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Educational-work projects and post graduate pathways of secondary students in Chile: Individual Strategies in an Unequal Education System¹

Leandro Sepúlveda & María José Valdebenito²

Introduction

Various research carried out in the field of education and its relation with labour market have shown the increasing weakening of higher education as a tool of social mobility in Latin America (Filmus & Moragues, 2003; Jacinto & Terigui, 2007). However, despite the finding of an increasing loss of value of educational credentials, education still holds an important symbolic value, especially for the most disadvantaged groups of society.

The completion of secondary education represents an instance of great importance in the subjective construction of young people's lives, since it is associated to the possibility of personal accomplishment, access to better working conditions and - a fundamental issue- a necessary step for the continuation of studies at the tertiary level, being this last one increasingly open to the demands of different social groups (Dussel, Brito and Nuñez, 2007; Castillo & Cabezas, 2010).

In the case of Chile, the rate of completion of secondary education is currently 83%. This indicator has increased by 10 points in the last ten years, driven by the incorporation of the most vulnerable sectors to education, particularly to vocational education (MINEDUC, 2013). Indeed, as it happens in most OECD countries, in global terms, academic training³ prevails above technical-professional training. However, there are important differences when analysing its internal distribution. On this point, it should be stressed the predominance of technical-professional modality in sectors of lower income and higher

¹ This is a preliminary draft. Please do not cite or distribute without permission of the authors.

² Investigators. Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación, CIDE, (Center of Research and Development of Education CIDE). Universidad Alberto Hurtado. E-mails: lesepulv@uahurtado.cl; mavaldeb@uahurtado.cl

³ At the level of secondary education, the Chilean system recognizes two different training modalities for the last two years of compulsory education: Academic Training (AT), which prioritizes a training model conducive to higher education studies, and technical-professional education (TVET) that strictly corresponds to a modality of vocational education.

levels of vulnerability, reaching 66.4% of the first two poorest deciles; this figure only gets to the 17.3 % of this socio-economic segment pursuing academic training.⁴

On the other hand, although increase in schooling has marked the setting of Chilean society in the last decades, the main transformation of recent years is associated with an increase in access to higher education. This expansion in enrolment has been made possible to a large extent by the privatization of the higher education system implemented three decades ago, which led to structure a market characterized by the great heterogeneity of its institutions and the weakness of mechanisms to regulate their functioning (Brunner, 2007).

Figures of effective entry into Chilean institutions of higher education show that overall enrolment has quadrupled in recent years: it has increased from approximately 250,000 students in 1990 to more than 1,161,200 at the present time.⁵ Currently, net rates of higher education enrolment for youngsters 19 and 20 years correspond to 40% and 45% respectively, being both figures higher than OECD average rates of 32% and 38%. (MINEDUC, Op cit). This growth has focused particularly on tertiary technical education. Its enrolment has increased exponentially in the last years, accounting nowadays for 53.5% of total enrolment in the tertiary education system.⁶

Thus, higher education system has increasingly become an instance intended exclusively for elites, presenting higher levels of complexity and new requirements for its development. In recent years, youngsters who are the first generation to pursue further studies have entered an institution of higher education, to such an extent that in 2010, 7 out of 10 new students had exceeded the level of education of their parents (Meneses *et al.*, 2010). Although there are still marked differences by socio-economic status, analyses indicate a tendency towards saturation of the representation in the system of the more privileged levels. This may entail that future expansion might be concentrated in medium and low income levels of the population (Orellana, 2011).

The operating model of higher education system is mainly based on a structure of private financing, which has led Chile to become one of the countries with the highest proportion of private spending at all levels of the education provision. Most of this expenditure corresponds to the contribution of own individuals and their families. This is confirmed by the fact that more than 70% of enrolled students study in private universities or technical training institutes⁷. As described by OECD and the World Bank (2009), Chileans consider education as the most important and safe path towards a continuous prosperity and make big efforts to have access to higher education, beyond the effective yield this effort may bring in the future. Despite this situation, it is not evident that such a model ensures progress towards improvement of social equity. A big question whether the impact of this process of massification of education and increase of credentialism in the reduction of social gaps within society still prevails.

⁴ Statistics from the National Council of Education <http://www.cned.cl/>

⁵ Statistics from the National Council of Education <http://www.cned.cl/>

⁶ Ibidem

⁷ Education at a Glance, 2014 <http://www.oecd.org/edu/Chile-EAG2014-Note.pdf>

In fact, the need for research in this field is of great importance, and it should be used as a basis of empirical history that feeds a discussion on public policies and regulatory strategies needed to foster an educational system which delivers development opportunities for everyone. Research efforts on massification of higher education in Chile have focused their concern on institutional analysis and proposals of necessary changes for assuming recent transformations. There is an important production of studies related to the system of educational provision, regulatory frameworks and mechanisms of organization of training offer, among other issues. However, one area that has received less attention and that is most relevant when analysing transformation of the higher education system and its effects on social organization, refers to aspirations and educational projects youngsters build before entrance to higher education and how these aspirations correspond with future reality. An important number of investigations on the construction of students' aspirations and the processes of choice of an educational and/or work pathway reveal the growing uncertainty that young people experiences at this stage of decision-making. Similarly, the degree of freedom or structural conditioning in the options for the future has led to deepen in the discussion about the effect of mass use of higher education and its eventual contribution to a greater democratization, social equality and reduction of socio-economic gaps (Lehmann, 2004; Grytnes, 2011).

