

## Certification Policy: Reflections Based on the Chilean Case of the INICIA Test for Beginner Teachers

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∞ The main purpose of this paper is to analyse a specific educational policy in a national context: INICIA (In Spanish: Start) in Chile. Enacted in 2008, this policy evaluates beginning teachers at the national level before they start their professional careers in schools. The INICIA has been categorised as a certification policy to measure what teachers know in relation to a certain disciplinary area. At present, INICIA is voluntary for beginning teachers. However, due to policy changes, a passing score on it will soon be necessary to become a nationally qualified teacher in Chile. Through a holistic analysis of the policy, we develop a complex picture of the problem INICIA generates as a requirement for certification. According to our analysis, INICIA has been misunderstood as a policy that provides quantitative and qualitative information about a teacher's performance. In actuality, INICIA merely provides information about a specific moment in a teacher's professional development and cannot be used as a predictor of future performance.

**Keywords:** policy, certification, INICIA test, teacher's performance

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## Politika certificiranja: refleksije, osnovane na čilskem primeru testa INICIA za učitelje začetnike

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≈ Glavni namen prispevka je analiza specifičnih edukacijskih politik v nacionalnem kontekstu INICIA (v španščini: start) v Čilu. Zakon, ki evalvira učitelje začetnike na nacionalni ravni, preden začnejo profesionalno kariero v šolah, je bil sprejet v letu 2008. INICIA je kategoriziran kot politika certificiranja, ki meri, kaj učitelji vedo v povezavi z določeno disciplino oziroma njenim področjem. Trenutno je ta prostovoljen za učitelje začetnike. Glede na spremembe politik bo uspešno opravljen test kmalu potreben za to, da postaneš nacionalno usposobljen učitelj v Čilu. Prek holistične analize politik razvijemo kompleksno sliko problema INICIA, ki ga ta ustvarja kot zahteva za certificiranje. Naša analiza je pokazala, da je bil INICIA narobe razumljen kot politika, ki zagotavlja kvantitativno in kvalitativno informacijo o učiteljevi uspešnosti. Dejansko INICIA samo zagotavlja informacijo o specifičnem momentu v učiteljevem profesionalnem razvoju in ne more biti napovedovalec prihodnje uspešnosti.

**Ključne besede:** politike, certificiranje, test INICIA, učiteljeva uspešnost

## Introduction

In the previous decade, the Chilean national agenda has prioritised the establishment of a high-quality education system (The Ministry of Education of Chile, 2012). This goal requires the creation of a secure mechanism that measures the quality of the system. In so doing, an initial focus on the quality of early teacher training has become a crucial starting point in the overall improvement of the system (Avalos, 2003; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). Thus, starting with a reform in initial teacher training was an intentional and conscious decision. Educational policymakers in Chile made a deliberate, political decision that positioned teachers at the top of the education system as key agents of change. International research and comparative studies from across the world showing strong evidence that teachers have the most important influence on student outcomes aided this conscious decision (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Other perspectives and approaches also show a connection between the quality of the education system and the quality of initial teacher training processes (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). As a result, Chile has selected a coherent path towards improving its education system.

In this scenario, the main purpose of this paper is to analyse a Chilean policy of teaching training processes called INICIA. On a national level, this policy evaluates beginning teachers before they start their professional careers in schools. Starting in 2008, the Chilean government mandated the INICIA as a 'final' test to measure and validate teachers' knowledge before they graduate and become professional educators. INICIA is not an acronym; it is the Spanish word for 'start'. At present, taking the INICIA test is voluntary for beginning teachers. However, due to policy changes, a passing score on the INICIA will soon be necessary to become a nationally qualified teacher in Chile. Using a holistic policy analysis approach, we present a complex evaluation of INICIA. Such an analysis requires the identification of several viewpoints and factors conducive to our holistic understanding of the costs and benefits of INICIA concerning the Chilean education system. Thus, the research question of this study is: What are the future implications of INICIA for the Chilean education system?

