



# LEARNING WHAT MATTERS IN CHILE

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR A BREADTH OF SKILLS.

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# ACRONYMS

<b>ACE</b>	Education Quality Agency (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación)
<b>CNED</b>	National Education Council (Consejo Nacional de Educación)
<b>DEP</b>	Public Education Directorate (Dirección de Educación Pública)
<b>MINEDUC</b>	Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación)
<b>NEST</b>	Network for Education Systems Transformation
<b>SIMCE</b>	System for Measuring the Quality of Education (Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación)
<b>SLEP</b>	Local Public Education Service (Servicio Local de Educación Pública)
<b>UATP</b>	Technical-Pedagogical Support Unit (Unidad de Apoyo Técnico Pedagógico)
<b>UCE</b>	Curriculum and Assessment Unit (Unidad de Currículum y Evaluación)

# ABOUT REIMAGINA

Fundación Reimagina (Reimagina) is a civil society organization advancing educational innovation in Latin America. By connecting schools, communities, governments, and organizations, Reimagina works to transform teaching practices, strengthen learning outcomes, and prepare new generations to navigate 21st-century challenges. Reimagina fosters new ways of learning, mobilizes networks to enable systemic change, and generates knowledge to influence public policy and support other organizations. It was founded to align efforts, connect diverse actors, and accelerate an education system that meaningfully transforms both classrooms and learning.

As an organization actively engaged in educational innovation, public education improvement, and policy

dialogue in Chile, Reimagina recognizes that its position within the Chilean education landscape may shape how educational priorities, institutional relationships, and power dynamics are interpreted in this study. Given Reimagina's ongoing collaboration with schools, civil society organizations, and public education actors, the research team sought to maintain a reflective and transparent stance regarding how these institutional relationships and experiences could influence both the framing of the research and the interpretation of findings related to the breadth of skills in Chile.

Reimagina is a member of the Network for Education Systems Transformation (NEST) and partnered with the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution as part of the NEST Chile study.



# ABOUT THIS SERIES<sup>1</sup>

How well are education systems creating opportunities for children and young people to learn what matters?

Education systems worldwide face mounting pressure to prepare children and young people not just for academic success, but for meaningful participation in an increasingly complex world (UNESCO 2023). Growing evidence suggests that to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, children and young people need a broad set of skills, including but not limited to literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, socioemotional learning, and civic engagement (Dweck, Walton, and Cohen 2014; Martinez 2022; Radó 2020).

The Network for Education Systems Transformation (NEST), a global impact network<sup>2</sup> co-led by the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution and 10 civil society organizations across Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and South Asia, seeks to understand how education systems can transform

to prioritize what we call “breadth of skills” –an integrated set of academic, socioemotional, and transversal competencies that enable all children and young people to thrive (Care, Anderson, and Kim 2016; UNESCO n.d.).

Central to our work is a shared exploratory question: How well are education systems creating opportunities for children and young people to learn what matters? This question acknowledges that, while concepts like “education systems,” “opportunities,” and “what matters” may differ across contexts, what binds the network is our collective commitment to understanding how education systems can transform to prioritize the development of a breadth of skills in all children and young people. Rather than prescribing universal definitions, NEST embraces locally grounded interpretations that honor the historical, cultural, political, and socioeconomic realities of each setting.

<sup>1</sup> The introductory section includes common language for the sections “About this Series,” “Framing Our Inquiry,” and “About this Report” across all the reports in the NEST “Learning What Matters” series. The original source is “Learning what matters in Kenya” (Gikandi et al. 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Impact networks are complex living systems, made of interacting people, organizations, and ecosystems. In contrast to traditional organizations with linear processes and standard operating procedures, networks are dynamic, interconnected, and variable. For details about the model of impact networks, see Ehrlichman (2021).

