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# **The Participatory Process of Adults (Scholarly Community) in a Formal Education Program in Secondary Lyceums in Chile: The Case of the Montegrando Project\***

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*The investigation deals with the interpretation that the actors involved in a formal educational program have of the program, understanding such program as a community educational practice. The Program studied is named the Montegrando Project, and it forms part of the Chilean Educational Reform which began in the past decade. The Montegrando Project is characterized, among other things, by the delivery of support and economic resources to 51 secondary education establishments in Chile with the goal that these establishments will develop innovative educational initiatives (projects) that positively impact on the learning of the students.*

*To achieve this purpose, the Montegrando Project establishes a strategy of working with the lyceums based on the concept of educational community and through the constant collaboration of support professionals known as tutors. An entity specifically created for this purpose is called the Project Execution Unit (UEP), which, as its name indicates, is in charge of leading the definition and the development of the research project undertaken by each establishment.*

*The investigation treated the issue of interpreting the participation on the part of the actors in the process qualitatively and quantitatively. To do this, the tutors and the members of the UEP were interviewed, and a wide sample of professors, parents, and authorities in 10 of the 51 establishments in the project were surveyed.*

*It is concluded that the participation of the scholarly community in the Montegrando Project has a selective character in spite of the project being widely known and valued by members of the same. Also, the fundamental role and the innovation that the tutors mean within the Chilean educational system, as community trainers and educators on issues of impact on a formal educational project, is alluded to in the conclusions.*

## **The Problem**

The central Problem of the investigation has been the impact that the strategy of community participation in a project of scholarly innovation (Montegrando Project) which is a product of the Chilean Educational Reform has on the educational community that surrounds it, understanding by this the professors of the establishments, the students, and the parents. In terms of adult education and training, the investigation deals with the impact that the participatory component of the experience has on the actors mentioned, based on the experience in question having as a central element organized community participation in connection with the resources delivered for the development of a process that improves the quality of scholarly teaching in the establishments.

Specified in terms of questions, the problem can be structured by the two following questions:

How do they interpret –that is, how do they account for the lived process- the experience of scholarly community participation to which they have been called?

In what way, if any, does the scholarly community generate a process of organization and/or collective mobilization in connection with the recourses delivered to improve the quality of education imparted in the establishments? How does the scholarly community react to the eventual participatory space that is offered to them?

This research problem seems important to us for two reasons: i) First, a phenomenon which is a priority in the political-public discussion in Chile and Latin America at the moment, like Educational Reform, is tackled, and in particular, a fundamental element of this process like the consequences or community participation in the same is investigated; ii) Second, the research problem is important because it deals with the perspective of the participants in the process and with this the immediate impact that a participatory instance of scholarly innovation has –in terms of involvement, generation of identity and mobilization –on the youths and adults directly or indirectly connected with it.

Both elements, social participation in the processes of educational change and the perspective and impact of the same on the scholarly community, are central aspects of the educational and community discussion currently in Latin America.

### **Theoretical Framework and Purpose of the Study**

The investigation is based on a descriptive-interpretive perspective of social processes. From this lens, the experience studied is understood as a social process interpreted by its protagonists, that is, those who live the experience grant it a particular meaning and significance.

The central concept to which we allude here is the participatory component, understanding by such the elements that, within the discourse and practice of a social intervention project, allude to instances and structures created to generate associations and/or mobilization of the participants related to partial or total goals predefined by the project.

In a more schematic way, the approach to the problem can be explained according to the following points:

- i) The Montegrando Project is a discursive structure created within a particular institutional context (Chile's Ministry of Education);
  - ii) As such, the project attempts to separate a series of social, cultural, and in general, interactive processes in another type of institution: the lyceums or secondary education establishments;
  - iii) Given the above, what motivates the Montegrando Project is, among other things, a structure of social and conversational relationships that tries to be participatory;
  - iv) To achieve such structure, the Project, understood as a set of norms, resources, and objectives, organizes a structure of actors among whom are those -the tutors- who exercise the official representation of the same. That is, they are spokespersons of the official discourse of the project;
  - v) The tutors "are grounded" with their discourse in a particular social and cultural scenario made up by each lyceum. Within each one of them, they conform with the cooperation of the organizing power of each establishment, a UEP that possesses a discourse and a mandate regarding the scholarly community participation with the goal of creating and implementing a strategy for improving the learning of the students in the lyceum;
  - vi) Each one of the actors interprets the Montegrando Project in a particular way as well as the "participatory component" of the same. This interpretation refers to the generation of a discourse regarding their possibilities of influencing the project, their level of knowledge of the same, and the manner in which their opinions have been considered.
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- vii) Because of the above, the investigation seeks to identify the interpretation that each one of these actors has of the participatory component put into practice by the project.

