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Formación ciudadana en universidades chilenas: variaciones históricas e institucionales

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Summary

Citizenship education in universities is becoming more important throughout the world, given the growing concern of scholars, politicians and civil society advocates about signs that social cohesion is getting weaker and that democracy is undergoing a legitimacy crisis. From a political point of view, evidence of distrust in institutions and governments is concerning, as well as there being a clear downturn in citizen participation in elections. The emergence of authoritarian and populist leaders is also worrying, since they threaten to weaken democratic states. From a global socioeconomic perspective, the evidence points to problems with unprecedented levels of complexity. These need answers that require high levels of knowledge and technology, as well as coordinated efforts in the political, social and cultural spheres. Both the intellectual and ethical skills needed put contemporary universities in the spotlight, given their research functions, the opportunities they provide to redefine the limits of knowledge and their mission to teach new generations of professionals' ethics. Therefore, the requirements for contemporary universities converge to reveal a kind of education that has an explicitly moral basis, aimed at both the common good and coexistence.

Given this concern, some authors have adopted a philosophical-historical outlook, in which universities' vision of citizenship and public service has been present since the very beginning. Alternatively, others suggest that this is a recent debate, partly as a result of the fact that getting into university is now easier, which in itself calls on universities to broaden their mission and make explicit educational efforts to promote democracy and the common good. In fact, some international organisations such as UNESCO and the European Commission - as well as other schools of thought worldwide - have mentioned the role of citizenship education as part of the guiding aims of contemporary universities.

In Chile, the reference to citizenship education as part of higher education principles appears explicitly in its 2018 higher education reform, currently underway, with a law that established that a country's institutions should educate people to have a vocation for service to society and who are committed to its development. In the case of public universities, the legal text specifies that their mission is to create citizens inspired by the values of ethical, democratic, civic and social solidarity, and who respect the indigenous people and the environment.

In every case, both globally and nationally, this contemporary debate expresses an interest in making universities a place where values and politics are taught. However, despite current

discussions and the perceived agreements based on the relevance of universities as a place for giving future professionals citizenship education, this debate has shown that there is little consensus about what citizenship education in the university context means. Moreover, there is even less agreement on how to teach it. This is seen even more acutely in Chile, where the field of research into higher education has not yet dealt with the topic in comparative or systematic terms and any evidence that does exist is only primary (such as programmes and curriculums), dealing with initiatives at an institutional level.

Therefore, the research on which this study is based firstly aims to formulate and substantiate some of the conceptual concepts to help understand what universities contribute to citizenship education. Based on the conceptual framework constructed and providing both the perspective and the analytical categories needed, the study is organised into three parts. First, the historical journey of universities in Chile is identified and systematised, including the evolution of the concepts and practices of their citizenship education. The historiographic method is used, involving a historic interpretation from the mid-nineteenth century up to the present day. This historical interpretation starts with the broad socio-political context, moves onto the institutional context and finally touches on citizenship education itself.

The second research phase involves case studies that identify and systematise what three universities define as citizenship education today, as well as how they carry out this education in the organisation. The three universities studied are emblematic of the Chilean higher education system, either public or private and either foundational or new. They are the state-run University of Chile, founded in 1842; the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, founded in 1888 and affiliated to the Church, and the Universidad de Desarrollo, founded in 1990 and based on a business model that is the result of both political events and consistent development over time. In their official documents, the three universities explicitly declare their institutional and educational commitment to undergraduates' citizenship education. This commitment obviously varies depending on the type of institution and the type of citizen they look to create. In addition, it is worth mentioning that this study specifically involves undergraduates, since it is at this stage of development that individuals decide their political beliefs and how they are going to relate professionally to others. The case studies' sources involve a documentary basis of norms, strategic plans and documents that set out the curriculum, as well as semi-structured interviews with the three universities' heads and student leaders to complement the documentary evidence.

Finally, the study analyses the curriculum of each of the institutions selected, since this allows for the general educational plan of each of the three universities to be seen as an object. In other words, the group of courses defined as educational opportunities for any

undergraduate student are looked at, irrespective of their faculties or which degree course they belong to. The citizenship education curriculum is part of this general education. The general education courses of the academic programmes offered by the three universities during the first semester of 2021 are the focus of this analysis. This phase involves analysing a total of 305 general education courses offered by the three universities, with 170 of these chosen using a range of categories decided upon according to the areas of societal differentiation that sociology describes in societies that are sufficiently complex. These categories are politics, economics, society, community, and culture. The conceptual framework justifies the addition of two other key issues faced by contemporary society, namely globalisation and the environment. This group of categories is certainly not exhaustive, but it is sufficient to tackle the multidimensional nature of the conceptualisation of citizenship in the case studies. The analysis of these educational courses also includes the pedagogy used, with the aim of identifying whether there is a pedagogy that predominates in each university.