# FRAMING OUR INQUIRY: THE 4 PS AND 3 Cs AS WORKING FRAMEWORKS

Informed by prior research from CUE at the Brookings Institution, NEST draws on two interconnected frameworks that guide our exploration of education systems transformation toward skills development. The 4P framework identifies four high-level domains of change in systems transformation: purpose, pedagogy, positioning, and power (Sengeh and Winthrop 2022; Winthrop, Morris, and Qargha 2023). The 3C framework proposes three catalytic conditions believed to enable and sustain the transformation process: commitment, capacity, and cohesion (CUE 2022; Olateju et al. forthcoming).

We approach these frameworks not as prescriptive models, but as working theories that require interrogation, adaptation, and potential expansion based on observations in diverse local contexts. Our methodology is deliberately abductive, that is, moving systematically between observation and theoretical inference while remaining open to alternative explanations and framework modifications. This approach reflects NEST's commitment to collaborative inquiry that is iterative, values local knowledge and expertise, and contributes to a broader understanding of education systems transformation. We recognize that meaningful change cannot be externally imposed but must emerge from genuine engagement with local realities, assets, and constraints.



# ABOUT THIS REPORT

The following country-level findings represent an early stage of inquiry in NEST's ongoing exploration of education systems transformation for skills development. Exploratory in nature, the insights emerging from Chile's unique context are an initial step toward a shared understanding of its education landscape. While findings of this research may not be directly transferable to other settings, we believe that the patterns, tensions, and possibilities identified in this report can inform broader conversations about how education

systems worldwide might better support all children and young people in developing the skills they need to thrive. As NEST continues its collaborative work across 10 countries, subsequent studies strive to deepen these insights and further refine our understanding of what enables sustainable education systems transformation toward a breadth of skills. As such, the following report should not be read as a final statement, but as part of an ongoing, iterative process of learning and discovery that contributes to an emerging field.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chile's ongoing curriculum reforms reflect a broader global shift toward equipping students with broad or transversal skills—including critical thinking, collaboration, and socioemotional learning—that are essential for navigating complex social and economic realities. In Chile, these priorities are embedded in the Bases Curriculares, the national curriculum that defines learning objectives across subjects and grade levels and formally incorporates broad competencies as core goals. However, translating curricular commitments into consistent classroom practice remains a persistent challenge, impacted by the country's profound socioeconomic and territorial inequalities, a misaligned accountability system, and an incomplete governance transition.

This report describes a study that examined how Chile's education system is—and is not—creating conditions for broad skills development, drawing on evidence from five public schools across the country's macro-zones. The study employed a sequential, qualitative research design structured in three phases: 1) national-level policy interviews with key actors across the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación, MINEDUC), the Education Quality Agency (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, ACE), the Public Education Directorate (Dirección de Educación Pública, DEP), and civil society organizations; 2) a content analysis of the current Bases Curriculares and the proposed Grades one through 10 update, coding learning objectives against four broad skills

dimensions; and 3) in-depth school case studies in five public schools, one per macro-zone, each involving interviews with the principal and Technical-Pedagogical Support Unit (Unidad de Apoyo Técnico Pedagógico, UATP) coordinator as well as focus groups with teachers and students. The analysis was structured through the 3C framework, developed by the Center for Universal Education (CUE), which assesses the degree to which the system supports and prioritizes the development of broad skills (commitment), provides the tools and support needed for skills development (capacity), and maintains alignment across curriculum, assessment, teacher professional development, and governance (cohesion).

Findings revealed four interconnected themes: a lack of shared understanding around broad skills development, the burden and mismatch of the current curriculum and assessment structures, individual teacher initiatives that lack structural, system-wide support, and delayed implementation of administrative and structural supports. While individual commitment to broad skills development was genuine and present across actors and zones, it has not been institutionalized. Capacity exists in the form of teacher knowledge, locally generated innovation, and community-rooted practice, but is often self-generated and unevenly distributed, concentrated where teachers have independently sought training rather than where the system has intentionally built the conditions for transformation. The study also revealed that cohesion

**While individual commitment to broad skills development was genuine and present across actors and zones, it has not been institutionalized.**

is the most fundamental missing condition for the integration of broad skills development in Chilean schools. Currently, there is no coherent framework linking curriculum expectations from the Bases Curriculares with teacher preparation, school support systems, and assessment practices. The result is fragmented implementation, with teachers left to interpret and operationalize the broad skills mandate individually, producing inconsistent opportunities for students across the system.

