latinoamericana de información y documentación educativa)*. *Idea La Mancha: Revista de Educación de Castilla-La Mancha*, Nº 5, pp. 303-314.
- (2008). *Ley General de Educación: avances y silencios*. *Mensaje*, Vol. 57 Nº 570, pp. 6-11.- (2008). *El Consejo Asesor Presidencial para la calidad de la educación: reseña de una experiencia*. *Revista CIS*, Vol. 8, Nº 11, pp. 30-33.
- (2008). *El papel de la lectura en la formación de profesores en La lectura en la sociedad de la información*, Editores Madrid: Fundación Santillana, pp. 159-166.
- (2009). *Una nueva meta para la educación latinoamericana en el Bicentenario en Calidad, equidad y reformas en la enseñanza* / coord. por Álvaro Marchesi Ullastres, Juan Carlos Tedesco y César Coll Salvador, pp. 19-34.
- (2010). *En colaboración con BELLEI, Cristian. Calidad de la educación: ¿tropiezo y oportunidad?*. *Mensaje*, Vol. 59 Nº 589, pp. 10-15.
- (2011). *En colaboración con CONCHA, Carlos. La educación en la encrucijada de las oportunidades (de nuevo)*. *Mensaje*, Vol. 60 Nº 600, pp. 6-11.
- (2012). *En colaboración con SALVAT, Pablo y ROMÁN, Marcela. Horizonte normativo para una educación justa en sociedades democráticas. Una reflexión desde América Latina*. *Revista Internacional de Educación para la Justicia Social* 1.1, pp. 46-78.
- (2014). *La reforma educacional: propósitos y escollos*. *Mensaje*, Vol. 63 Nº 630, pp. 6-11.
- (2014). *En colaboración con FERRADA, Rocío y GIL, Marcela. La relación educación-sociedad en el discurso político-educativo de los gobiernos de la Concertación (1990-2009)*. *Estudios Pedagógicos*, 40(1), pp. 113-131. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-07052014000100007>.
- (2020). *Renovar la educación*. *Mensaje*, Vol. 69 Nº 691, pp. 22-27.

education following the return to democracy in 1990. Juan Eduardo took on the role of coordinator of this program from 1990 to 1993, assisted by Liliana Vaccaro. One of his primary concerns was achieving equity¹⁴. In this regard, he published a text on the Chilean Educational Reform (García-Huidobro, 1998), which three researchers from the Center for Public Studies analyzed. They noted:

A central program in the pursuit of equity is the 900 Schools Program (P-900). At the time the program was launched, the initial diagnosis could be summarized by the following key ideas: education is the mechanism for achieving social mobility, education coverage is a relatively solved problem, increased schooling does not guarantee greater employability or access to higher wages, and finally, attending school or high school does not ensure the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are useful in life and for participating in society (p. 70). Based on these ideas, the importance of setting quality and equity goals in education is recognized. The analysis of Simce results reveals insufficient quality and profound inequality in education between poor and wealthy sectors. To support the conclusion that the quality of education is low, they cite the average Simce score and point out differences in performance between private and public schools as an indicator of equity (Beyer, Eyzaguirre, & Fontaine, 2001, p. 306).

Unfortunately, the program was not continued, nor were the public policies necessary to reduce the educational gap between the public (municipal) and private (subsidized or paid) sectors implemented. These policies would have included granting greater autonomy to schools and not overburdening them, their management teams, and their teaching staff with additional demands derived from the Enlaces, Acle, PME, school educational projects, assimilation of the new curriculum, projects to extend the school day, monitoring workshops, and so on (IDEM, p. 311). On the contrary, the gaps have widened recently (IDEM, p. 311).

Regarding their academic and professional work, the findings of another significant Chilean educational research center are important to highlight: the Interdisciplinary Program for Research in Education (PIIE). Founded at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile in 1972 by Beatrice Ávalos¹⁵ and Ernesto Schiefelbein¹⁶, it is now part of the Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano (CAICEO, 2015).

As an educational researcher, he is known for his work in popular and adult education during his years at CIDE. His lines of research on education and poverty, education and justice, segregation and school inclusion, and public education policies, developed during his time at CIDE and at the Alberto Hurtado University and the Center for Studies on Policies and Practices in Education (CEPPE) at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, are also notable. The findings and products of his research projects have been published in books, articles

¹⁴ Inclusion is necessary for equity, and García-Huidobro regularly spoke on these issues at the International Congresses of Latin American Philosophy held at the Universidad Santo Tomás in Bogotá between 1988 and 1990. The author of this article, who also participated, can attest to this.