Processes experienced by the subjects and strategies they developed to cope with their living conditions is a weakly addressed issue and there has been an analytical distance with this perspective in educational research carried out last years in Chile. From this research perspective, this article provides background of an ongoing study on educational-labour pathways of young Chilean students. The material here reviewed originates from a 5-year longitudinal study that aims at giving an account of the type of aspirations built by students from schools of different socio-economic levels, rationales or social logics that define such decisions and educational-employment pathways four years after graduation. This perspective, weakly addressed in educational research carried out in the country, provides a base of complementary information for an informed discussion about the limits and possibilities offered by the current expansion of the education market to reach higher levels of social equity.

Conceptual framework

The expansion of the offer and the demand for post-secondary studies in all sectors of society has seen influenced by the rhetoric of politics, which has contributed to the increase of expectations and aspirations, emphasizing that higher education is a goal which we can all aspire (Sellar, Gale and Parker 2011). The foregoing has given rise to the so-called "standardization of aspirations" (Ball, Davies, Davis and Reay. 2002), which values and legitimates certain educational-labour paths and projects of life over others.

In tune with the emergence of this phenomenon, youth educational aspirations and expectations constitute a core theme that has taken prominence, both in the social sciences and public policy discussions. In recent decades, it is possible to observe a growing research interest for life trajectories, processes to adapt expectations to the environmental

characteristics and opportunities, as well as the analysis of the interaction between structural conditions and agency in people's and social groups' biographical experiences (Heinz & Kruger, 2001). Many studies have intended to establish a significant association of one or more variables with the aspirations and educational attainment. However, in general, these studies have had a descriptive approach, without deepening on how and why these factors consistently impact such aspects. (Jones & Schneider, 2009)

A perspective that theoretically deepens in the treatment of this theme has been influenced by the work of Bourdieu and his concept of cultural capital as a means of transmission and reproduction of social classes. McDonough (1997) uses this approach to demonstrate that aspirations and the type of education chosen by students of secondary level are conditioned by the social, cultural and organizational contexts they come from, playing a fundamental role the type of educational institution they have attended. Within this framework, individual aspirations respond to perceptions shared by members of a social group or class and which have an impact on possible choices. They are subjective assessments about the chances of social mobility and construction of a personal pathway, but, at the same time, they represent objective probabilities for the future of those who build them. They do not imply a rational analysis, but they represent the way in which young people of different social classes build reasonable choices based on their cultural capital. In this way, the concept of bounded rationality is used to indicate that personal decisions and the kind of choice youngsters make are tied to the degree of social constraint of their own cultural capital.

As indicated by Sellar *et al.* (Op cit), there are important differences in the way wishes for the future are built among different social classes For the elite desire tends to inform possibility: what is imagined as desirable is simply made possible. For the marginalised, possibility tends to inform desire: what is possible limits the desirable to what is 'realistic'. In this sense, and in correlation with the ideas of Appadurai (2004), imagination has acquired a new power in social life, as much more than before people consider a range of possible alternatives for life. This certainly does not mean that the ability to meet such aspirations are equal or better distributed; however, places the field of cultural activities in a dynamic perspective, expanding its merely reproductive function.

In this context, it is possible to point out that social, cultural and financial barrier of higher education systems bring as a result that frameworks of preparation and realization of aspirations and expectations⁸ for young people from the most disadvantaged contexts are more difficult to achieve than it is for more privileged groups. As reported by Archer and Yamashita, (2003) there are structural limits on aspirations, which apply differently according to where a person is positioned within social, cultural and economic framework. These are important factors. However, as agreed by several recent studies of youth transitions, there is a need to reconsider both structural influences and the sense of agency

⁸ On this point, Reynolds and Pemberton (2001) point to the conceptualization between expectations and aspirations, which express the distinction between what is wanted to be achieve and what is expected to be achieved realistically. Aspirations, as abstract statements, are values and beliefs about future plans, which do not necessarily reflect the specific socio-economic realities. In this sense, as stated by Khattab, aspirations have a socio-cultural root, which expresses shared values, while expectations are determined by the perception of the structure of opportunities. (Khattab, 2015).

and control displayed by young people. As hold by Wyn and Dwyer (1999) the younger generation are making pragmatic choices which enable them to maintain their aspirations despite the persistence of structural influences.

Similarly, and as pointed out by Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), educational and career decisions are bound to horizons of action, depending on the wider context and the individual's life history. "Students decision making processes are part of a life style structured by social and cultural context as well as of an ongoing biographical process in life course trajectories evolving from the interactions with the others". (Cuconato et al., 2016: 225)

Facing the same problem, studies of educational trajectories have sought to elucidate the tension between the weight that structure and agency exert⁹ in the setting of paths and routes. The introduction of the concept of agency has acknowledged that influence of social structure was not direct, nor was it deterministic. Even though algunos studies consider that these are taken by individuals as a direct consequence of their choices and acts, that is, as successes and personal failures, as hold by Furlong and Cartmel (1997), conditioning objectives remain with as much or more structural capacity for people's lives than ever. The *epistemological fallacy of modernity* to which these authors refer would explain the discrepancy between individual reality as a social fact and individual reality as a subjective fact. Social class continues to have a strong impact on the vital opportunities of people within a framework of fragmentation of social structures which have tended to weaken the collective identities. From a similar perspective, Dubet (1994) has established that autonomy of the subject is a necessary illusion with which the subject acts. Without being fully aware of doing so, the subject uses as an own strategy situations of own position in the social structure that has internalized. Consequently, he/she intends to reproduce the situation from which the action has originated.¹⁰

Progressing in the discussion, Evans has demonstrated that agency is a socially situated and delimited process. Meaning of agency has limits that vary in time, confirming the hypothesis of an individualization structured process that manifest in the experience, values and behaviour of young people. "Our expanded concept of agency sees the actors as having a past and imagined future possibilities, both of which guide and shape actions in the present. Our actors also have subjective perceptions of the structures they have to negotiate, which affect how they act. Their agency is 'socially situated'" (Evans, 2010:252)

The reviewed approach has raised the need to study processes of transition to adulthood considering both the perspective of the subject and the restrictions derived from the social

⁸Archer (2010 [1982]) picked up the concept of morphogenesis to describe a dialectic relationship between structure and agency, acknowledges that social practice is undoubtedly shaped by non-recognized actions and generates not expected consequences , which forms the context for subsequent interactions.

