STUDENT EMPOWERMENT IN CHILE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE 2011-2012 MOVEMENT

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Abstract

Previous findings show weakened empowerment of groups facing macroeconomical and political powers, so this study explores movement participants' perceptions of empowerment in the Chilean student movement, years 2011-2012. A qualitative method with 18 individual interviews and three focus groups was used in students of universities and schools (N= 31). Results show empowerment in most dimensions: critical consciousness, organization, actions/behavior and contextual citizens' support. However, the sense of control in the face of the political institution is week. Implications regarding strength, movements' continuity-erosion, theoretical aspects and public policies are discussed.

Keywords : Chilean student movement; empowerment; community psychology; public policies

Social movements (SM) are collective challenges based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities, who are in dispute with power agents (Tarrow, 1998, cited by Meyer & Verduzco, 2010). As a field of study, SM has been little addressed by community psychology, despite the fact that they make up rather loose networks of people and social groups that pursue a purpose of social change. The latter, mediating the participation of groups and communities, constitutes a key goal of

community psychology (Montero, 2010). The present study addresses, from this discipline and its key concept of empowerment, a social movement that has emerged significantly in the last ten years in Chile: the student movement (ME). Empowerment is a mechanism through which people, organizations and communities gain control over matters of interest to them (Rappaport, 1987). The current possibility of community empowerment has been called into question when alluding (Sánchez, 2012) to problems of the empowerment process (which generates awareness, is interactive-organizing and involves social action) in the face of concentration, opacity, remoteness and incomprehensibility of the macrosocial power, and which additionally reports clientelism and paternalism in relations with government institutions (Zambrano, Bustamante, & García, 2009). In MS there are studies (Campbell, Cornish, Gibbs, & Scott, 2010; Culley & Hughey, 2008; Stephens, 2014) that have pointed out the insufficiency of critical analysis, voice and development of resources and empowering actions to generate social changes, to which is added the relevance of power relations in society (political, economic, elites) that oppose and/or attack the MS defending its advantages. On the other hand, achieving control has not been a constant in EM in recent history. A little over a decade ago Garretón (2002) pointed out that we are witnessing a weakening of social movements (eg corporatization, sporadic, fragmentary, defensive actions, state institutionalization of certain movements). However, the ME has reemerged strongly in recent years in Chile with massive and sustained mobilizations of high school and university students. Thus, the affirmation of weakness referred to in previous times seems to fade. to which is added the relevance of power relations in society (political, economic, elites) that oppose and/or attack the MS defending its advantages. On the other hand, achieving

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Given the background of the difficulties of empowerment and the ups and downs of the movement, the question arises about how strong [1] and empowered is the movement during 2011 and 2012. And more specifically, what is the perception of the participants about dimensions of empowerment, what is the process of critical analysis and identification with the demands, their organizational capacity, the valued actions, their perception of control and effectiveness, and the external political and social conditions that favor or hinder the ME. Without ignoring the existence of complex sociopolitical processes that can explain ups and downs and cycles, the objective of this study focuses on describing a quality of the ME as a social group, that is,

empowerment in its five dimensions from the subjective perception of its participants.

The study is theoretically relevant because it extends knowledge about empowerment to a particular field little explored by community psychology. In practical terms, the findings about more - and less - strong areas can provide feedback to citizen actions from the student movement. Furthermore, the results provide additional information to what the movement has made publicly known (in terms of content and organization of ideas), which can mean a contribution to the formulation of educational public policies.

Contextualization of the student movement

Student movement in Chile

The student movement was born at the beginning of the 20th century. The federations of the University of Chile (FECH) and the Catholic University (FEUC) were relevant actors in national politics. In the sixties they influenced the reform of the university system, and together with secondary school students, they led the construction of political projects of national scope. The process was abruptly interrupted by the military coup, but since the 1980s, the student movement joined the democratic recovery movement (Garretón & Martínez, 1985). In democracy, the relationship between the student movement and political parties suffered a fracture with the opening to forms of action that privileged autonomism and assemblyism. A period of withdrawal began that only emerged in the mid-2000s with the so-called "Penguin Revolution" of high school students in the ninth, eleventh, and twelfth grades in 2006. New forms of action then emerged marked by the autonomy of the political. and skillful management of virtual means of communication. This laid the foundations for current student demands (Henríquez, 2007). Subsequently, during 2011 and