Based on the analysis of the findings using the 3C framework, the report's four recommendations include aligning national assessments with the curriculum's stated goals for broad skills development, building sustained and practice-oriented professional development systems for teachers, establishing a coherent implementation framework for broad competencies, and reorienting the UATP's activities to provide greater pedagogical support across the system.

## CONTEXT

Chile's education system operates within a context of profound socioeconomic and territorial inequality, where the top 1% of the population is estimated to hold close to half of the total national wealth (World Inequality Lab 2022). Significant inequalities shape access to quality services, including education, across regions and population groups (World Bank 2021). Geographic conditions further influence educational opportunities. Schools in northern border regions, southern rural areas, and remote territories such as Patagonia face structural constraints related to teacher availability and access to institutional support (MINEDUC 2025). These disparities form the structural backdrop against which the implementation of national curriculum reforms has occurred.

Chile's Bases Curriculares, the national curriculum, is the primary policy instrument through which the state has sought to orient public education

toward the development of broad skills. Since 1996, the Bases Curriculares has formally incorporated transversal, or broad skills, as cross-cutting goals organized around four dimensions drawn from the Four-Dimensional Education framework: ways of thinking, ways of working, tools for working, and ways of living in the world (Fadel et al. 2016; MINEDUC 2011). These competencies are defined as integral elements of the curriculum, highlighting what Chilean students should learn across all subjects and grade levels. The most recent approved revision in 2019 was applied to grades 11 and 12 and introduced a strengthened 21st-century skills framework under Decree 193, including new elective pathways designed to foster students' personal and social development alongside academic content (MINEDUC 2019).

However, policy implementation is difficult within Chile's complex education governance system.

Significant inequalities shape access to quality services, including education, across regions and population groups.

Responsibilities for curriculum design, assessment, school support, and oversight are distributed across multiple actors, including the MINEDUC, the Curriculum and Assessment Unit (Unidad de Currículo y Evaluación, UCE), the ACE, and the Superintendence of Education (Carrasco, Contreras, and Varas 2020). While each institution plays a distinct role, coordination across them remains limited. Schools therefore receive multiple, and at times conflicting, policy signals, particularly around curriculum implementation and performance expectations, resulting in confusion and policy fatigue among teachers and administrators (Astudillo and Imbarack 2013).

Since 2017, Chile has been undertaking a structural reform of public-school

governance, gradually replacing 345 municipal education departments with 70 autonomous SLEPs—specialized state agencies designed to professionalize local governance and embed dedicated pedagogical support in each territory through UATPs (Anderson, Uribe, and Valenzuela 2023). The model was conceived precisely to address longstanding coordination failures that have limited curriculum implementation. UATPs were intended to provide schools with consistent, technically qualified instructional support. However, as of 2026, only 36 of the 70 SLEPs were operational, and the transition process itself has absorbed much of the administrative capacity that UATPs were meant to dedicate to pedagogical support (Dirección de Educación Pública 2026).<sup>3</sup>

**TABLE 1: CHILE'S EDUCATION GOVERNANCE SYSTEM**

LEVEL	BODY	MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>National</b>	Ministry of Education (MINEDUC)	Develops national education policy; sets curriculum and learning standards; allocates and manages education funding
<b>National</b>	Directorate of Public Education (DEP)	Coordinates and manages Chile's public education system; oversees SLEPs; supports implementation of public education reforms
<b>Regional</b>	Regional Ministerial Secretariats of Education (SEREMI) <sup>4</sup>	Represent MINEDUC in each region; implement national education policies regionally
<b>Local</b>	Local Public Education Services (SLEPs)	Administer public schools transferred from municipalities under Chile's "de-municipalization" reform; manage school operations, staffing, budgeting, and support at the local level.