¹⁵ National Education Award in 2013.

¹⁶ National Education Award in 2007

in specialized journals, and book chapters, both nationally and internationally. In the field of public policy, his contributions to designing and implementing policies that promote quality and equity in education, especially for marginalized groups, are significant. His contributions as a policymaker in various public positions in the Ministry of Education and as a ministerial advisor are relevant in this regard (PIIE, 2023, n/p).

On the other hand, he later wrote two working papers at CIDE entitled “The Gramscian Conception of the State” (1980) and “Gramsci and the School” (1984) based on his in-depth studies of Gramsci's thinking in his doctoral thesis. For this reason,

His theoretical contribution to understanding education as a historical, cultural practice conditioned by power relations will be fundamental to the Chilean intellectual milieu. So too will his role in introducing concepts that changed the way politics was understood, extending it to the field of culture, into the silenced and silent debate of the time (MILOS, 2003, p. 50).

MILOS himself (2023, p. 51) proposes the following hypothesis regarding the conjunction between theory and practice by the 2023 National Prize winner:

His intellectual work developing the idea of the “political meaning of popular education” and promoting the systematization of hundreds of popular education experiences or projects contains the foundation of his subsequent contributions to education systems in general and school systems in particular. This work demonstrates his ability to interpret reality through specific categories of understanding and then apply systems of action, or policies, to it.

Dr. García Huidobro was one of the driving forces behind the transformation of CIDE into the Faculty of Education at Alberto Hurtado University. He joined the university in 2000 and, the following year, created and directed the basic education program. Subsequently, the university established programs in pedagogy for professionals in 2004, early childhood education in 2005, and pedagogy in English in 2006. During this time, he also participated in launching a master's degree program in educational policy and training for school principals. The Department of Teaching and University Pedagogy was established in 2003, and he became its director from 2003 to 2005. The following year, the Faculty of Education was established, and Dr. García Huidobro became its dean (2006–2012). He incorporated early practical experience into teacher training from the beginning of the degree program (SEPÚLVEDA, 2024).

Following the country's return to democracy in 1990, a significant number of CIDE and PIIE doctors joined the Ministry of Education, including two individuals who would play a pivotal role in the policies promoted during the democratic governments. Both were former Jesuit students from the San Ignacio de Alonso Ovalle school: Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra and Cristian Cox Donoso. The latter refers to the first program implemented during the Patricio Aylwin administration (1990–1994): the P900¹⁷.

¹⁷ This program employed “affirmative action” that had been implemented in France and England in the previous decade; it was a pro-equity program; tutors supported students especially in reading, writing, and mathematics; and each school was provided with a library of about 100 books (COX, 2024).

each in charge of different but closely related areas. He founded and launched the P900 program with funds donated to the Chilean government and democracy by Nordic Cooperation (Sweden, Denmark, and Norway) 15 days after President Aylwin took office. The Swedish ambassador came to speak with Minister Lagos, saying, "I have brought a million dollars from Nordic Cooperation for the Transition, and we believe that education is where it can have the greatest impact. Do whatever you think is best." He believed the best use of the funds was the P900 program, also known as the 900 Schools Program. It was designed, led, built, and launched in a very short time (COX, 2024, p. 1).

This program was implemented in three months thanks to Juan Eduardo's efforts, receiving support from ministry officials once they realized that his intentions were for of students and that there were no mass layoffs with the arrival of the new government. A larger program was then implemented: the Improvement of Quality and Equity in Education (Mejoramiento de la Calidad y Equidad de la Educación - MECE) program, promoted by García-Huidobro and Cox¹⁸, especially the MECE for primary and secondary education, which took about a year to materialize; here, our laureate took charge of the MECE for primary education¹⁹. The resources came from the World Bank²⁰ thanks to the efforts of Finance Minister Alejandro Foxley: while the P900 program had a budget of one million dollars, the MECE programs for primary and secondary education had budgets of thirteen million dollars each (COX, 2024; CAICEO and PARRAGUEZ, 2000).