The current study is organised by the following structure: the first section provides a general overview of INICIA, placing the test within a larger educational context. This is followed by a discussion of policy trends at the international level, such as accountability process, competition, measurements and comparative competitions. We then analyse the tension INICIA has caused within the Chilean educational system. This breakdown leads to the fourth

section, which analyses what changing from an 'educator state' to an 'evaluator state' implies for Chile. In the last section, we will provide a rhetorical analysis of INICIA by highlighting implicit language within the policy. Finally, we will provide conclusions, future implications and recommendations for implementation of this specific policy.

### **Contextualisation: What is 'INICIA' (Start)?**

Taking into consideration the multifaceted textualisation of ideological positions, educational policies in Chile are being designed in a complex scenario dominated by multiple and simultaneous reforms (Mizala & Romanguera, 1998; Mizala & Torche, 2012). Thus, Chile as a developing country is attempting to improve its rank within the OECD. Because of this goal, Chile tends to assimilate waves of measurements, competition and control as international trends (Razvy & Lingard, 2010). To achieve this goal, the Chilean government has spent the last decade focusing their efforts on improving the education system in different areas. These areas include quality and equity, education access, teachers' professional development, infrastructure, curriculum policies, and training programmes (Brun & Hinostroza, 2014). However, one area dominates the others regarding the enhancement of the Chilean education system as a whole: the teacher training process. The Ministry of Education of Chile (2015) currently places significant focus on initial teacher training programmes. It is within this context that INICIA emerged as policy.

Teacher education in Chile is in the hands of universities and pedagogical institutions. These organisations can be private or public. To become a teacher in Chile, it is necessary to study for at least eight semesters at one of these institutions (Avalos, 2003). In Chile, study centres do not provide teacher certification. Instead, each university creates its own standards, curriculum, and strategic alliances with schools that serve as practice centres for teachers in training. Generally, universities structure initial teacher training programmes into three stages: initial practice, intermediate practice, and final practice (Avalos, 2003). During the initial practice stage, student teachers are expected to understand the school culture, the role of the teacher and the learning routines of the students. Generally, some universities design spaces for classroom interventions, while others focus only on the observation and contextualisation of teaching. In the second stage, most trainee teachers visit an existing class for a period to teach a course with real students. Finally, in the third stage, teachers in training take charge of a course for a whole semester. In addition, they make portfolios about their performance that reflect on the learning outcomes of

their students and project challenges in their future as a professional teacher. In this sense, it is possible to point out that Chile does not employ a singular initial teacher training method. Although all Chilean teacher training programmes utilise an apprenticeship model, each university designs and utilises its own way to train teachers. Consequently, a national model for teacher training is non-existent in Chile. The context of the varied teacher-training organisations allows INICIA to emerge as a way to standardise the training processes and the results of teachers in training.

The first group of teachers evaluated by INICIA in 2008 yielded low outcomes. The results indicated that 60% of novice teachers did not have subject matter competency (Ministry of Education of Chile, 2015). In essence, 6 out of 10 novice teachers did not possess the minimum knowledge required to be a teacher in the Chilean school system. The results of the following years were not much different. Low scores raised questions for researchers, teachers, policymakers, and stakeholders, and caused INICIA to become a controversial method of measuring performance and university quality. As a result, the Ministry of Education of Chile (2012) emphasised that: “[...] INICIA was an evaluation system created to measure the quality of initial teaching processes, changing from a structural policy related to formal preparation of teachers into an evaluation system [...]” (p. 8)

This modification caused controversy because it changed the role of INICIA in educational policy. Currently, it is understood as an evaluation system rather than a formative assessment for teachers. Because of this change, the policy’s purpose is more closely aligned with control and accountability rather than teacher assessment.

In addition, INICIA identifies four sections to evaluate: “[...] disciplinary knowledge; pedagogical knowledge; communication skills and basic ICT (the Information and Communication Technologies) skills [...]” (p. 10). For the Ministry of Education of Chile (2012), the main purpose of INICIA is: “[...] to display publicly vital information about teaching training process to four stakeholders, the universities, evaluated teachers, policy makers, and general community [...]” (p. 10). Today INICIA is voluntary; however, in the coming years (stipulated but not detailed) the test will be compulsory for teachers who want to apply for jobs in the public-school system. The test will not be required for positions at private schools. This policy also includes economic incentives because novice teachers who score in the top 30% on the test will receive higher salaries (Meckes & Bascopé, 2012). In contrast, teachers who obtain unsatisfactory results will have the opportunity to retake INICIA with the support of performance-enhancing programmes provided at universities.

