
Chilean Student Campaign to Reform Education, 2011

- [\(mainly or initiated by\) student participants](#) [1]
- [an example of paradox of repression](#) [2]

Timing

Time period notes:

Globally, this was a time of revolutionary spirit (Arab Awakening) and youth mobilization using social media.

Though the "Chilean Winter" was most active in a time period of 6th months (most highly in the first segment), sporadic marches continued which extend our time frame into late 2012.

May 12th

2011

to:

September 27th

2013

Location and Goals

Country:

Chile

Location City/State/Province:

Santiago Metropolitan Region (among others)

Location Description:

Protests occurred throughout Chile

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

An improved, free, and more equal education system (see specific demands of the "Social Agreement for Chilean Education" further detailed in narrative). Also, the end of for-profit education

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support>CONFECH demands letter delivered to Joaquin Lavín
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 035. Humorous skits and pranks>Flash mobs, danced as zombies, staged fake suicides
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 117. General strike
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)>Hunger strike

- 163. Stand-in › Kiss-in

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 038. Marches
- 104. Professional strike › Called by Central Union

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 038. Marches

Methods in 4th segment:

- 038. Marches

Methods in 5th segment:

- 038. Marches
- 117. General strike

Methods in 6th segment:

- 038. Marches

Segment Length:

86 days

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- Chilean college and high school students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Camila Vallejo (University of Chile), Giorgio Jackson (Pontifical Catholic University of Chile)

Partners:

FEUC (Students' Federation of the Catholic University of Chile), FECH (Students' Federation of University of Chile)

External allies:

Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, Michelle Bachelet (at the conclusion of the campaign), older generation family member and Los Pinguinos, Chilean Teachers Association, El Colegio de Profesores, Extraordinary National Assembly of Teachers, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Acción Asociación

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- CONFECH
- FECH (Students' Federation of University of Chile)
- FEUC (Students' Federation of the Catholic University of Chile)

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Central Unitaria de Trabajadores

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Acción Asociación
- Amnesty International
- Chilean Teachers Association
- El Colegio de Profesores
- Extraordinary National Assembly of Teachers
- Greenpeace

Segment Length:

86 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

The Chilean government and Ministry of Education

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Official government declarations (compromise proposals)

Campaigner violence:

Multiple riots that included of injurious brutality towards police and mass destruction of property, thought not sanctioned by leadership

Repressive Violence:

Police brutality and teargassing, resulting in campaigner injuries and deaths

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

5 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Total points:

9 out of 10 points

Student governments of Chilean universities assembled to be represented as the Confederation of Chilean Students Federations (CONFECH), the leading organization of the campaign. College students Camila Vallejo and Giorgio Jackson took leadership of the protests and were both integral in creating the "Social Agreement for Chilean Education" (Acuerdo Social por la Educación Chilena), the proposal that was presented to the Chilean government. The students of CONFECH demanded the following:

- Increased state-support for all public universities (which traditionally depended solely on tuition for funding activities)
- A more equitable admissions process into prestigious universities (including less emphasis on the standardized test Prueba de Selección Universitaria)
- Free public higher education for all, regardless of a family's economic status
- Creation and implementation of a government agency that would investigate and prosecute universities allegedly using loopholes to make profits
- Creation of a more serious accreditation process
- Creation of an "intercultural university" (to meet the unique demands of the underrepresented indigenous Mapuche students)
- Repealing of laws that did not allow student participation in University governance

High school students created demands as well. These included:

- Central government control of public secondary and primary schools
- Only allowing Chile's school voucher system to be applicable in nonprofit pre-school, primary and secondary schooling levels
- Increasing state spending from 4.4% of GDP on education, to a number more comparable to the 7% of GDP recommended by the UN for developed nations
- The use of student bus passes throughout the entire year
- The development of more vocational high schools

- The reconstruction of the schools that were damaged during the 2010 Chilean earthquake
- A moratorium on the creation of new voucher and charter schools
- Increased pay for teachers
- Creation of a national plan to attract the best talent to the teaching profession and raise its social stature

A letter detailing these demands was presented to Lavin on 26 May.

CONFECH largely used social media like Twitter to spread the campaign objectives and plans to students throughout Chile, allowing students to organize mass protests. Creative nonviolent protest quickly drew public attention. Students used tactics such as taking over school buildings and going on hunger strikes, dressing up as super heroes to marches, organizing flash mobs to Michael Jackson's "Thriller" (dressed as zombies), jogging around the presidential palace 1,800 times to symbolize the \$1.8 billion a year in funding that protesters demanded, and staging a mass public "kiss-in". Students donned flags and signs with statements that resonated with many, such as the slogan "Fin al lucro en la educacion, nuestros sueños no les pertenecen" (education is not for profit; our dreams are no one's property). By 13 June, protesting students occupied an estimated 100 high schools. On 30 June, 200,000 students and workers demonstrated in support of the campaign.