2012, there were massive student mobilizations (secondary and university students) whose demands were related to education as a right, the quality of education, the end of profit, among others (CONFECH, 2011). New forms of action then emerged marked by political autonomy and skillful management of virtual media. This laid the foundations for current student demands (Henríquez, 2007). Subsequently, during 2011 and 2012, there were massive student mobilizations (secondary and university students) whose demands were related to education as a right, the quality of education, the end of profit, among others (CONFECH, 2011). New forms of action then emerged marked by political autonomy and skillful management of virtual media. This laid the foundations for current student demands (Henríquez, 2007). Subsequently, during 2011 and 2012, there were massive student mobilizations (secondary and university students) whose demands were related to education as a right, the quality of education, the end of profit, among others (CONFECH, 2011).

Education policies

The phenomenon of ME empowerment is part of the educational policies of recent decades. During the period of the dictatorship, great educational reforms occurred that, to a large extent, have lasted to the present day. These refer to the decrease in the leading role of the State, opening to the market, financing via subsidies, student credit systems and flexibility. pedagogical curriculum (Microdata Center, 2012). With the arrival of democratic governments in 1990, targeted programs were developed (vulnerable schools, virtual technological skills), curricular changes and an extended day; New credit systems were created for students, co-financing of parents in schools with state subsidies and quality evaluation systems of educational establishments and schools (Centro de Microdatos, 2012). However, the evaluation of the results of the school system

showed poor and socially unequal results in terms of performance (Arellano, 2001; Mayol, 2011). Young people expressed their dissatisfaction with the educational system en masse with citizen support of 83% (González, Cornejo, Sánchez, & Caldichoury, 2009). Even though there are descriptions of sequences of ME events and analysis of the reason for its emergence, it is not known about its empowerment. Young people expressed their dissatisfaction with the educational system en masse with citizen support of 83% (González, Cornejo, Sánchez, & Caldichoury, 2009). Even though there are descriptions of sequences of ME events and analysis of the reason for its emergence, it is not known about its empowerment. Young people expressed their dissatisfaction with the educational system en masse with citizen support of 83% (González, Cornejo, Sánchez, & Caldichoury, 2009). Even though there are descriptions of sequences of ME events and analysis of the reason for its emergence, it is not known about its empowerment.

A conceptualization of empowerment appropriate for ME.

The empowerment

Several authors have defined empowerment as a process characterized by a critical analysis whose purpose is to gain control and transform the environment, the development of capabilities and resources, the organization, and the realization of behaviors and actions (Montero, 2003; Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman , 2000). Zimmerman (2000) adds the intrapersonal component of beliefs in one's own competence and control motivation. Rich, Edelstein, Hallman and Wandersman (1995) introduce the external and institutional contextual element, more or less facilitating, in which communities are situated.

The expanded concept

Considering the SM literature and the work of Silva and Romero (2013) on strength in a SM, a definition of empowerment that includes these elements is proposed. In relation to the critical and sociopolitical analysis, the analysis proposed by Klandermans (2003), Meyer and Verduzco (2010), Tarrow (1994), Tricot (2012) and Retamozo (2009) is incorporated, of situations, events and conditions of the activists. , which is expressed in a body of demands and an interpretive framework with which they identify. Moral aspects such as the perception of injustice and moral indignation are also included (Klandermans, 2003). Regarding the purpose of gaining control, the sense of effectiveness is incorporated, pointing out the relevance of achieving goals at reasonable costs and with direct incentives formulated by Klandermans (2003), Meyer and Verduzco (2010) and Olson (1992). Regarding the intrapersonal component, the urgency to participate to generate changes is added, formulated by Klandermans (2003) and Meyer and Verduzco (2010).

In relation to the development of capabilities, resources and organization, the development of strategic leadership, network connections, time and money resources is included. It is also important that strategies appeal to people and adjust to the opportunities and threats of the political context, values and identities (Klandermans, 2003; Meyer & Verduzco, 2010; Tarrow, 1994), which also reveals their contextual aspect. Regarding behaviors, these are reported as 'actions' and 'tactics' in studies on SM, which according to Kirshner (2009), link strength with the mobilization of a greater number of people.

Method

A qualitative methodology was used following Strauss and Corbin (1990), due to the need to capture the subjective narrative of the participants of the social movement in relation to their empowerment.

Participants

The sampling was intentional, including participants of different educational levels (high school - grades 9 ' 10, 11 ' 12 - and university), type of university [2] , major, dependence on the school [3] , role and gender. (N= 31, average college age = 23.8, and high school age = 16. 9).