¹⁰ However, he believes that actors have the possibility not to limit themselves to social roles or to strategic and rational interests, but to contribute to shape their own lives and resist with a defensive attitude towards external dominating logics. Unlike autonomy, authenticity permits that an individual is able to choose and select modes of acting that do not originates from a rational strategy but from non-rational and emotional aspects.

structure (Evans., 2001; Casal, 1996). For these authors, the focus of interest is not the study of the events/transition in themselves (occurrence, timing and intensity), but an approach that emphasizes the subject-structure dialectics, with a clear emphasis on a perspective that retrieves the individual as core of sociological reflection. (Mora y Oliveria, 2009). Su consideración permite un análisis más complejo de las políticas sociales, las que deben entenderse en constante reelaboración por parte de los sujetos a los cuales están dirigidas. Como señala Sarojini (2014) las políticas, desde este punto de vista, pueden ser concebidas como sistemas cíclicos que de ninguna manera se agotan en un momento legislativo inicial, sino que, por el contrario, se redefinen temporal y espacialmente debido a la carga de intertextualidad que están portan y donde las aspiraciones y conductas de los individuos (ejecutores y/o receptores de estas políticas) adquiere una gran relevancia para su propia definición.

Research methodology and sample

Data set forth below account for the results of a longitudinal survey applied between 2011 and 2015 to a sample of 1,888 students attending last year of secondary education at different types of schools in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago, Chile, which was carried out with the support of FONDECYT¹¹. La investigación se enmarca en la tradición de las investigaciones sobre trayectorias de vida o life course y se organiza a partir de dos fases fundamentales. La primera, destinada a caracterizar una muestra de estudiantes en su último año de enseñanza secundaria (que incluye la aplicación de un instrumento estructurado y un conjunto de grupos de discusión); y la segunda, destinada a realizar un seguimiento a la muestra de esta cohorte a lo largo de 4 años, aplicando una encuesta longitudinal, y complementada con el material cualitativo que se recoge de mediante grupos de discusión y entrevistas con los jóvenes en su situación de egresados.

El levantamiento de información empírica se aboca a conocer el proyecto personal de los jóvenes, sus expectativas de estudio y/o trabajo, las valoraciones que éstos hacen de su entorno y, de un modo general, las pautas de vida, esto es, principales hábitos, intereses y motivaciones que orientan su quehacer. A partir de los antecedentes proporcionados por este material, emergen modelos diferenciados de expectativas y proyectos personales que da cuenta de los distintos y perspectivas de proyecto que estos relevan.

La información derivada del estudio permite contar con antecedentes no solo de las disposiciones subjetivas de los jóvenes en el marco de su experiencia escolar y labora, sino que además, al enfatizar en el seguimiento de sus trayectorias educativo / laborales, es posible acceder a mayor información sobre el grado de linealidad de estas trayectorias, las eventuales diferencias existentes a partir de las variables consideradas en el estudio (nivel socio-económico, género, tipo de establecimientos y modalidad de enseñanza) y su incidencia en la situación de desenlace de los jóvenes, el nivel de continuidad o ruptura que

¹¹ FONDECYT Project n° 1140596: "Models of trajectories and educational-labor outcome of young people; A longitudinal study in the Metropolitan Region"

existe entre la enseñanza secundaria y la educación post-obligatoria, el nivel de apertura del mercado laboral para la inserción de los jóvenes, entre otros aspectos.

Estos resultados ayudan a levantar algunas hipótesis acerca de la relevancia y modalidad de inclusión de la preparación para el trabajo y/o continuidad de estudios en la enseñanza secundaria de la modalidad Técnico Profesional.

Data are represented by 8.8% of young people from low socio-economic ² level, a 34.5% in the medium-low socio-economic level¹², a 19.8% in the medium level, 19.7% in the medium-high socio-economic status and a 11.5% of students who were enrolled at institutions of high socio-economic status. In relation to the modality of studies, the sample shows a distribution of 38.3% of youngsters attending academic training (AT), a 53.5% at TVET and an 8.1% by youngsters (under of 21 years) who finished their studies in the modality of adult education.

The following article is organised based on three main themes, (a) aspirations and expectations at the end of secondary education (b) situation upon completion of studies and degree of fulfilment of expectations the following year after completion of their secondary school studies. (c) pathways or routes four years after graduation.

Educational-work projects and pathways of secondary students: an empirical study

a) Aspirations and expectations at the end of secondary education

In order to learn their aspirations, youngsters in this study were consulted about their educational-work projects in the medium and long term. As stated below, personal projects built by young students show a broad interest in pursuing higher education. Aspirations for the future are strongly associated with continuation of further studies prior to engage in work activities. Only a 4.7% express disposition to start working immediately and did not show future interest in continuing post-secondary studies. The vast majority in this last group correspond to youngsters from low- and medium-low income levels, although the proportion of cases only slightly exceeds 10% of this segment. A 45% expresses that their personal project considers finishing a University career (90% of cases belong to high socioeconomic level), while a 21% believes they will pursue an upper level technical career (high percentage of cases in this group belongs to low- and medium-low income levels).