Source: Modified from Educators Perspective 2025

<sup>3</sup> In 2025 and 2026, 22 SLEPS have been created but won't be operationalized until 2027 and 2028 (Ex-Ante 2026).

<sup>4</sup> There is a SEREMI in each of Chile's 16 regions (Educators Perspective 2025).

The degree to which the new administration will sustain political commitment to the curriculum reform and the SLEP transition remains uncertain.

Chile's accountability architecture deepens this implementation gap. The System for Measuring the Quality of Education (Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación, SIMCE) shapes institutional reputation, public rankings, and resource allocation decisions, yet measures only a narrow band of academic skills (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación n.d.).<sup>5</sup> This creates a structural contradiction where the curriculum mandates breadth, while the evaluation framework rewards narrowness, generating powerful incentives to deprioritize exactly what the Bases Curriculares most explicitly calls for. This dynamic is well-documented in the Chilean context and most acute in highly vulnerable schools (Falabella and De la Vega 2016).

Chile's most substantive policy response to this long-standing implementation gap was a proposed update to the Bases Curriculares across all grade levels—from grade one through grade 10—submitted by MINEDUC to the National Education Council (Consejo Nacional de Educación, CNED) in December 2024. This was the product of a national pedagogical congress in 2023 and a public consultation involving over 119,000 participants, including 39% of the country's teachers (MINEDUC 2024). The proposed update seeks to reduce curricular overload, strengthen the broad competencies framework, integrate socioemotional learning as a formal objective, and extend digital citizenship across grade levels. As of late 2025, the update remained under CNED evaluation, with implementation projected for 2027 for grades one through three, 2028 for grades four

through six, and 2029 for grades seven through 10 (CEPPE UC 2025).<sup>6</sup>

This implementation challenge is further complicated by the political context in which the curriculum update is unfolding. The proposed revision was submitted to CNED in the final weeks of the outgoing progressive administration, which had placed education transformation at the center of its agenda. Following the December 2025 presidential election, a new government assumed office in March 2026—one whose stated priorities center on public security, immigration control, and fiscal order, and whose political orientation represents a significant shift from its predecessor (LLYC 2025). The degree to which the new administration will sustain political commitment to the curriculum reform and the SLEP transition remains uncertain.

The implementation challenges documented in this report—curriculum overload, accountability misalignment, and governance fragmentation—are not unique to Chile. Comparable patterns have been documented across Latin America and the Caribbean, where curriculum reforms have consistently struggled to move beyond formal policy commitments and produce sustained changes in classroom practice, particularly in contexts marked by high inequality and decentralized governance (Inter-American Development Bank 2019; OECD 2018). Chile's experience thus contributes to a growing regional body of evidence on the conditions required for education systems transformation to reach the classroom level.

5 The SIMCE is a national standardized evaluation taken by students in Chile. Its objective is to measure the achievement of the contents and skills of the school curriculum in different subjects, providing key information about the academic performance of the educational system (ACE n.d.).

6 Following the change in government, the proposed curriculum update has not yet been publicly addressed by the new educational authorities.

# METHODOLOGY

## Research questions

This study is anchored in the overarching research question co-created across the NEST network: How well are education systems creating opportunities for children and young people to learn what matters?

In Chile, the research explored a country-specific question: What are the gaps between Chilean public policy mandates and classroom realities in the development of a breadth of skills, and what conditions are necessary to bridge those gaps?

Together, these questions guide the study across two levels of inquiry: (1) the system level—examining what the Bases Curriculares requires, how national actors interpret and frame that mandate, and what they identify as the main barriers to implementation; and (2) the school level—exploring how teachers, school leaders, and students experience and enact (or do not enact) the broad skills mandate in everyday practice.