#### **Specific Questions that the Study is Designed to Address**

- i) How does each one of the actors interpret his/her participation in the Montegrando Project?
- ii) What is the discourse that the tutors of the Montegrando Project have regarding justification of the participatory component of the same project?
- iii) What is the discourse that the UEPs of ten establishments participating in Montegrando have about the UEP concerning instances of community participation within the lyceum?
- iv) What is the perception of the professors, authorities, and parents of the possibilities for participating in the Montegrando Project?

In methodological terms, question (i) corresponds to a global analysis of the information collected, question (ii) is the first component of the project that we analyzed in the second point. In the same way, question (iii) corresponds to the second component of the investigation and question (iv) to the third. The first two components are treated through qualitative procedures and the last through a quantitative strategy.

#### **Data Collection and Analysis**

##### ***i) Qualitative Component on the Discourse of the Tutors or Support Professionals***

- a) First, a common semi-structured interview guide was developed to be applied to the group of seven tutors, to one support professional, and to the national coordinator of the Montegrando Project<sup>1</sup>. The questions of this interview indicated a relation with the place, the importance and the eventual consequences that the interviewees gave to participation within the project in question. The nine interviews were recorded and transcribed.
- b) At the same time, a simple categorization was elaborated based on the questions of the interview guide with the goal of permitting the initial ordering of the information. In this way and based on the reading of each one of the interviews, the information from each person was classified according to categories. At this time, a text formed by discourses selected and grouped according to the themes indicated by the categories was produced.
- c) The following step of analysis was the carrying out of an *analytical synthesis*, consisting of a summary of the discourse of each tutor in reference to each one of the categories. In this stage, and for the first time in the analysis *we got away from the quotations*. That is, for the first time in the course of analysis, a preliminary and synthesized interpretation of the tutors' discourse was produced. As a consequence, the product was a second text of analysis that summarizes, in words of the analysts, what was expressed by the tutors.
- d) A fourth step was the interpretation of the tutors' discourse itself in which the participatory component of the Montegrando Project was referred to. For this purpose, the interpretation was made based on the text of the analytic synthesis indicated in the point above, and from this revision the principal conclusions that are derived from each category were established. To complement this final interpretation, some textual quotations from the interviews were included.

**ii) *Qualitative Component on the Discourse of the Members of the Project Execution Units (UEP)***

The technique for collecting information was the collective interview, which was applied to members of each one of the ten UEPs selected. Given the semi-structured character of the interview, the following basic question guide was established:

*Background of the UEP*

- How was the UEP formed?
- Who joins it?
- What is the frequency of meetings?
- What are its successes and products to date?

*Participatory Spaces in the UEP*

- What is, according to its own members, the degree of free action that the UEP has?

*Participatory Moments in the UEP*

- What has been the role of the UEP and its members in the different phases of the project? (the birth of the idea, elaboration of the proposal, administration of finances, direction, development or execution of the proposal, monitoring and evaluation)
- How have these phases occurred?
- Has the incorporation of other actors into these phases resulted?

*Motivation for Participating in the UEP*

- What are the individual motives of each member of the UEP for being there? In what way does participation in the UEP represent an advance in their personal and professional development?
- In what way do the members of the UEP think that the Montegrando Project can contribute to the lyceum as a collective?
- In what way do the members of the UEP think that the Montegrando Project can contribute to other members of the scholarly community satisfying specific needs and demands related to the lyceum?

For the purpose of analysis, a transcription of each one of the ten interviews was initially made. From these transcriptions, we proceeded to structure the following semi-inductive guidelines of analysis, that as such, respond to the questions mentioned previously as well as to *emerging themes* in the interviews:

1. Mode in which the UEP was formed.
2. Motivations for joining the UEP.
3. Characteristics of the process and its stages.
4. Characteristics of the activities realized.
5. Perception of the successes and advances achieved.
6. Perception of the difficulties encountered.
7. Perception of the project's objective.
8. Concept of participation emergent in the discourse.