Differences in options of no study and differentiation by type of post-secondary training are mostly expressed in relation to the training modality. Option *only work* concentrated 11% of the students under the TVET modality and only 2.7% of those who follows the system of academic training (AT). In any case, the low proportion of cases of the training modality confirms the fact that, for the vast majority of students, it is not a terminal education modality as it occurred indeed some decades ago.

¹² This variable was constructed on the basis of characteristics established by the Ministry of Education through the application of a national instrument which measures quality of education (the SIMCE test), which differentiates educational centres in relation to the socio-economic status of the families.

The above confirms the trend already observed with respect to the increase of educational demand in last years, and that this demand occurs in all socio-economic strata, which generates a socio-cultural shift of huge proportions. Having said so, the fact that higher education system has become one that is no longer elitist is a powerful sign of the increase in the aspirations of the society as a whole; and TVET system is no exception (Orellana, Op cit).

The described distribution may be explained by different factors: weakening of credentials and the reduction of opportunities for those who have got only secondary education, as well as the increase in aspirations and the willingness of most students ‘families to further invest in education. The choice of continuing studies would thus obey to a widely shared cultural disposition based on the valuation of education as the most powerful tool to achieve a better standard of living and to overcome precarious socio-economic conditions broad sectors live in.

Table N° 1
Educational Project in % by socio-economic level

	Low and low medium SE level	Medium SE level	High and Medium High SE level	AT	TVET	Total
Work and will not study	12,5%	5.8%	2,3%	2.7%	11.0%	7.4%
Will finish a university career	29,2%	46.1%	76,8%	73.7%	31.0%	45.2%
Will finish studies at a higher education technical institution	31,3%	22.2%	9,8%	12.2%	29.3%	21.5%
Will finish a military or police career	4,9%	4.7%	3,9%	2.7%	5.7%	4.2%
Does not know yet ¹³	8,9%	7,3%	4,6%	6%	8,5%	7,4%
Other	13,4%	14.0%	2,7%	2.6%	14.6%	8.6%
No information						5.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Project for the future have a differentiated temporal expression in the framework of life’s path shown by subjects themselves. Indeed, when the question is *what are your plans for the year following graduation*, the percentage of cases who express that they will work rises to 20% of the total number of respondents. This increase is verified mainly in medium-low and low socio-economic levels, and principally among those studying TVET modality. While answers among students of AT modality remain somehow constant with respect to their long-term plans, in the case of those who are studying TVET it is possible to observe some strategic adjustments: the percentage of youth who points out that in this period their main activity will be to work is increased in 20 percentage points; this figure decreases in the same proportion for the cases who express willingness to pursue higher education. The need to count on economic resources to finance their studies and to support their families may explain a situation for temporarily postponing further studies and

¹³ High percentage of TVET students who respond I DO NOT KNOW may be related to the issue that they are doing an internship practice at some company.

deciding for a more complex personal path that combines studies and work and that would need a longer period for its realization.

Table No. 2
Expectations for immediate personal future in % by socio-economic level

	Low and Medium low SE level	Medium SE level	High and Medium High SE level	AT	TVET	Total
Work	36,2%	15.8%	4,7%	4.7%	33.2%	20.0%
Study at a University	19,7%	35.5%	69,2%	65.9%	20.9%	36.5%
Study at a PI or TTC	24,1%	20.5%	8,1%	10.5%	23.4%	17.1%
Military or police career	4,5%	4.1%	2,5%	2.3%	4.5%	3.3%
Repeat last year of high school	0,4%	0.3%	0,7%	0.6%	0.4%	0.5%
Military service during the whole year	0,7%	1.8%	0,4%	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%
Preparation for Univ. Test	2,3%	4.4%	7,4%	6.6%	2.8%	4.0%
Will not do anything	0,5%	0.6%	0,5%	0.7%	0.4%	0.6%
It is not clear	6.3%	7.3%	3,9%	4.9%	6.3%	5.9%
Other	5,5%	9.7%	2,6%	3.0%	7.0%	4.9%
No information						6.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Simultaneously, possible obstacles that could hinder the fulfilment of objectives were analysed. Among factors mentioned with equal importance were the score achieved in the PSU (University selection test¹⁴), the cost or tuition of the career and the grades average obtained at the end of secondary education. These considerations, although are general, show important differences by socio-economic level. Students from low socio-economic groups attributed proportionally, a lower incidence to high school grades when defining this issue as an obstacle (the difference with high level students is nearly 20 points). In contrast, the difference by socioeconomic level when considering cost or tuition as an obstacle is very significant, presenting a difference of 60 points between low- and high socioeconomic levels.

Table No 3
Perception of obstacles that would influence choice of higher education studies; percentage of mentions by socio-economic level ¹⁵

	Low SE level	Medium-low SE level	Medium SE level	Medium-high SE level	High SE level	Total
Highs school grades	39.0%	46.2%	52.1%	62.6%	56.7%	51.0%
Scored of PSU	63.2%	59.1%	65.8%	56.3%	68.5%	58.6%
Cost or tuition of the career	77.9%	79.4%	72.2%	57.8%	20.2%	58.3%
Family opposition	2.6%	2.8%	4.6%	3.1%	3.4%	3.2%
Other	3.9%	5.6%	6.2%	3.4%	4.0%	4.4%

On the other hand, research shows that quality of the training received and the prestige of the institution represent the most relevant features for young people ¹⁶ and evidence demonstrate again there are important differences according to socio-economic levels. Indeed, although more than half of the young people of low socio-economic level indicate the importance of the prestige of the institution, this judgement increases as socio-economic level gets higher. In contrast, the value of tuition becomes more important in young people from poorest households, becoming consistently less important in youngsters belonging to families of higher income.