[...] Implications for training institutions: if 30% or more of the graduates in pedagogical careers or programs at the same institution take the exam for the first time in the same year and obtain an unsatisfactory score, said institution shall offer at least a free, semester-long remedial course for those who wish to obtain a higher score [...]. (The ministry of Education in Chile, 2017, p. 13)

INICIA test results are public, which is problematic because it places too much responsibility on the teachers; and not enough on the inadequate preparation provided by universities. Results from the last INICIA test are summarised in four main points:

1. In general, less than a third of the graduates that took the exam answered more than 75% of the questions correctly.
2. The majority of the graduates achieved scores between 50% and 74% correctness.
3. With the exception of some disciplines, performance levels were similar for questions regarding disciplinary knowledge and didactics.
4. In the Abilities in Written Communication Test, the majority of graduates demonstrate a competent level of argumentation. (The Ministry of Education, 2014)

### **Policy trends: Globalisation and Chile**

Today's globalisation affects education policy trends not only on the local and national levels (as in the past) but on an international level as well. As the process of globalisation has integrated and configured a new social context, it is now necessary to locate certain policies within a global system (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). In other words, stakeholders must understand the complex relationships between globalisation, national contexts and policies. Due to the interconnectedness of global communities, policy is no longer merely text. Policy in the global social context represents action that changes the course of the future. As a result, new policies should be constructed to address the difficulties and opportunities within a globalised world (Ball, 1998; Marginson, 1999; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Tikly, 2001). International and national contexts implicate the need to understand policies from a socio-cultural perspective.

Levin (2010) pointed out that the challenge of educational improvement is shared throughout the world. For this reason, national governments have a vested interest in functioning within an interconnected world, which by extension represents a new era of educational reform for countries across the globe.

Now more than ever, it is vital that educational systems create opportunities for stakeholders to connect with the most remote areas around the world. Thus, educational policymakers from many different nations now share the same challenge of creating and integrating national policies that plant the seeds of the worldwide future of education. Chile's national government is no exception to this burgeoning challenge.

National governments, policymakers, and educational stakeholders are building more complex, dynamic, and flexible policies that are designed to put their nations ahead in the globalised world. Competition, measurement, comparison, indicators, reforms, results, and international tests significantly regulate the decision-making processes of national governments. These factors, the importance of which is augmented by globalisation, have brought structural adjustment to educational reforms as evaluation and comparison continue to play an essential role in addressing educational challenges (Carnoy, 1999). Researchers and practitioners are pushed to meet these challenges with the creation of innovative routes to successful, internationally validated and recognised school systems. As a result, sustained evidence regarding successful teaching-learning processes is necessary when future political situations require a measurement of teachers' performance.

According to Ball (2012), the relationships between government, education, and economy are complex, unpredictable, and tend to overlap in a globalised world. These dimensions are interrelated. Ball (1998) described five main key points to illustrate how this interrelationship occurs within a new orthodoxy called globalisation:

- (1) Improving national economics by tightening the connection between schooling, employment, productivity and trade;
- (2) Enhancing student outcomes in employment-related skills and competencies;
- (3) Attaining more direct control over curriculum content and assessment;
- (4) Reducing the costs to government of education;
- (5) Increasing community input to education by more direct involvement in school decision making and pressure of market choice. (p. 122)

As mentioned, Chile is no exception to this shift in policy-making strategies. In Chile and in other education systems around the world, budgetary investment is being made in order to compete internationally. Recent neo-liberal policies make common the use of economic growth as an indicator of education quality, which creates a quantified global ranking system. Ranking educational quality according to the economy causes international competition and an unceasing comparison between different realities. As a result, supranational

companies within the education field have become the point of reference for international comparison and measurement. Two examples include the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (Klenowski, 2012). In the Chilean context, INICIA follows the directions of these organisations because they frame individual test outcomes as comparative results. Results from the INICIA test rank an individual teacher's achievement and compares it with others at a national level. This presents a potential risk because the test has more to do with accountability and controlled processes rather than the production of a formative assessment that enhances changes and improvements.