Procedure

Participants were contacted in their organizations, educational establishments and study sites, in a "snowball" manner. Some were asked to participate in a focus group taking care of the heterogeneity of careers and managing the achievement of rooms (in a student center of the University of Chile (UCH), academic meeting room of the School of Psychology of the Pontificia Universidad Católica of Chile (UC) and a private address in the case of secondary ones). All participants were informed about the reason for the study, confidentiality, among others, and their consent was recorded by signature. The interviews lasted around an hour and a half, were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

TABLA 1.
Características de la muestra

Criterio	N°	%	Criterio	N°	%
Nivel educacional			Dependencia del colegio		
Universitarios	19	61.3	Municipal	5	16.1
Secundarios	12	38.7	Particular subvencionado	6	19.4
Tipo de universidad			Particular pagado	1	3.2
Tradicional	14	45.2	Rol dirigente		
Privada	5	16.1	Dirigente	12	38.7
Tipo de carrera universitaria			No dirigente	19	61.3
Ciencias sociales	10	32.3	Género		
Ciencias naturales y exactas	8	25.8	Mujeres	16	51.6
Arte y arquitectura	1	3.2	Hombres	15	48.4

Fuente: elaboración propia

Instruments

The researchers conducted individual semi-structured interviews with nine university students and nine high school students. Three focus groups were held (five UCH young people, five UC students and three secondary school young people). Both instruments allowed the different topics to be addressed with flexibility, which facilitated a natural and receptive attitude on the part of the interviewer (Goetz & Lecompte, 1988). The questions were adjusted to a thematic script on the central aspects of empowerment: critical analysis and identification with demands, organizational capacity, valued actions, perception of control, external political and social conditions that favor or hinder the ME. These components were investigated through several questions related to each topic (eg

Analysis

The analysis was based on the grounded theory method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Two researchers examined each interview separately and conducted open coding of the data to define conceptual categories that accounted for the meanings emerging from the data in each sentence and paragraph. These were being compared to distinguish categories, properties and dimensions. The individual codings were then contrasted and discussed in team sessions and the final categories of each interview were agreed upon. These categories were integrated into a single list that formed the basis of the description of results.

Results

The results refer to five dimensions of empowerment, which are explained below.

Critical analysis and identification with demands

The young people carried out a critical analysis of the educational situation and showed a very heartfelt identification with a set of demands of the movement, pointing out relationships between these and their causes: "Yes, they all go hand in hand with each other" (E5,28) [4] . This can be articulated in a model (Figure 1) with an axis of 'quality, free and access' that articulates more specific demands associated with characteristics of educational quality, motives and casual conditions.
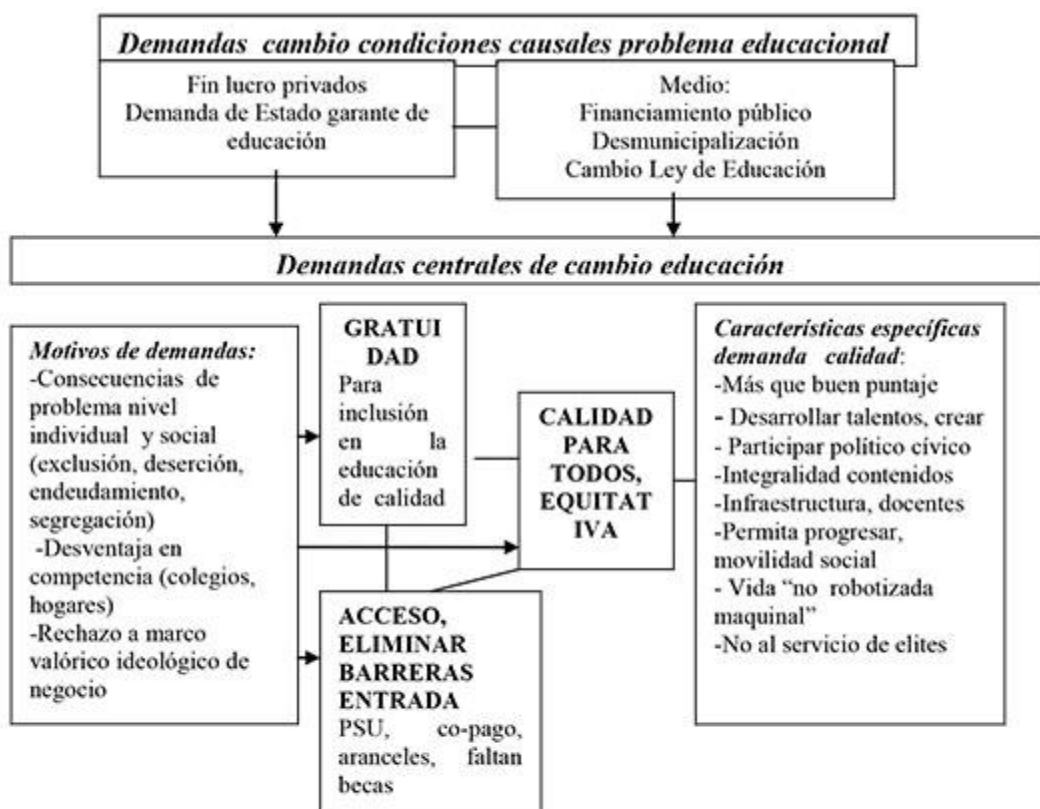