Subsequently, Juan Eduardo "was the Director General of Education²¹ in the government of Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle (1994–2000)" (Cox, 2024, p. 2). Unsatisfied with his accomplishments, he continued to publish articles on public policies related to equity (García-Huidobro, 2004). While at CIDE, he participated in the Commission on Teacher Training in 2005. In response to the 2006 Penguin Revolution, President Bachelet appointed him on June 7 of that year as president of the Presidential Advisory Council on Education. The council consisted of 82 people from different backgrounds across the country²² and aimed to improve the quality of education by listening to citizens. The secondary school student movement sought to

There has been a change in the importance of education in society. They have succeeded in establishing the importance of public education in public discourse. In a wealthier Chilean society where most goods are allocated through the market, having a good education can make a significant difference. However, the demand

¹⁸ From 1998 to 2006, he was in charge of Curriculum Reform, leaving his important role at MECE.

¹⁹ There were other MECE: Rural and Higher Education.

²⁰ These programs were heavily criticized by some sectors of the country, but the World Bank held them up as an example for other Latin American countries.

²¹ He was the third highest authority in the Ministry of Education. President Frei wanted to promote a project to improve secondary education, called Montegrande, in which Juan Eduardo pushed for more explicit elements of equity and inclusion (COX, 2024). "During that period, Juan Eduardo experienced a critical situation with his brain tumor. It was surprising because it was a fairly large tumor, and he suffered no after-effects. I understand that this is one of the miracles for canonizing Father Hurtado (SEPÚLVEDA, 2024, p. 7).

²² Among others, Cristian Cox, Patricia Matte—who ran the conservative Matte school network—Archbishop Ricardo Ezzati—who defended Catholic schools—and the Rector of Diego Portales University, Carlos Peña, who is secular.

does not define what constitutes a good education. It is simply a matter of receiving an education as good as that of the more affluent. This allows them to achieve higher scores on the PSU and gain admission to the most prestigious programs at leading universities. In short, it is a movement toward equality in education, a political goal consistent with the importance of education for social mobility and quality of life today (García-Huidobro, 2008b, p. 30; García-Huidobro, 2008a, n/p).

After six months of work divided into three subcommittees, three convictions were reached:

The first establishes a sense of urgency and proposes education as a strategic priority for Chile. The second refers to the diagnosis. Although Chilean education has made significant progress recently, it still lacks the quality required and demanded in today's world. It is also unable to reduce the marked inequalities of origin that children face at the beginning of their educational experience. Finally, there is a conviction that improvement is possible. However, such improvement requires sustained effort and is based on certain consensuses (*ibid.*, p. 31).

The Advisory Board's main proposals were:

1. Replacing the current Organic Constitutional Law on Education (Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza - LOCE) with a law that better balances the effective right to quality education with extensive freedom of education is politically time-critical and could be an opportunity to build the necessary consensus on the education we want for our society.
2. It is proposed that, in a mixed school system (public and private²³), with public funding and school choice for families, it is essential to create a Quality Assurance System (...).
3. It is essential to improve public education so that it contributes effectively to expanding opportunities for all Chileans (...).
4. School administrators and teachers are key players in building a good education system, which is why the report highlights the need for special measures to support them. To decisively support the dignification of their work, progress must be made in developing a professional teaching career that ensures job stability and clear dismissal procedures, but also attracts and retains teachers who demonstrate the skills required for teaching. In addition, it is imperative to improve the initial and continuing training of teachers (IBIDEM).

²³ Due to his Jesuit training and his early work at CIDE alongside Fr. Cariola, SJ, defending Catholic private education from the Popular Unity government (1970-1973), Juan Eduardo always felt conflicted about this issue, because he realized the importance of strongly promoting public education, which had been so neglected by the military dictatorship. However, here we see the balance achieved with mixed provision, a situation that continues to this day.

Unfortunately, the Final Agreement delivered to President Bachelet at La Moneda did not include the signatures of the President of the Teachers' Association, Jorge Pávez, or the students aligned with the Communist Party. This caused our award winner to suffer greatly (COX, 2024). In 2009, however, Congress succeeded in replacing the LOCE with the General Education Law (LGE), ending 19 years of confrontation between the government and the opposition. The LOCE required high parliamentary quorums for any educational changes. Juan Eduardo, however, was not happy with the new law because it emphasized evaluation and accountability mechanisms more than supporting educational work. For this reason, he contributed to drafting the 2015 Inclusion Law during Michelle Bachelet's second term (2014–2018), which better reflected his views on equity in education (ibid.).