These principles demonstrate that globalisation has brought more interdependence between international actors and within national governments, especially in the economic, educational, and policy-making spheres. Although Chile created INICIA as a valid test to measure teacher preparation, its purpose is shifting in a globalised setting. What results from INICIA will soon indicate exemplifies how policies in Chile are now formulated based on international trends within a globalisation process.

## Methodology

Analysing educational policies is a complex process. They are usually understood as concepts, phrases, and serious statements (Henry, 1999). However, policies are fundamentally more complex than that as they are ideological, political facts with their own power and influence (Ball, 1998; Marshall, 2000; Ozga, 2000). Because of the complex reality of policy, this paper approaches policy analysis from a holistic point of view to highlight the relevance of discourse (Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 1992). The holistic analysis approach moves away from the traditional view of policy as a final product. This theoretical shift is essential because it examines the new terms of implementation and practice for educational policies in a globalised context. Holistically analysing the trajectory of certain policy allows us to understand factors, rhythms, and revisions within the context in which they are enacted. Fundamentally, we seek to understand what future implications INICIA presents to the Chilean education system.

Ball (1993) expressed that the concepts of discourse and processes are relevant to the policy analysis because they involve a multifaceted textualisation of ideological positions within their respective documents. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, we analysed the textualisation of INICIA in terms of statements, quotes, and extracts. This implicates an analysis of the text in



different fragments. Thus, it was implemented an emergent coding. This means that two researchers independently identified key concepts in the document. If the researcher disagreed on the importance of a certain code, that code was removed. Once the policy text was coded, some quotes were selected to illustrate the main points of the discussion.

Jager and Maier's (2009) approach was selected as the methodology to generate discourse analysis of the INICIA policy. This approach undertakes discourse analysis through context, the surface of the text, rhetorical meanings, content, ideological statements, and discourse position of the text at different analytical stages (p. 55). In this study, we focus on the content and ideological statements of the INICIA textualisation. Consequently, analytical emphasis will be placed on textual and contextual articulations and the centrality of the content (discourse construction). Ball's (1993) concept of policy is profoundly important as this paper analyses a specific policy as a whole. The objective is not to simply critique INICIA, but rather to highlight the essential tensions between INICIA and its stakeholders by analysing textualisation and statements included in the policy.

### **Chile's Educational System and INICIA: Tension through change**

INICIA has highlighted previously hidden tensions, complexities, and dilemmas. One such tension is between the teachers' union and the ministry of education. Teachers have questioned the ability of INICIA to measure the quality of teaching performance even though it solely focuses on disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and communication, and ICT skills. Teachers argue that policy-makers focus too much on implementing a certification process, while their efforts should be geared towards improving the quality of initial teacher training provided by universities (Goméz, 2013).

Teachers claim that the government attempts to judge teachers rather than improving the programmes that train them. This is partially true. Teaching is a process that involves time, training, and experience and INICIA only provides cognitive information collected from a specific moment in time. However, there is always resistance to change. In contrast, one senator critiqued the position of the teacher's union:

It is necessary to contribute to the construction of better education and not defend mediocre results...presenting results from a diagnostic is not a measurement against teachers, but rather the beginning of a process that would allow the quality of the country's education to improve. (Senator Lobos, 2012, p. 1)

As such, the reaction to the policy from teachers and officials is a general rejection of new requirements. This resistance is part of a natural process of change. Rather than a political tipping point, INICIA can also be considered a hopeful starting point that invites the possibility of other policy reform in Chile. If one considers INICIA as a starting point, it is fundamental to understand that, from a theoretical perspective, INICIA exists to ensure teachers are competent in subject matter. Moreover, INICIA assumes that knowledge is indispensable to teaching. This assumption is essential, but also too simplistic when considering teacher's professional development in broader terms. Instead, policymakers should ask more questions surrounding teacher pedagogy. If the real desire of official stakeholders is to improve the educational situation in Chile, seeking alternatives in pedagogy should be a central focus. For instance, a teacher's performance can be evaluated through long-term classroom observation, and subject matter competency can be measured by a test. In this hypothetical context, the questions become: In which area do teachers want to be evaluated? How can the government measure the quality of teacher training programmes? Is it possible to determine the quality of a teacher's performance?