Table N° 4
Percentage of cases mentions factors for choice of institution (University, PI or TC) in %

	Low and Medium low SE level	Medium SE level	High and Medium High SE level	Total
Prestige of the institution	61.2%	61,3%	73,5%	68.2%
Rectors' Councils University (public or traditional)	19.9%	23,9%	38,0%	29.5%
Quality of training	75.5%	77,3%	75,3%	76.5%
Cost of tuition	48,0%	42,0%	22,5%	36.2%
Closeness to home	9.6%	6,3%	5,8%	7.4%
Students from different social groups enrolled	6.2%	6,7%	9,4%	7.4%
That your friends also choose it	2.4%	2,5%	1,0%	1.1%
That your family likes it	7.7%	5,5%	6,8%	6.9%
Infrastructure and space	13.4%	16,8%	23,3%	18.9%
That they develop a strong social work	16.3%	15,5%	10,0%	12.5%
Attend people similar to you	6.7%	3,8%	4,0%	4.8%
Have religious orientation	3.1%	1,7%	1,0%	1.4%
Offering the possibility of internships abroad	8.9%	10,1%	10,0%	8.6%
Offering the possibility to continue postgraduate studies	14.1%	18,5%	15,7%	15.6%
Other	2.9%	4,2%	2,0%	2.2%

¹⁵ Multiple choice question

¹⁶ Multiple choice question with a maximum of three alternatives

Nevertheless, it is possible to affirm that most students show an exercise to adapt their aspirations to the alternatives offered by the higher education market, choosing before high school completion non-selective higher education alternatives that require less academic demand. Differences regarding expectations of performance in the PSU and how they link to entry to higher education are eloquent, and can only be explained by an exercise of individual adaptation according to a rational reading similar to that showed when choosing the TVET modality. This situation should not represent a surprise, since the expansion of higher education offer has been achieved through the recognition of students' socio-economic and academic differences, thus generating specific "educational market niches" for each socio-economic reality (Torres & Zenteno, 2011).

From the background featured here, we believe that the vast majority of young people manage information that enables them to recognize this scenario and know enough to design a personal project for the future which responds to their aspirations¹⁷, even if those aspirations may be limited. As stated by Evans, "young people are social actors in a social landscape. How they perceive the horizons depends on where they stand in the landscape and where their journey takes them. Where they go depends on the pathways they perceive, choose, stumble across or clear for themselves, the terrain and the elements they encounter. Their progress depends on how well they are equipped, the help they can call on when they need it, whether they go alone or together and who their fellow travellers are" (Evans, 2010: 265).

b) Situation of students after graduation: fulfilment of expectations

Information regarding the situation after high school completion shows that- only months after students had finished secondary education- the majority of them were carrying out a specific activity, with a high percentage continuing higher education immediately. Indeed, when asking about the main activity carried out the first half del año siguiente de egreso de la enseñanza secundaria, 46.8 % says having studied in a centre of higher education; a 16% of the total pursued studies at a Professional Institute or at a Technical Training Centre, and a 30.8% at a University. One-third of respondents said that their main activity was working, while 10.5% decided to prepare and take again the test required to apply to Chilean universities (PSU). Only 4.9% of the sample did not work or studied, or said doing nothing during the informed period. A 7.1% performed another activity and a 0.9% entered a military or police career.

Data disaggregated by socio-economic status are consistent with the above figures: the higher the socio-economic level, higher prevalence of studying at a university or training centre, and the lower the socio-economic level, higher proportion of youngsters involved in working activities. This situation also is in correspondence with the modality of study followed in high school: AT students tend to pursue higher education studies, while a significant percentage of TVET students decided to work.

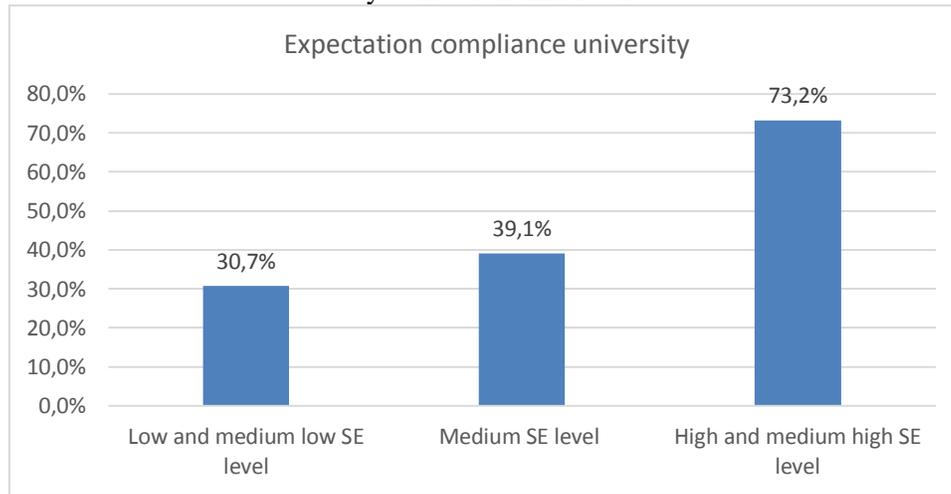
¹⁷ Outcome of these pathways and the effective possibilities implied by these decisions are indeed two different issues.