From 2014 to 2015, he participated in the Study Group on the Education Evaluation System and SIMCE. Between 2013 and 2014, he promoted the creation of a joint doctoral program in education at Alberto Hurtado University and Diego Portales University that addressed the political aspects of education (Corvalán, 2024). He assumed the position of Director of General Education at the Ministry of Education once again (2016-2018).

In summary, here is the testimony of someone who was his disciple and worked directly with him at CIDE and Alberto Hurtado University:

I think I should emphasize that he was someone capable of providing guidance to Chilean education. His nomination and recognition with the National Prize crown his work at CIDE, at the University, and at the Ministry of Education, as well as his contribution to the new General Education Law (MAUREIRA, 2024, p. 9).

Through his relentless academic and professional endeavors, Dr. García-Huidobro has served on the boards of several notable institutions, including the Center for Cultural and Artistic Inquiry and Expression (CENECA), the Penta-UC Talent Program at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, the non-governmental organization Genera, and Un Techo para Chile's education department. Dr. García-Huidobro is also a member of the Expanded Council of the magazine *Mensaje* and has been part of the editorial committee of the following magazines: *Estudios Pedagógicos* of the Universidad Austral (Chile), *Páginas de Educación* of the Universidad Católica del Uruguay and of the *Revista Internacional de Educación para la Justicia Social*, published by the Grupo de Investigación 'Cambio Educativo para la Justicia Social' (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid). Dr. García-Huidobro has also participated in the Scientific Committee of the Ibero-American Network for Research on School Change and Effectiveness (RINACE). Dr. García-Huidobro has served as an evaluator in various CONICYT instances, as well as a peer evaluator. He is also part of the board of institutional evaluators of the National Accreditation Commission (Comisión Nacional de Acreditación - CNA) (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 2019).

Latin America has also been a constant focus of his work. He has been recognized by several countries and international organizations for his contributions to various educational reform processes aimed at improving the quality and equity of education. His advisory work with countries in Latin America and Europe includes the following: CELADEC in Peru (World Council of Churches); Convenio Andrés Bello; UNESCO-OREALC; UNICEF; NOVIB (the Netherlands); IDRC (Canada); SIDA (Sweden); HIID (Harvard University); the World Bank; the Inter-American Development Bank; and the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI).

Additionally, he has served as a consultant to the IDB and the World Bank, helping to prepare and evaluate projects that improve the quality of basic and secondary education in Paraguay and Argentina. He was also a member of the OEI's Expert Advisory Group on Educational Reforms and part of the International Academic Working Group convened by the Mexican Ministry of Public Education from 2009 to 2012. He has provided advice on educational policies in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Argentina (IDEM).

Conclusions

Given the above, it's clear that Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra was passionate about education. From an early age, he recognized the inequalities in education caused by social differences, and he devoted his life to promoting equity and inclusion in schools. In his research, he drew on the ideas of authors such as Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci to lay the foundations for popular education, which guided his work. His research at CIDE and later at Alberto Hurtado University strengthened his convictions and led him to promote educational changes and reforms in the Chilean system, such as the 900 Schools Program and the Program for the Improvement of Quality and Equity in Education (MECE). These programs targeted all levels of the system, including rural, basic, secondary, and higher education. Most importantly, however, he proposed the Presidential Commission that replaced the LOCE with the LGE, and he supported the 2015 inclusion law. He promoted higher education, awarding doctorates in Education Sciences at the University of Leuven and in the joint program between Alberto Hurtado University and Diego Portales University. He also promoted educational reforms in Latin America guided by equity and inclusion.

References

BEYER, Harald; EYZAGUIRRE, Bárbara y FONTAINE, Loreto (2001). La reforma educacional chilena editado por Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro. *Revista Perspectivas*, vol. 4, Nº 2, Departamento de Ingeniería Industrial, Universidad de Chile, pp. 289-314.

CAICEO, Jaime y MARDONES, Luis (1998). *Elaboración de Tesis e Informes Técnico-Profesionales*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Jurídica Cono Sur Ltda.

CAICEO, Jaime y PARRAGUEZ, Sonia (2000). Calidad y Equidad de la Educación: La Experiencia Chilena en la Década del 90. *PsicoPedagógica*, Año 4, Nº 4, Centro de Investigaciones Cuyo, Mendoza - Argentina, pp. 29-36.