Figura 1. Modelo de demandas interrelacionadas

Fuente: elaboración propia

Demand for quality: specific characteristics

Quality is understood as something more encompassing than the achievement of good performance in university selection tests, which implies the development

of varied abilities, a vocation and personal-social progress, development and citizen construction, good equipment and teachers. , as well as a life not subject to production/money or the elites "[...] because the system tells you that you have (sic) to get a fourth grade, then university and then work, so they kind of raise you more that nothing like a machine to "produce" (E15,72). "Yes po (sic). And in the end they cover themselves with money and produce super-good slaves, who don't wonder so much about where all their work goes" (GFE20, 40). Young people want to be able to develop creative work in the future, to be thinking subjects,

Reasons associated with the lawsuits

Figure 1 summarizes the indicated grievances, to which we must add social discrimination, intra-group homogeneity and disadvantages in this competitive society that "sinks people down" (E18, 122). The model can be illustrated with the following quotes about social and power disadvantages:

And the only thing it does is increase segregation [...], the poorest people go to worse schools, worse universities, they have worse professions [...], the people who have money are the ones who get more education,[. ..] comes to command the government or companies [.] (E2, 54)

Even so, some participants pointed out that paid private education could coexist for those who wish to join a particular educational project [5] .

Demands related to the causal conditions and solution of the educational problem

These included ending the benefit of private groups at the expense of the majority of the population. "The end to profit [...]. Because I think that is more humane, I cannot believe that [they] are profiting from something that is their own [...] to fill the owners' pockets" (E11, 52, 54). This harms educational

quality, generates inequities in educational investment and is exclusive. However, some participants [6] doubted the transparency, honesty and reasonable income of school owners who reinvest profits in it.

Another group of demands pointed to the agent that should be responsible for the solution and guarantor of this common good: the State, as indicated in figure 1. Additionally, this role of the State would promote the training of professionals with a vision of public service. Regarding the form of financing, some discrepancies were recorded between the participants regarding the nationalization of natural resources, tax reform due to distancing from the focus of the problem [7] and the degree or type of state interference in school [8] (proposal for a formula that includes community control).

Organization capacity

There was an important effort to organize activities, such as marches, assemblies, activities to raise funds, dissemination, strikes, voting, in which many young people are involved to varying degrees. The valued leadership profile pointed to left-wing political thought with a personal ideological discourse of credible, consistent people, committed to the ME, who communicate and co-decide with the bases. They also valued the thematic management, experience and audacity when dialoguing with the authorities and empowering citizens. Spokespersons who do not promote internal participation, but only adherence to the massive activities of CONFECH, who are passive, or those with personal political interests were rejected. "I always see that, I have always thought that they have many hidden interests,

Regarding communication channels, the importance of 'word of mouth' in nearby spaces was reported, considering it highly effective, transversal, and reliable. "I think the assemblies are more like talking word of mouth. Deep

down, there comes a point where you collapse from all the documents and news, and internet issues" (E3, 68). Another channel frequently mentioned by those interviewed was the internet. Traditional media were evaluated as effective, but not reliable.