INICIA emerged as a *certification policy* to measure what teachers know in relation to a certain discipline. As such, it has also been misunderstood as a policy that provides quantitative and qualitative information about a teacher's performance in the classroom. For the Ministry of Education (2012): '[...] INICIA represents a policy designed to guarantee the students quality outcomes as well as representing a guarantee for children in the future [...]'. In reality, INICIA solely provides information about a particular moment in teachers' professional development, and it is not an automatic predictor of performance. This is especially true because there is no official data. For example, a teacher who earns a high score on the INICIA will not necessarily perform well in his or her classroom (Goméz, 2013). Unfortunately, universities have not been able to assess teachers' basic knowledge and skills over the course of their professional careers. Furthermore, if universities cannot assess these skills in the initial teacher training, who can? It seems that The Ministry of Education as a part of the Chilean government is considered a reliable body to evaluate the professional skills of Chilean teachers. What this reveals is that INICIA, administered at Chilean Universities and pedagogical institutions under the control of The Ministry of Education, is largely an accountability policy.

As mentioned, INICIA has been communicated as a policy that provides information on teachers' competency (Ministry of Education, 2015). However, the incorrect use of INICIA as a predictor of a teacher's future performance challenges its purpose. The validity of INICIA is called into question because

it was designed to measure accumulated knowledge during five years of preparation but instead is used as an instrument to predict a teacher's future performance in the classroom. This misconception has raised much attention on social-media, singling out novice teachers as the main problem that hinders the improvement of Chilean education. However, novice teachers as individuals are not the main problem. Instead, the real problems within the Chilean education system are rooted in the ineffective educational policies used to evaluate the learning process in universities and pedagogical institutions. Since universities and pedagogical institutions are largely responsible for providing an environment that generates effective teachers, confronting the misconception and misuse of INICIA is essential to solving the more salient issues of the education system as a whole.

Policies are often either viewed as an ensemble or individual policies working in tandem with others. These policies can implicitly and explicitly generate a new comprehension of the world (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). For this reason, textualised rhetoric becomes an essential component within policies, as words, phrases, and specific concepts tend to create different socio-political frameworks. In this specific case, the language used in INICIA clearly expresses that it is a policy that provides information on teachers' performance. However, the test itself actually provides information on subject matter competency. With this dissonance in mind, it is important to note that knowledge and performance are not the same thing. However, the rhetoric used in this policy presents knowledge and performance as synonymous. Thus, to holistically analyse INICIA it is important to make a distinction between knowledge and performance within the language of the written policy.

### **Changing from an 'educator-state' to an 'evaluator-state'**

How people react to change is influenced by how it is communicated. When policy changes are introduced, how these changes are communicated plays an essential role in the entire process of implementation (Clarke, 2013; Fullan, 2007; Goleman, 1998). As mentioned, although INICIA was intended to measure subject matter competency, the test itself was misunderstood as a way to measure teacher performance. This misunderstanding created tensions between beginner teachers and The Ministry of Education, and thus a general atmosphere of resistance.

This outcome is expected, as change often generates resistance. Fullan, (2007), Goleman (1998), and Clarke (2013) stated that the different stages of the grief process are: internalisation, reflection, and acceptance of the change.

Using the stages of grief as a framework, we see that accepting changes necessitates time and energy in order to consider future outcomes. The changes brought about by INICIA and subsequent tension between teachers and the policymakers warranted additional time and effort to settle. The Ministry of Education held a crucial position in this process, because as a stakeholder it provided qualitative information that encouraged change. As a result, policymakers needed to clarify the significance of INICIA in order to convince teachers that this policy change is necessary. Clarification would aid in teachers' understanding of INICIA as an accountability policy intended to enhance the whole education system, as well as to provide a macro-political approach to education reform.