The sum of these phases means that, in each study, the relationship between the educational aims and type of citizen distinguished in the conceptual framework can be identified. At the same time, it involves a comparative analysis that allows for invariable traits to be identified as far as the implications of the universities' vision of citizenship, and how they teach this subject are concerned. This is a result of both their origins and institutional identity, as well as of the evolution of the socio-political context in which they interact. The results of the study are described in five chapters.

Chapter 1 defines the conceptual basis on which citizenship education is understood at universities and is organised into three sections. The first defines universities as a conglomerate according to Burton Clark's categories and identifies the external forces that create tension within them. As part of this section, the figure of the student is also analysed. This figure incorporates the epistemological and pragmatic opportunities implied for human and social development when the student receives citizenship education that is pertinent to and coherent with institutional guidelines. At the same time, this education makes it easier for them to acquire the abilities and skills required for living in society. In the second section, the concept of citizenship education is developed, with citizenship education understood as the knowledge, values and attitudes needed to take part in society at a local, national, and global level. As part of the definition of citizenship, identifying the area in which civic processes and relationships emerge and the types of citizens described in literature is recommended. The third section deals with the organisational context in which citizenship education at universities is provided, conceptualised in terms of the interaction between the

definition of the institution's mission and hallmark, its organisational structure, and its curriculum.

Chapter 2 analyses the historical basis of citizenship education at Chilean universities from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, using a perspective that examines the existence and forms of pedagogy and how these have changed depending on macro-sociocultural and political contexts and on the institutional context of the higher education system itself. The historical description of these macro-relationships is based on a periodisation that, in the just under two centuries considered, identifies six different timeframes, with a greater emphasis on the four running from the mid-1960s to the present. These periods are called university reform (1967-1973), the monitored university, (1973-1990), higher education in democracy (1990-2018) and the 2018 university reform. The analysis is centred on identifying the general nature of the citizenship education provided by the universities in each period and how this is related to the institutional context of higher education, as well as to the macro socio-political and cultural context. Doubly nesting citizenship education in this way promotes understanding of how the institution adjusts to its structure, modifying its organisation, programme, and curriculum. The aim is for the universities to adapt to what is interpreted as the requirements of the socio-political context, at the same time as maintaining their institutional identity. In particular, students who are on the receiving end of this education and the nature of this education itself are made visible. This nature is implicit (not on the curriculum) when the students are a clearly elite and homogeneous group and is explicit (on the curriculum) when the students are recruited from a broader sociocultural sphere and are therefore more diverse. Finally, it is mentioned that this broad revision of the historical evolution of citizenship education at universities enables citizenship education at the three institutions analysed in the other chapters to be looked at and interpreted from a comparative perspective.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the case of the University of Chile and the selective citizenship education it provides, which has evolved over its history. Its founding documents describe this university as the offspring and servant of the State and its fundamental ethos as republican. This hallmark of affiliation and identification is sustained throughout its history, confirming that its citizenship education is implicit in nature. This is conveyed in its institutional mission statement, in its customs and in its impact on the political socialisation of its students, intrinsic to the workings of its Federation of Students (FECH in Spanish) for a large part of the twentieth century. This chapter describes the changes that occurred in the 2000s, when a general education that explicitly offered courses with citizenship education aims and content was introduced for a student body that, in socioeconomic and cultural terms, was recognised and valued as distinctly more diverse than in the past. The analysis of

current citizenship education, as appears in the institution's regulations and official discourse and in the general education curriculum, concludes that citizenship education is a constitutive element of the university and has a republican, long-standing basis that is inseparable from the institution's own identity. Given the blossoming of socio-political issues in the second decade of the present century, this has been combined with an orientation that conceptual framework typology identifies as radical citizenship.