**iii) *Quantitative Component on the Perception of Participation in the Montegrando Project on Professors, Parents, and Students***

In this section we deal with what corresponds to the second chapter of the investigation, which consists of a quantitative analysis realized through the application and later analysis of a series of standardized questionnaires to different actors in the educational communities of 10 lyceums studied. The application of these questionnaires was carried out in two time periods: the first, between March and April, 1999, which covered six establishments (lyceums of secondary education), and the second, between November and December of the same year, covering four other lyceums.

In the first stage that included six lyceums, a total of 338 questionnaires were administered, of which 130 were answered by teachers, 108 by students, and 100 by authorities, all from middle schools.

Concerning the second time period, which was centered on four other lyceums, a total of 195 questionnaires were administered, of which 84 were answered by teachers, 54 by students, and 57 by authorities, all of them also from middle schools.

For purposes of analysis, we have considered it important to make this distinction because of the possible differences of opinions that the informants could have had due to the greater level of advancement of the projects in the lyceums studied in the second time period with regards to those of the first.

Methodologically, we can show that the instruments applied were designed almost entirely of closed questions. Prior to their definitive application, a test was made with teachers and authorities, which permitted correction in the form of some questions.

In its final version, the questionnaires of the teachers and students are identical (except for the use of “you” formal or “you” informal respectively, which changes some verb tenses and forms of writing the questions). Regarding the questionnaire administered to the authorities, this is also basically the same, except that it was simplified in some questions and in another case this was simply eliminated because it was not relevant for this actor.

In all the cases, the questionnaires were self-administered in the respective establishments and in the presence of a responsible person who was a member of the CIDE research team. This meant scheduling meetings especially for the purpose of collecting the information solicited in the questionnaires. This was achieved but with greater complications in the case of the authorities.

The material was ordered by establishments and organized in spreadsheets. All the calculations were made on the basis of these, an analysis that arrived at the conclusions that are presented later.

### **Sample Composition**

In this document, the analysis of the information collected by means of the administration of questionnaires to **214** teachers (130 from the first group of lyceums + 84 from the second group of lyceums), **162** students (108 from the first group of lyceums + 54 from the second group of lyceums) and **157** authorities (100 from the first group of lyceums + 57 from the second group of lyceums) from the **10** establishments that make up the cases studies in this investigation is reported.

As we indicated, the establishments were studied in two different time periods. The lyceums that make up the first group are the following:

<b>Number of case study</b>	<b>Name of lyceum</b>	<b>Municipality</b>
Lyceum 1	Liceo José Manuel Barros Borgoño	Petorca
Lyceum 2	Liceo Pulmahue	La Ligua
Lyceum 3	Inst. Reg. Federico Errázuriz IRFE	Santa Cruz
Lyceum 4	Industrial Italia	Santiago
Lyceum 5	Cristóbal Colón	Conchalí
Lyceum 6	Elvira Brady Maldonado	San Bernardo

To these six lyceums are added a group of four other establishments, making a total of ten. The identification of the second group of cases studied is as follows:

<b>Number of case study</b>	<b>Name of lyceum</b>	<b>Municipality</b>
Lyceum 7	Escuela Industrial La Gratitude Nacional	Santiago Centro
Lyceum 8	Liceo Nacional de Llo Lleo	Llo Lleo
Lyceum 9	Escuela Agrícola Las Garzas	Chimbarongo
Lyceum 10	Complejo Educacional Particular Monseñor Luis Arturo Pérez	Pedro Aguirre Cerda

In each one of these lyceums, questionnaires were administered to teachers, students, and authorities. According to the criteria for selecting the informant sample, the final composition of the group of people surveyed in the first group of lyceums is the following:

Lyceum	Teachers	Students	Authorities	Total
Lyceum 1	13	12	16	41
Lyceum 2	39	31	24	94
Lyceum 3	28	12	13	53
Lyceum 4	21	15	16	52
Lyceum 5	10	7	10	27
Lyceum 6	19	31	21	71
<b>Total cases: 6</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>338</b>

Likewise, the composition of all the people surveyed in the second group of lyceums is the following:

Lyceum	Teachers	Students	Authorities	Total
Lyceum 7	34	21	20	75
Lyceum 8	19	12	12	43
Lyceum 9	13	4	5	22
Lyceum 10	18	17	20	55
<b>Total cases: 4</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>195</b>

In the case of the students and authorities, the intention was to survey those who had directive duties in their courses. However, there were cases in which the directors were not available to respond to the questionnaire. Therefore, they were replaced.