CAICEO, Jaime (2015). Patrício Cariola Barroilhet y su Aporte a la Renovación Pedagógica en la Segunda Mitad del Siglo XX en Chile. *Revista História da Educação*, V. 19, Nº 47, set./dez., Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil, pp. 149-174. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/2236-3459/53788>.

CAICEO, Jaime (2018). El Porqué del Desarrollo Insuficiente de la Filosofía de las Ciencias Sociales. *El Futuro del Pasado*, Nº 9, Editorial FahrenHouse, Salamanca, España, pp. 393-418. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14516/fdp.2018.009.001.014>.

CAICEO, Jaime (2022). *Políticas Públicas en la Educación Chilena: 1990-2020. Nivel Parvulario, Sistema Escolar y Educación Superior*. Santiago de Chile: Departamento de Contabilidad y Auditoría de la Facultad de Administración y Economía de la Universidad de Santiago de Chile.

COLEGIO SAN IGNACIO (2023). Noticias: Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra, exalumno del Colegio San Ignacio, recibe el Premio Nacional de Ciencias de la Educación 2023. Consultado el 16 de septiembre de 2024 en: <https://www.colegiosanignacio.cl/noticias/2023/08/25/juan-eduardo-garcia-huidobro-saavedra-exalumno-del-colegio-san-ignacio-recibe-el-premio-nacional-de-ciencias-de-la-educacion-2023/>.

CORVALÁN, Alejandro (2024). *Entrevista* realizada en Santiago de Chile por Myriam Retamal el 24 de mayo.

COX, Cristián (2024). *Entrevista* realizada en Santiago de Chile por Myriam Retamal el 2 de abril.

GARCÍA-HUIDOBRO, Juan Eduardo, Editor (1998). *La reforma educacional chilena*. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Popular.

GARCÍA-HUIDOBRO, Juan Eduardo (2004). Políticas Educativas y Equidad en Chile. *Persona y Sociedad*, 18(3), Universidad Alberto Hurtado, pp. 95-106.

GARCÍA-HUIDOBRO, Juan Eduardo (2008a). Ley General de Educación: Avances y silencios. *Revista Mensaje*, 57, N° 570: 6-11.

GARCÍA-HUIDOBRO, Juan Eduardo (2008b). El Consejo Asesor Presidencial para la calidad de la educación: Reseña de una experiencia. *Revista CIS*, Vol. 8, N° 11, Centro de Investigación Social (CIS) de la Fundación TECHO-Chile, pp. 30-33.

GARCÍA-HUIDOBRO, Juan Eduardo (2024). *Entrevista* respondida por escrito y enviada por correo electrónico a Myriam Retamal desde Puerto Varas, el 25 de abril.

LATORRE, Marisol y ROJAS, Teresa (2023). Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro y la importancia de la educación a 50 años del golpe. *The Clinic*, 26 de agosto. Consultado el 16 de septiembre de 2024 en: <https://www.theclinic.cl/2023/08/26/columna-marisol-latorre-teresa-rojas-juan-eduardo-garcia-huidobro-importancia-educacion-50-anos-golpe-estado/>.

MAUREIRA, Fernando (2024). *Entrevista* realizada en Santiago de Chile por Myriam Retamal el 2 de mayo.

MILOS, Pedro (2023). Juan Eduardo García Huidobro, Premio Nacional de Educación 2023. *Revista Mensaje*, 77, N° 723 pp. 49-52.

MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN (2019). Carta de Postulación al Premio Nacional de Educación en primera oportunidad. Antecedentes entregados por el MINEDUC.

MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN (2023). Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro es elegido Premio Nacional de Ciencias de la Educación 2023. Consultado el 15 de septiembre de 2024 en: <https://www.mineduc.cl/juan-eduardo-garcia-huidobro-es-el-premio-nacional-de-educacion-2023/>.

PROGRAMA INTERDISCIPLINARIO DE INVESTIGACIONES EN EDUCACIÓN (PIIE) (2003). Felicitamos al Premio Nacional de Ciencias de la Educación 2023, profesor Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro Saavedra. Consultado el 16 de septiembre de 2024 en: <https://piie.cl/felicitamos-al-premio-nacional-de-ciencias-de-la-educacion-2023-profesor-juan-eduardo-garcia-huidobro-saavedra/>.

SEPÚLVEDA, Leandro (2024). *Entrevista* realizada en Santiago de Chile por Myriam Retamal el 9 de mayo.