In Chile, INICIA represents both an educational policy change and a nationwide shift towards educational accountability. Azevedo (2008) explained that evaluation and certification have profoundly impacted educational policies worldwide. Education systems place a heavy emphasis on learning goals and evaluating people based on what they know. Unique quantitative measurements are being introduced to the education field, and INICIA is a part of this trend (Mercer, Barker, & Bird, 2010). According to Azevedo (2008), the focus on quantitative measurement represents a change in perspective on education reform. He stated that a government's concern with certification processes (as opposed to evaluation processes) signifies a transition from an 'educator state' to a 'evaluator state.' This transition is a result of globalisation, a phenomenon that warrants the use of quantitative data to compete on national and international levels. When the government becomes an evaluator, it is crucial to understand that evaluation is a process, one that is cyclical and permanent (Azevedo, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003). This idea has not been internalised and enacted within INICIA—or more importantly, within the Chilean education system as a whole.

Changing from an 'educator state' to an 'evaluator state' is not necessarily negative. It does signify a change in rhetorical terms because the language of the policy changes the role of the Ministry of Education. For instance, the Ministry of Education acts as an inspector and evaluator of the certification process. INICIA has been explained as a tool to concretely measure a teacher's preparedness at the conclusion of their training. However, this categorisation is fallacious because evaluation is a continuous process. Ideally, INICIA would be placed within both a process of evaluation and initial teacher training practices.

## A complex question: Start or End?

The Ministry of Education has implemented INICIA as the final step in formal teacher preparation. The policy states: “The Chilean Government is applying a “final” test at the end of their degree in universities called “INICIA” (The Ministry of Education of Chile, 2012). Making it a final step is potentially dangerous because it conceptualises INICIA as a linear process, with different stages and steps to achieve specific goals. It is risky to conceptualise INICIA as a linear policy because there are multiple factors involved when policy changes are introduced. To create reform within the education system, the complexity of policy changes and various actors, factors, variables, and unforeseen situations need to be recognised. Because teaching and learning are processes themselves, it is crucial to understand that the implementation of education policy should be gradual and continuous. Ball (2012) and Braun et al. (2011) stated that policy implementation should be understood as an interpretable process due to the diverse and simultaneous structural changes that are endorsed rather than implemented. Larrive (2000) also explained that teachers need to be reflective in order to internalise different perspectives, reforms, and the complexities of teaching. This reflective process is always a part of the cyclical learning process (Dewey, 1933). Larrive (2000) further stated that teachers are involved in a perpetual cycle of problem-solving at a multidimensional level. These essential processes of reflection and cyclical learning are not assessed by INICIA. Therefore, if INICIA hopes to embody a structural change, it should be designed as a policy that views learning as a process.

Tone, voice, and discourse are also relevant components of policy-making. If we consider teaching and policy-making as cyclical processes, we see that INICIA is neither the beginning nor end of teacher training. It is simply a part of the process. Unfortunately, because INICIA has already been implemented as a pathway to employment, conceptualising INICIA as a part of a learning cycle is complex.

We would like to point out a linguistic paradox within the policy. INICIA means ‘start,’ however, the test itself represents an ‘end’ to initial teacher training. This is not merely a play on words. This linguistic paradox is key because it symbolises an ideological framework that explains the implications of the teaching process. Since teachers are involved in a continuous and complex process (Darling-Hammond, 2003), it is necessary to create a clear conceptualisation of what INICIA implies in theoretical and practical terms. Morais et al. (2005) pointed out that a theoretical basis for teacher training should also align with principles of pedagogical discourse. Therefore, stakeholders in teacher

professional development should recognise the tones, voices and discourses that generate the realities and practical dimensions.