Table No. 5
Main activity performed the first half of 2012
by socio-economic level and modality of studies

What was the main activity you did the first half of this year?	Low and Medium low SE level	Medium SE level	High and Medium high SE level		AT	TVET	Total
Higher Technical	18,0%	22,6%	9,7%		13,1%	18,3%	15,9%
University	10,3%	21,0%	62,3%		57,3%	12,4%	30,5%
Work	47,0%	28,4%	7,6%		9,7%	41,8%	29,0 %
Preparation for Univ. Test	5,4%	12,3%	15,8%		15,9%	6,6%	10,5%
Something different	11,7%	12,8%	4,1%		42,0%	13,5%	9,3%
Nothing	7,0%	3,7%	1,5%		14,0%	6,4%	4,9%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

A detailed analysis of initial expectations and achievement of actions, even though a high rate of fulfilment is observed, shows that rate for admission to universities is considerably higher among youngsters of high socio-economic levels (see chart No. 1). These data confirm what has been demonstrated in several studies and that says that while “good” students or the “elite” are welcomed by the system and see how school integration rises in front of them, “the mass of those students is left to their fate, subjected to the anguish of failure” (Dubet, 2005: 68) Confirming the above and as Araujo and Martuccelli express (2012), tests, since they feed the existence of a system that select people without invalidating the weight of social positions and differentiated opportunities associated, compel the actors to be constantly fighting against transverse inconsistencies of social positions, a situation that is especially marked in Chilean society. The selection process goes increasingly through a process that, in each step, forces the individual to take responsibility for his/her situation, thus reproducing even more discriminatory mechanisms in the school educativa path of students. Esta situación, sin embargo, como se verá en la sección siguiente, resulta matizada a partir del proceso de readecuación de las expectativas de los jóvenes en función de la diversidad de alternativas que ofrece el mercado educativo de nivel superior en la actualidad. En efecto, el mercado, desde este punto de vista, aparece como el principal agente generador de alternativas para la reelaboración de proyectos de futuro

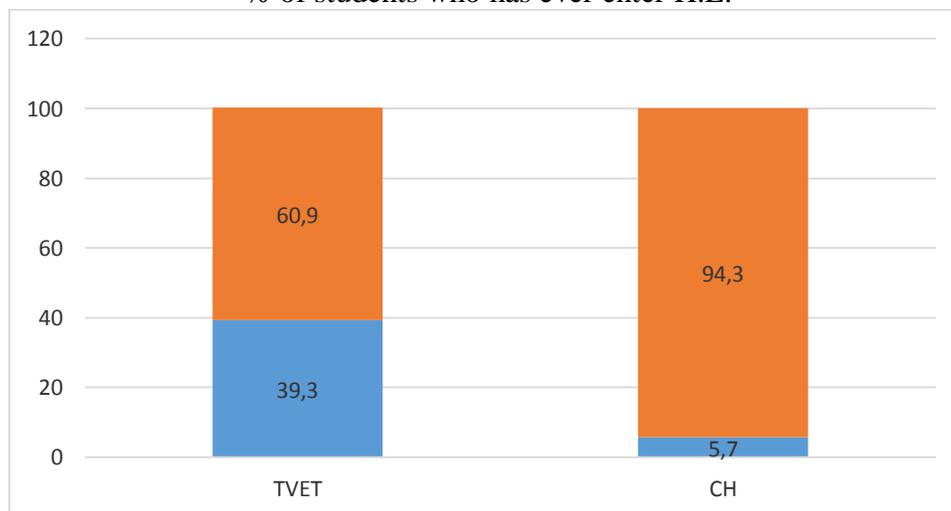
Chart No. 1
Rate of achievement university attendance
by socio economic level



Paths or routes four years after graduation

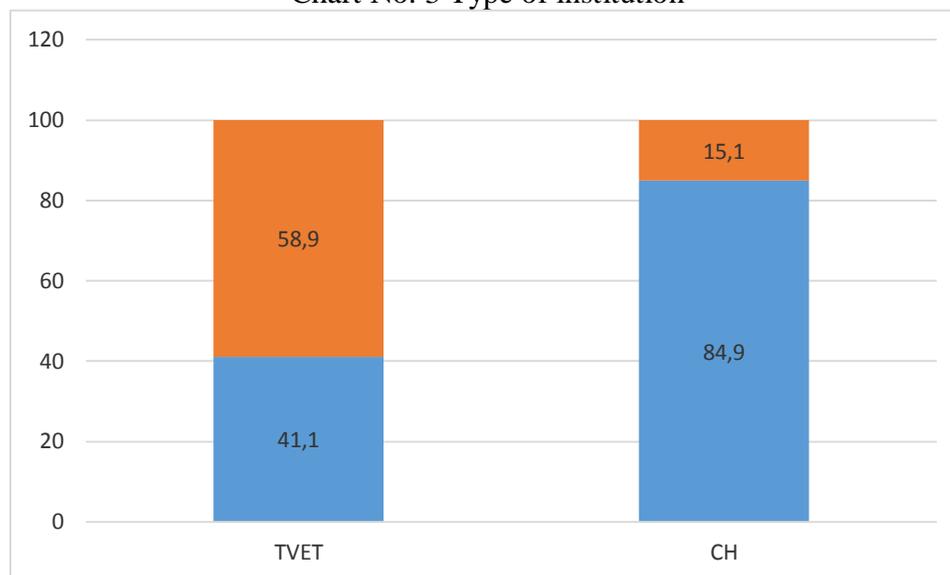
When taking a more extended and panoramic look at students' post-graduation paths, more general data show that most of the participants have entered at least once to higher education at some point during the four years period after graduation from high school. As seen in the chart below, even though rates of inclusion are dissimilar between TVET and AT students, current entrance to higher education in Chile is extended and coverage reaches most socio-economic levels, excepting the low level.

Chart No. 2¹⁸
% of students who has ever enter H.E.