Chapter 4 also deals with the case of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (PUC in Spanish) from a long-term historical perspective. Like its secular counterpart, it is the offspring of the State, since the Catholic University 'emerged from the heart of the Church'. Since its very beginnings, it has been a university that has declared itself at the service of society and culture and which aims to contribute to human and individual development. Like the University of Chile, citizenship education at PUC was implicit throughout the twentieth century. It was not on the curriculum as such, but was seen, however, in: i) its hallmark, communicated through its institutional discourse, regulations and customs, including republican (public virtue) and community values; ii) its ties with the community, based on helping the poor, and iii) student participation in the Federation of Students. Explicit citizenship education emerged from the 2000s onwards. The analysis of relevant courses reveals that these were based on the classical republican meaning of citizenship and on its focus on the civic and political-institutional nucleus of democratic life, as well as on the community-orientated spirit of the same and its emphasis on a social dimension or the civil nucleus of collective life, traditionally part of Catholic political culture.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to the case study of the Universidad del Desarrollo (UDD in Spanish). This university was founded in 1990 by members of the country's business elite and the civil technocracy behind Pinochet's dictatorship. As the description of its brief and consistent development shows, in its most insightful and decisive declaration, the new institution very clearly expresses that the company's vision and public policies adhere to the liberal philosophical framework of private solutions to public problems. It is obvious that this case study does not have as long a history as the others, nor are there periods of citizenship education with implicit characteristics. Quite to the contrary, the founders' testimonies and the university's educational development unequivocally show its political vocation and explicit emphasis on the centrality of citizenship education. Therefore, this chapter shows how the UDD's mission statement and general education courses express its aim to create human capital with a sense of public responsibility, innovation, and entrepreneurship. As part of this aim, excellence refers to economic and social development based on the values of freedom, creativity, and individual effort, while staying silent about democracy and human rights. The kind of citizenship education it favours is coherent with the circumstances of how

it was founded and the beliefs of those who founded it and is in direct contrast to the other two cases.

In summary, the historical analysis of citizenship education in Chilean universities reveals that, for more than a century, this was implicit, although there is no doubt about the impact it has had on each new generation of professionals, who have reproduced or found new ways of doing what the political, economic and cultural elite in the country had done before. Largely the result of what they had learnt and their interaction with other teachers and students. Explicitly educating citizens was not something that was part of the plan. The spread of higher education and global tendencies meant that the notions of a society of knowledge and democratic governance were eroded and led to a substantial change in the scenario at the turn of the millennium. At the beginning of 2000, universities - both worldwide and in Chile - began making explicit and increasingly systematic efforts to educate citizens, so that they could meet the new challenges of daily life, both in terms of civil coexistence and civic participation.

Against this backdrop, in which the erosion of affiliation and democratic governance has become critical in Chile lately, citizenship education and the ever-increasing resources used by the universities studied and their consistency when dealing with this subject over the last two decades have acquired the utmost relevance and significance. These resources are revealed as the result of examining the differences between the institutions as far as identity, organisation and curriculum and teaching are concerned and are seen by analysing the underlying political and philosophical layers common to representative democracy in republican, liberal and community-based rulebooks.

Explicit citizenship education - living up to the new requirements alluded to - is currently part of the 'genetic code' of institutional identity, which promotes the knowledge, values and attitudes needed for coexistence in a post-modern world and is particularly demanding as far as politics is concerned. As the comparative historical and political analysis reveals, this DNA has a philosophical and ideological basis that is directly related to the institution's origin and affiliation. This is reflected in the organisational and curricular adjustments that lead to the creation of different types of professionals within society.

The synoptic vision of the traits of explicit citizenship education reveals that, despite many visible differences between the institutions, certain important common ground can be identified. In the three case studies, the subjects covered in the general education curriculum are politics, society, culture, and the environment. In all of these, a similar concept of disciplinary transversality is considered key. As mentioned, citizenship education at the three universities shies away from the type of citizenship education that literature describes as one

that simply adapts to a certain order and its rules and regulations. The type of learning prioritised at both of the older universities is one that aims to find a balance between personal emancipation and the common good. This learning is aimed at promoting dialogue with others, appreciating diversity and participating in society. In the case of the university from the 1990s, the kind of learning encouraged favours autonomy and individual agency, based on the idea of experiencing freedom and, as a result, of making sense of one's own life. Given the clear differences in their history and educational hallmarks and considering the impact they have on both the beliefs and democratic skills of the country's elite, it can be said that the three universities undoubtedly agree on the meaning of democracy and the central role of politics. There is, perhaps, solid hope for the future development of democracy in the country and that future generations will be able to respond to the new challenges that emerge.