Actions valued and rejected, and power of call

The participants appreciated the actions that are related to the massiveness that the ME has acquired in the country, the innovation and creativity (eg cultural events), as they mean spaces for entertainment, communication and meeting: "Just like all the other activities, like the batucadas , that the kiss, that the cueca, that the wea for education, all that [...] I managed it a thousand percent (...)" (E7, 102), and the organization of discussion and reflection activities (assemblies, debates and forums). The rejected actions were mainly related to violent actions, 'takeovers' and prolonged hunger strikes without a specific purpose (for discrediting the ME and not being effective), but not for the radicalism itself,

Perception of control and effectiveness

The young people interviewed considered that their influence as ME has not been sufficient, they did not believe they had achieved the central demands formulated: "[...] but to be effective the goals need to be specified" (E5, 60). On the other hand, however, they believed they had been influential in positioning the problem in the public space, and they thought that their goals would be achieved in the future. "I still don't think it's effective, that's still missing. I think it has marked a point and there is no return. I think that from now on education is on the table (sic) [...] (E5, 60). They also believed they had influenced the social awakening of the country. Likewise, their motivation for control (even in

the second year) was high and they gave reason for it because they were participating in a historic movement.

Political and social context: Favorable and unfavorable external conditions for the ME

The government and its partisan position was classified as an unfavorable condition for the ME for repressing, manipulating information via the media, emphasizing destruction in the marches, loss of classes, diversion of attention from underlying issues and reluctance to improve education. . The economic conditions were defined as unfavorable, due to the individualistic socioeconomic culture, of competition and individual hoarding, and a social order with a working class as cheap labor, not being of interest in educating them for the spheres of economic power. On the other hand, the economic conditions considered favorable mainly pointed to the fact that Chile has the money to contribute to solving the problem of education: "In this country there is a lot of money, which if it were well distributed, We would all have been studying for free for a while now. And the conditions are there, but politically the intentions are not there, they don't want to do that" (E5, 104). The social conditions were classified by young people as favorable due to the awakening of citizens regarding inequalities (eg in various movements) and the broad support received for it, especially from workers and the middle class.

Discussion

In this section, the strength-weakness of EM empowerment and some implications of the results for empowerment theory, public policies, and EM itself will be discussed.

Strengths in empowerment

First, the critical consciousness component is clearly a strength. Young people question the educational system in its inequality, conception and function, denoting an analytical exercise of the phenomenon of their interest based on their experiences. This points to an essential aspect of empowerment pointed out by Montero (2003) and Zimmerman (2000) to which is added the 'building voice' of the SM (Campbell et al., 2010; Stephens, 2014) and redefining the problem differently. to hegemonic (Lehrner & Allen, 2008). In their sociopolitical analysis, the participants added to the previously stated vision of the role of the State by CONFECH (2011) and Osorio (2003), the demand for the withdrawal of private groups that benefit economically at the expense of students. From the approach of Retamozo (2009), It could be said that the students moved from subordination to antagonism, meaning their educational situation as unjust within the framework of a hegemonic social order of unjust social relations, which recalls the contingency (past military dictatorship) in which it arose and offering resistance against to the same. The demand is oriented towards the other (State) by questioning otherness and fighting for recognition.

The diagnosis of the problem and the students' proposals constitute an important input for educational policies. It is suggested that the institutions carefully analyze their contributions, increase their receptivity from the legitimation of youth demands and interpretation, and build participatively with the movement, a national political agenda of equitable education, where the voice of the ME has a lot of knowledge to transmit. Also, the demands for quality, comprehensive and citizen development suggest designing educational policies aimed at teaching intellectual, philosophical, values, artistic, cultural and civic

subjects more substantively. Likewise, the result points to the challenge of strengthening the teaching career and school infrastructure.

In another aspect of empowerment, the protesters have achieved the empathy of the citizens, interpreting their values and interests, which constitutes, according to Klandermans (2003), a great mobilization of consensus of the population. There is interest from society in the goals of the movement that point to a problem that worries the majority of citizens and has numerous sympathizers. This refers to the supportive social context, constituting a strength of EM empowerment.

Finally, the organization constitutes another strength of the ME. The issue of communication channels that document the importance of virtual networks is interesting (Baeza & Sandoval, 2009; Osorio, 2003; Valderrama, 2013), which is confirmed in this study. However, the importance of direct 'word of mouth' communication is more novel, which refers to the relevance of bonds of trust in small groups of belonging, in which experience is shared, which is credible and reliable. The importance of these relationships within a movement is highlighted by Dixon, Danaher and Lennox Kail (2013), for what they call the coalition fit.