¹⁸ Data correspond to a sample that is not representative of the total universe of graduates of secondary education in the country

Chart No. 3 Type of institution



When comparing the modality of education received, information reports that educational insertions correlate with the training received. As reported when describing expectations, most students from the scientific-humanist modality (AT) pursue a university career, whereas young TVET students do so at institutions of technical education, las que demandan menores exigencias académicas para el ingreso de los estudiantes y que, comparativamente, son de menor extensión y costos asociados¹⁹.

En este marco, es posible señalar que los jóvenes de estratos socio-económicos más pobres evidencian ajustes de sus expectativas iniciales, incorporándose mayoritariamente a carreras de educación superior de menor prestigio o estudiando en centros educativos menos selectivos y financieramente menos costosos que los centros universitarios tradicionales y de mayor reconocimiento social.

Desde una perspectiva integral, estos antecedentes refrendan la constatación de un gran incremento de la participación de las nuevas generaciones de estudiantes en el nivel de educación superior. Aunque persisten desigualdades al considerar la realidad de los jóvenes por estratos socio-económicos, la masividad y diversidad de la oferta formativa constituyen los rasgos predominantes que caracterizan el sistema de educación superior en Chile. Pero junto a lo anterior, la distribución desigual al interior de este sistema, evidencia un cuadro de reproducción social de clases que se constituye como una tendencia consolidada y que evidencia rasgos muy similares a los analizados por Furlong y Cartmel para el caso británico a fines de la década pasada (véase Furlong and Cartmel, 2009)

¹⁹ Early entry to work is also a characteristic feature among TVET students. Four years after high school completion, 82% of TVET students have worked and only 44, 1% of AT students have been involved in working activities

Modelos de trayectorias predominantes

Deepening in the general data exposed, and as a way of giving an account of the sequential feature and movement that pathways take in the experience of the young people, four types of educational-working paths have been characterized. These were conceptually elaborated from previous bibliographic antecedents (Du Bois Reymond & López, 2004; Staff & Mortimer, 2003; Biggart, Furlong and Cartmel., 2008) and then analysed in the light of empirical data collected through these instruments.

It is important to note that this characterization is not associated to the definition of a stage of completion of a cycle, but evidence the movements generated during this process. These translate into earlier or later incorporation to work, progress or stagnation in educational paths and greater precariousness of social insertion.

The first path called *exclusive continuity* defines those paths considering the extension of academic training, with no breaks and with an ascending transit in the education system. This is a linear path characterized by establishing staged relations of sequential events, in which there is no overlapping of activities. They are young people who are dedicated exclusively to their studies, i.e., not working and, therefore, residential emancipation is not glimpsed in these paths. It responds to a traditional way of understanding the processes of transition or postponement among these youngsters, as emphasis is placed on the acquisition of skills, abilities and rights associated with the adult life, a process that is mainly developed while being a student (Oyarzún & Irarrazabal, 2003). En este proceso, existe un importante rol de la familia como soporte económico de los jóvenes frente a la alta exigencia financiera que implica cursar estudios superiores en un Sistema como el chileno, fuertemente mercantilizado.

The path named **synchronous continuity** corresponds to the route that, like the previous one, considers the extension of academic training, with an ascending transit in the education system. Unlike exclusive continuity paths, these may involve greater delay, since there are simultaneous working and educational activities. While there is employment insertion, this may be discontinuous, precarious and informal and, therefore, may not imply residential emancipation. The extensive training offer of higher education system and the high costs associated with studies makes that an important number of youngsters alternate both activities, without necessarily presenting family emancipation or transition to adulthood, in a traditional sense. Thus, paths of synchronous continuity are expressed as: student-worker-without family independence económica/ student - worker- home provider.

Early integration into the labour market corresponds to a type of trajectory in which young people early enter the world of work. They are young people who, even though may have received training for work, as it is the case of TVET youth, are oriented towards poorly qualified 'work culture' and, in general, not linked to previous training. Precariousness of those Jobs in terms of stability, salary and level of qualification constrains the horizons of professional progress and makes such paths be particularly vulnerable in relation to changes in the labour market and employment dynamics. Even though empirical studies have represented these itineraries usually associated with very early family emancipation processes (Casal, 1997), there are not strongly expressed in this

case. Finally, it is important to note that – according to what has been revealed by most cases, this path is not associated to a deliberate, personal choice, but to economic problems de los jóvenes y su entorno familiar.

Trial-error paths or **greater precariousness** paths correspond to the so-called «yo-yo» paths. (López, 2002; Machado, 2002). Although they do not overlap activities of study and work, one always depends on the other. It is the kind of path of those who first study, then work and then study again as many times as required by their personal projects or external factors. This category represents those paths showing very sporadic or brief approaches to work activities or activities linked to professional training, and they are mainly characterized by no activity at all. It is a process in which youngsters (re) build their biographies following the ups and downs of life and their choices are confusing or difficult to categorize.

As it can be observed, even though there is a relative homogenization of transitions – since a large group of young people presents continuous paths, i.e., they extend their training process– these paths reveal different sequential stages and rhythms depending on SEL and modality of studies. While an important number of students begins developing work activities, in a short time they enrolled in higher education.