In 2005, the OECD emphasised the importance of formative assessment within the teaching-learning process. To best support this approach, it is crucial that policy-makers understand the relevance of formative assessment in terms of teachers' professional development. In the Chilean context, INICIA should be considered a formative assessment as it helps identify the critical issues within initial teacher training before punishing or rewarding teachers. In other words, one should question what the universities and pedagogical institutions are doing to create effective initial teacher training programmes. Scores on INICIA can help provide an understanding of initial teacher training; however, the Chilean government should collect this information in the early stages of development in order to assess initial teacher preparation and to improve the process as a whole. To mitigate possible negative effects on a teacher's professional learning, the use of formative assessments is necessary to create reform at the teacher education level.

## **Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations**

Clearly, INICIA serves as a foundational starting point to analyse the knowledge of Chilean teachers. This information is key as INICIA provides relevant data about what beginner teachers know within their respective discipline. These types of data are also indispensable for policymakers that seek to reform the whole system. It is essential to recognise the relevance of data within the teaching and learning processes at the macro- and micro-levels. Nevertheless, regardless of the useful data INICIA provides, using this assessment as a pathway to educational reform is inadequate.

INICIA is a policy designed to validate and evaluate a teacher's knowledge. However, in practice, it is being used to provide information about teacher performance. This utilisation of INICIA is erroneous, because it solely provides information within a specific moment and is not necessarily a projection of future performance. We believe that INICIA is overly simplistic and narrow and argue that INICIA is not a useful instrument to measure the quality of novice teachers in Chile. Knowledge is a relevant part of teaching performance; however, there are many other factors that also affect it. For example, school conditions, infrastructure, emotional intelligence, goals, motivation, and training, amongst other factors also affect how teachers are able to teach and students to learn. Moreover, teachers demonstrate more than just subject matter competency when they teach, which INICIA fails to take into consideration as part of its assessment.

We also critique INICIA and its position in the global context. To do this, we recognise accountability, external pressures, and control as common denominators of international trends in educational policy. The fact that INICIA is a policy requirement for teacher certification and contributes to the overall accountability of beginner teachers links the policy with the influence of the globalised world. Knowing this, INICIA can be considered a reactive policy because it symbolises a tipping point within the Chilean educational framework within a globalised context. Based on these linkages, INICIA can also be considered a positive force because it has highlighted tensions, complexities, and dilemmas that are necessary for ongoing research, interpretation, and reflection on education (specifically initial teacher training). It is also a starting point in designing new policies surrounding teacher training. INICIA represents the first steps of education reform from which other policies could emerge in a globalised world.

We also critique INICIA in the Chilean bureaucratic context. Although Chilean universities and pedagogical institutions are important internal agents of teacher training, the ministry of education (an external agent) validates the certification process. The external evaluation demonstrates that universities and pedagogical institutions are not considered reliable enough to certify their own teachers. Unfortunately, INICIA is the external measure used to validate teachers as professionals and is done so without considering the varied existing internal processes already employed by universities and pedagogical institutions.

However, the real problem has little to do with the INICIA test itself. The salient issues surrounding INICIA emerge from the policy's rhetoric and consequent misconceptions that falsely posit it as an accurate predictor of teacher performance. Furthermore, INICIA was introduced as a policy to measure and predict *how* teachers teach. To avoid this miscommunication, stakeholders should realise the implicit and explicit language that leads to the misinterpretation of the policy. In the case of INICIA, we recommend that policymakers analyse, distinguish, clarify, and define key concepts such as policy, knowledge, and teacher performance.

Novice teachers in Chile need more support in order to adapt to a new context. Since the quality of an individual teacher cannot be measured by a single assessment, other modes of support should be provided if teacher performance is to be judged by concrete standards. We propose that INICIA should be implemented with complementary support programmes geared towards helping teachers in training achieve optimal outcomes.

INICIA has brought important issues to the forefront of the Chilean national agenda. Now, the right questions about how to improve teacher quality

are finally being asked. However, INICIA is a temporary answer to these larger questions: Why do we need to certify teachers? Why can the government not rely on universities and pedagogical institutions to assess teacher knowledge? How do we involve universities and pedagogical institutions in the process of teacher assessment? How do we improve the selection process and standards for recruiting future teachers? These are the challenges that the Chilean education system needs to address as a whole.

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