Weaknesses of empowerment, process-results and contextual component

Despite the strengths stated, young people do not believe that their efforts have been sufficiently effective in achieving their goals of changing the educational system. Considering the approach of Baeza and Sandoval (2009), which indicates that young people seek short-term effectiveness, with palpable goals, and of Klandermans (2003), who includes the achievement of demands at reasonable costs in the strength of an MS, This perception of little achievement

can be pointed out as a weakness of the movement. This may have implications for empowerment theory, ME, and public policies discussed below.

The finding supports the conceptual distinction raised by Zimmerman (2000) between the process and the result of empowerment. In this study, this distinction is observed, with an empowering process related to several relevant aspects, but that does not culminate in obtaining the expected transformation goals. This can have important repercussions in relation to the projection of the ME, since its process strengths will most likely avoid an erosion as a movement, despite the lack of achievement of desired goals at reasonable costs. What happens with the ME in the future may shed light on the balance of the process-result aspects in the theory of empowerment.

The problem of effectiveness is also linked to the importance of interaction with the political institutional context. This entails a conceptual implication in terms of highlighting this component of the empowerment of external conditions compared to the classic definitions in the literature of Zimmerman (2000), Montero (2003) and Rappaport (1987). This reinforces the approaches of Rich et al. (1995), Campbell et al. (2010), Stephens (2014), Culley & Hughey (2008) and Sánchez (2012) who highlight this aspect in the understanding of empowerment phenomena. Applying this reflection to the case of the ME, the political context would correspond to what Rich et al. (1995) describe it as a non-empowering institutional context (does not allow the influence of citizens, delays, discredits, offers inconducive instances of dialogue). At the same time, This context is described by Campbell et al. (2010) and Stephens (2014), Culley & Hughey (2008), who point out blockages, attacks, threats, control of resources, agenda and definition of the problem, by power groups. In this regard, from community psychology, the first two authors propose that

movements seriously consider these groups to achieve changes in this scenario of disputes to improve their receptivity (eg achieve contacts with more open politicians, appeal to their morality, construct contestable demands legitimate). For educational policies, this suggests the no small task of creating mechanisms for the distribution of power in the educational field that allow the channeling of demands to be democratically constructed. Culley & Hughey (2008), who point out blockages, attacks, threats, control of resources, agenda and definition of the problem, by power groups. In this regard, from community psychology, the first two authors propose that movements seriously consider these groups to achieve changes in this scenario of disputes to improve their receptivity (eg achieve contacts with more open politicians, appeal to their morality, construct contestable demands legitimate). For educational policies, this suggests the no small task of creating mechanisms for the distribution of power in the educational field that allow the channeling of demands to be democratically constructed. Culley & Hughey (2008), who point out blockages, attacks, threats, control of resources, agenda and definition of the problem, by power groups. In this regard, from community psychology, the first two authors propose that movements seriously consider these groups to achieve changes in this scenario of disputes to improve their receptivity (eg achieve contacts with more open politicians, appeal to their morality, construct contestable demands legitimate). For educational policies, this suggests the no small task of creating mechanisms for the distribution of power in the educational field that allow the channeling of demands to be democratically constructed. by power groups. In this regard, from community psychology, the first two authors propose that movements seriously consider these groups to achieve changes in this scenario of disputes to improve their receptivity (eg achieve contacts with more open

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In practical terms for the ME, the low perception of control can also reflect a difficulty in strategic leadership, distinction of opportunities, management of threats and repertoire of actions that exert effective pressure in different political scenarios, but that do not detract from citizen support and maintain their ability to provide a more immediate incentive.

Footer

[1] It should be noted that Montero (2003) uses the term strengthening to name the phenomenon called empowerment in the Anglo-Saxon world, which shows a conceptual equivalence.

[2] Traditional universities are public or private universities created before 1981 (dictatorial educational reform) and receive partial state financing.

[3] Type of entity that supports the school: municipality, private institution with a state subsidy and without a state contribution.

[4] The abbreviation corresponds to the interview number and the paragraph number in which what was said is stated.

[5] This minority idea is included since it provides a different nuance to the general vision of gratuity in a context of society in which the issue of partial or total gratuity is being discussed.

[6] This minority idea is included because it shows a discrepant nuance and points to a controversial issue in society.

[7] An idea that, while not being the majority, nevertheless shows a different nuance that is interesting for the discussion within the movement.

[8] An idea that, while not being the majority, nevertheless shows a different nuance that is interesting for the discussion within the movement.

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