Table No. 5
Type of path (2012-2015)
AT and TVET students

Type of path	SEL					Modality		Total
	Low	Medium-low	Medium	Medium-high	High	TVET	AT	
Exclusive continuity exclusive	16,9	16,0	17,5	48,4	70,2	22,4	53,5	34,3
Synchronous Continuity	23,1	18,9	24,1	30,1	18,5	25	26,1	22,9
Early work	38,5	31,4	28,5	3,9	0,8	26,9	4,3	19,3
Try-error	21,5	33,7	29,9	17,6	10,5	25,7	14,9	23,5
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

In this perspective, it must be emphasized that results denote not only how ambitions of new generations of students have increased (secondary education students in general and, in particular, those from technical modality), but also, the management capacity of a labour-education project, beyond the limitations of the current educational model (such as inequalities in the education received for entrance and permanence in higher education and the high costs involved)

Other evidence relevant to be highlighted refers to the segment of young people entering early the world of work. Data show a range of complexities. Early labour insertions of these young people in rare cases are associated with qualified jobs and with greater job stability. In addition, correspondence between the type of education received in secondary education

and the type of work to which young TVET have access to demonstrate the precarious or reduced employment opportunities labour market offers to these young people. Even though they are formal jobs, information gathered doesn't show a correlation between activities carried out and training for work received in secondary education. These youngsters follow working paths similar to those travelled by AT students and, only in exceptional situations – particularmente en áreas formativas vinculadas al sector industrial tradicional- reveal a more articulated path.

The foregoing correlates with data from other studies showing that- even when the TVET graduates obtain an average salary higher (between 5 to 15% higher) than AT students, an important issue that explain this salary is that they have been a longer time in the work market and this is not due to secondary education received. Particularly in relation to this point, the history of paths allows questioning the relevance of curriculum structure and training system in secondary education that is too aligned to the requirements of the production system, tal como sigue siendo postulado por algunos organismos internacionales y promovido como políticas deseables en países que se encuentran en vías de desarrollo (véase por ejemplo, UNESCO, 2016). A model with greater emphasis on the development of general competencies for work would be, we believe, more appropriate to the market conditions faced by young people who early engage in work activities.

Finally, it is necessary to mention trial-error paths. As shown by data, a greater proportion of young TVET and low-medium SEL follow this type of paths, situation that may linked to school dropouts in higher education, con rate that exceeds 30% and that more doubles graduates from AT, (Larrañaga et al., 2013). This problem, even though represents a multi-causal issue, is linked to economic difficulties and poor academic performance. This last aspect may be determined both by previous training gaps and difficulties involving the alternation of educational and occupational activities.

Conclusions

On the basis of general data here reviewed, it is possible to hold that among Chilean students there is a massive tendency to privilege the continuity of studies, but that this presents important differences when analysing temporal expectations and effective options to enter higher education and eventual coordination with work activities. In this area, it is possible to distinguish a socio-economic differentiation and the emergence of various *racionales* that would account for an adjustment of future aspirations and possible paths to be reached by young students. The weight of economic requirements for continuing studies and the uncertainty to face academic requirements for admission to higher education are two important factors affecting mostly the orientations of low-income students. It is so that early notion of longer temporality to fulfil personal goals becomes evident among most vulnerable youngsters associated to TVET modality.

On the other hand, data demonstrate that- even though there is a high level of aspirations in the group- the choice of higher education institutions is associated to social origin and to the available social and cultural capital. An important number of youngsters from low and medium socio-economic levels, recognizing the difficulties of academic achievement

measured by the University selection test, less to express disaffection towards the choice of post-secondary studies, display in less demanding academic options (non-selective universities) an alternative for the fulfilment of their aspirations.

Likewise, the great appreciation of the virtuous link between training and subsequent entrance to work is causing that young people with higher socio-economic constraints tend to take different actions in order to enhance their chances. This implies they follow paths that combine education and work, which take longer time and involve more changes and interrupted travels. It is so that in a period of four years we see how structural constraints that may limit the achievement of a specific goal are avoided by the deployment of strategies aimed at searching financing, specific educational programs and more complex paths. As stated by other authors: “the complexity of educational trajectories in which not only do institutional factors reinforce or mitigate socio-economic factors of reproduction, but young people’s subjective agency, also filters socio-economic, institutional and discursive factors” (Cuconato et al., 2016: 245)

Aspirations, levels of fulfilment of expectations and the analysed paths evidence differentiated trajectories. In each of these analytical focuses it is possible to distinguish that social reproduction is reinforced thanks to the institutional conditions that anchor the Chilean model of education.

Regarding Latin American contexts in particular, some authors point out that the process of individuation becomes asymmetrical based on economic and social conditions provided by resources, expectations and qualifications (Jacinto, 2006). In disadvantaged situations without instances of institutional regulation and facing the pressure of finding new channels of integration, the margins of choices constrain. Esta situación, por cierto, es particularmente preocupante y evidencia un fuerte desajuste entre la fuerza de una orientación aspiracional –en el sentido de lo señalado por Appadurai- presente en vastos sectores de la sociedad y las respuestas institucionales que reducen a las *reglas del mercado* la resolución de las nuevas demandas, particularmente aquellas que surgen de los sectores pobres de la sociedad. El efecto probable de esta tensión radica en la mantención de un cuadro de diferenciación y segregación social, provocando un efecto de frustración generacional de consecuencias impredecibles.

In the Chilean case, the offer of differentiated higher education where the prestige of educational centres operates as a new sign of differentiation, seems to be a channel which, without limiting the urge to do better and the high degree of ambition in this generation, meets this demand, but mostly modifies the differences in origin and social segmentation prevailing in the country (**revisar este párrafo:** parece resolver esta demanda, pero sin modificar mayormente las diferencias de origen y segmentación social prevalecientes en la sociedad) A labour market not linked to vocational education and training for work, which in turn shows no greater chance of upward social mobility, calls into question a model of massification of higher education as the one developed in Chile, especially its eventual effect on the reduction of social inequality that is dragged along time. Beyond the efforts of youngsters and their families, data presented in this study confirm that the structural conditioning is a *straitjacket* that makes it difficult to move in the direction of greater levels of equality in a society like ours.

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