The government under President Sebastián Piñera first attempted to appeal to protesters on July 5th with the proposal of "GANE", a fund of 4 billion dollars that would be used annually to fund public education. To the dismay of the government, this plan only further increased protests, as Camila Vallejo exposed how this would only increase disparities by legalizing for-profit government activity in education. On July 14th, students and striking workers at El Teniente mine marched in one of the biggest demonstrations of Chile's history as a democracy. In response to the protests, four days later the government replaced Lavin for Felipe Bulnes. Many protesters took this attempt to shuffle cabinet positions as a sign that the government was struggling to find ways to appease the protesting masses. Student leaders traveled to Paris to meet with UNESCO and the European Parliament to recruit international support.

On August 1st, Piñera's government offered its second proposal to reform the education system with a 21-point plan. Addressing the education system from preschool level to higher education, the proposal included greater democratization of universities for student participation, direct state management of public schools, greater access to scholarships, and refinancing options on student loans. However, the student leaders did not agree to accept the terms as it failed to recognize the demand for criminalization of the profiteering in education. On August 4, the protesters staged a "state of siege", according to Vallejo, at the center of Santiago. Mass confrontations took place when police teargassed the streets, leaving 90 militarized police injured by protester riots, 874 students arrested, and a local department store burned down. That night, protesters organized a cacerolazo protest to respond to the violence, where protesters banged pots and pans as a audio display of discontent from their homes. The government presented a revised third proposal on August 18 that would reduce the interest on student loans to 2%, but again prompted more backlash from disappointed protesters.

That week, the Workers' United Center of Chile organized a 48 hour general strike, and an estimated 1,000,000 Chilean students and workers demonstrated, striked, and attended a concert for free education. Vallejo also urged students of schools and universities not to return back to classes for the second term of the academic year.

By the close of the rallies on the 25, up to 1,000 protesters were arrested, 100 militarized police injured, and one 16 year old student killed from a bullet wound to the chest, which many testified was the work of a police officer.

Finally on 31 August, the government officially ended state support for private profit-making institutions, conceding to student demands. Because not all of the demands were met, another protest erupted on 11 September in Santiago, where one 15-year-old girl suffered a bullet wound from police. Protests slowed until October, when failed ongoing negotiations between student leaders and government led to escalation of police brutality and repression. Students organized another 2-day general strike and protest against police brutality on the 18th.

The next year in April of 2012, the new Education Minister Harald Beyer proposed another university funding plan. Removing the private sector banks from the process of granting student loans, Beyer believed, would reduce interest rates on loans from 6% to 2%. Student leader Gabriel Boric rejected the plan, stating: "We don't want to trade debt for debt, which is what the government is offering us." On 27 and 28 April, the First National Meeting of Organised Teachers brought together teachers from schools throughout Chile in support of the protests. One year after the start of the protests on 16 May, roughly 100,000 supporters took to the streets in Santiago for the 40th official protest, where riot police met them with water cannons.

In late June, the government approved the draft of Hinzpeter Law, a law that would charge anyone who "violently occupied hospitals, schools and other public institutions" (at the word of arresting officers) with up to three years in prison. The president of the Chilean Teachers Association acknowledged that this was a grave attack on freedom of assembly. Teachers expressed similar rejection of the law was at the Extraordinary National Assembly of Teachers. Amnesty International, Greenpeace, and Acción Asociación all organized a peaceful protest in Santiago's Plaza Italia on July 31st against the law. The organization El Colegio de Profesores (CPC) publicly rejected the violent actions of the Chilean Police Force. All these allies supported the mobilization of students and put additional pressure on the government. A nationwide strike by teachers was held on August 28th, in which every single teacher from across the globe was invited to join and show solidarity.

The last major march of 5,000 people occurred on 27 September. Though not all of the objectives of the Chilean Winter were reached, the approval rating of the President had dropped significantly due to the protests, and the government made significant changes to the education system. In 2013, Socialist Party member Michelle Bachelet won the Presidency and vowed to establish a free and universal education system within six years. Twenty-five-year-old Vallejo was elected as a member of Parliament to continue to oversee policies in education. Smaller protests continued, as activists pursued an education system that would be accessible and affordable for every Chilean student.

Research Notes

Influences:

2006 Penguins' Revolution, Arab Spring, Spain's 15-M Movement

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Additional Notes:

October 17, 2012: CONFECH leaders of this Chilean Students Movement received The Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Awards, at Washington DC.

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