In conclusion, in relation to the positions held (among the directors of the course as well as among the directors of the General Center for Students and General Center for Parents respectively) the composition of the sample studied is the following:

- a) Quantity of students who are class presidents

Actor	Number of class presidents	Percentage of total surveyed (in relation to their respective group)
Students (first group)	59	55%
Students (second group)	31	25%

- b) Quantity of students who have some responsibility in direction of the General Center for Students (CA)

Actor	Number of people with directive responsibilities	Percentage of total surveyed (in relation to their respective group)
Students (first group)	20 in the CA	19%
Students (second group)	21 in the CA	24%

c) Quantity of authorities that are class presidents

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Number of class presidents</b>	<b>Percentage of total surveyed (in relation to their respective group)</b>
Authorities (first group)	42	42%
Authorities (second group)	14	25%

d) Quantity of authorities who have some responsibility in the direction of the General Center for Parents (CPA)

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Number of people with directive responsibilities</b>	<b>Percentage of total surveyed (in relation to their respective group)</b>
Authorities (first group)	23 in the CPA	23%
Authorities (second group)	29 in the CPA	16%

Regarding the sex of the people surveyed, the composition of the sample for the first group of lyceums is the following (indicating frequencies and percentages in relation to the respective group):

<b>FIRST GROUP</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Without data</b>	<b>Total</b>
Teachers	65 (50%)	60 (46%)	5 (4%)	130 (100%)
Students	52 (48%)	56 (52%)	0 (0%)	108 (100%)
Authorities	25 (25%)	70 (70%)	5 (5%)	100 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	142 (42%)	186 (55%)	10 (3%)	338 (100%)

The same information for the second group of lyceums is shown next:

<b>SECOND GROUP</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Without data</b>	<b>Total</b>
Teachers	54 (64%)	24 (29%)	6 (7%)	84 (100%)
Students	36 (65%)	17 (31%)	1 (2%)	54 (100%)
Authorities	20 (35%)	32 (56%)	5 (9%)	57 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	110 (57%)	73 (37%)	12 (6%)	195 (100%)

As is seen in the last rows of the two tables above, more than half of the people surveyed in the first group of lyceums are females (55% of the total of the representatives from the three groups), while in the second group the opposite occurs since more than half are males (57% of the total of the representatives from the three groups).

In the case of the authorities from both groups of lyceums, the composition of the total of the people surveyed is markedly female (70% for the first six lyceums and 56% for the remaining 4 lyceums).

### **Principal Findings**

- i) The dynamic of participation generated by the Montegrande Project tended to be restricted –if we speak of participation in a wide sense- to two actors in the process: the tutors and support professionals and the professors of the establishments. Even within the latter, effective participation only reached a few.
- ii) The model of participation is a particular type of socio-educational practice for adults which, in our opinion, can be labeled selective. In fact, it is not a model of massification of initiative and of the democratic generation of its responsibilities, but the opposite. It deals with a participatory practice

restricted in qualitative and quantitative terms to only a few members of the establishment, with the goal of massifying the acceptance of the processes and the results to the rest of the scholarly community.

- iii) In spite of the above, the Montegrando Project is a widely known and valued instance within the establishments. Therefore, it is not treated as a process ignored by the scholarly community, or much less, unvalued by the community due to its limited participation, but totally the opposite.
- iv) From the perspective of the UEP, the tutors make up a true revolution within the community work and of support within the formal education establishments. They are adult educators who carry out a dynamic of constant innovation, cultural adaptation, and development of a project that interprets needs felt by the target population and that demonstrates their pedagogical efficiency in the formal education environment at the same time.

### **Impact**

At the level of impact, we hope to establish with this project a line of research and reflection on educational practices in relation to the place that community participatory strategies occupy within the processes of socio-educational transformation promoted by the State. At the same time, we consider it important to impact on reflection and on future investigations regarding the vision that communities which have the participatory component of a specific project directed toward them have of this component: their expectations, their capacity for occupying social spaces that are offered to them, etc.

Finally, in the near future, we are interested to continue studying and generating information about the place that the practices of adult education and of the scholarly community in general occupy regarding the resources of the Educational Reform process in Chile and in Latin America.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Even when the interviews were carried out with the group of tutors and with the national coordinator of the Montegrando Project, for the purpose of facilitating reading we refer to both categories as **tutors** from here on.