## Analytical framework

This study is guided by the 3C framework, developed by CUE at Brookings, which conceptualizes education systems transformation through three interrelated catalytic conditions: commitment, capacity, and cohesion. As applied in this study, commitment refers to how actors at different levels of the system

understand, value, and prioritize broad competencies; capacity refers to the extent to which they have access to the knowledge, tools, and institutional support required for implementation; and cohesion refers to the degree of alignment across policies, institutions, and actors. The 3C framework is applied as an analytical lens rather than a predetermined conclusion. In this way, the study remained open to evidence that complicated, challenged, or extended its categories, and findings were derived from the data rather than fitted to the framework.

The 3C framework structured the analysis in two main ways. First, it informed the coding and interpretation of qualitative data across all phases of the research, including policy interviews, curriculum analysis, and school-level fieldwork. Second, it provided a common lens for synthesizing findings thematically, enabling a systematic assessment of how commitment, capacity, and cohesion shape the development of broad skills across the system. These dimensions also organize the presentation of the findings and recommendations, ensuring coherence between the analytical framework, evidence, and cross-cutting analysis. While both the 3C and 4P frameworks inform NEST's broader research agenda, this report primarily applies the 3C framework, and the 4P framework serves as a wider conceptual context for the "Learning what matters" series.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that the analytical frameworks were developed by Brookings and utilized by NEST for this research with the understanding that these are working theories and frameworks to interrogate, examine, and research education systems transformation. The authors recognize that these frameworks require adaptation and flexibility based on observations in diverse local contexts.

# Research design

This study employed a sequential, qualitative research design structured in three phases, each addressing a distinct dimension of the research question.

## PHASE 1: NATIONAL-LEVEL POLICY INTERVIEWS.

Sampling began with key informants identified by Reimagina and expanded through referrals. To mitigate the risk of a homogeneous sample, participants were intentionally included across institutional types, including government, civil society, and academia. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants at the national level that were purposefully selected based on their role and expertise within the broader education ecosystem.<sup>8</sup> Participants included educational authorities from the Education Quality Agency (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, ACE), the DEP, the UCE, the Educational Innovation Center, the 21st Century Learning Unit (the latter three within MINEDUC), as well as researchers from the Center for Studies in Educational Policies and Practices and the civil society organizations Tu Clase Tu País and Elige Educar. The purpose of this phase was to map the policy mandate for broad skills development and to understand how national actors define, frame, and communicate the Bases Curriculares' broad competencies agenda, and what they perceive as the main implementation barriers.

In-depth case studies were conducted in five public schools, one per macro-zone, administered by one of Chile's 15 SLEPs that were active when the study was carried out.

## PHASE 2: CURRICULUM ANALYSIS.

A content analysis was conducted of both the current Bases Curriculares and the proposed grades one through 10 curriculum update submitted to CNED in December 2024. All learning objectives were coded against the four broad skills dimensions drawn from the Bases Curriculares—ways of thinking, ways of working, tools for working, and ways of living in the world (Fadel et al. 2016)—to assess the extent to which broad skills are present in the formal curriculum, how they are distributed across subjects and grade levels, and how the proposed update modifies that distribution. This analysis provided the policy baseline against which school-level implementation was examined in the case studies in phase 3.

## PHASE 3: SCHOOL CASE STUDIES.

In-depth case studies were conducted in five public schools, one per macro-zone, administered by one of Chile's 15 SLEPs that were active when the study was carried out,<sup>9</sup> selected to reflect variation in governance, geography, and student population. In each school, the principal and academic leader (school's internal UATP coordinator) were interviewed individually, the SLEP's UATP coordinator was interviewed, and separate focus groups were conducted

8 Participants included main authorities currently leading the Chilean education system. For this reason, the study included representatives from the DEP, ACE, MINEDUC and its 21st Century Skills unit, as well as the UCE.

9 As of 2026, there are 36 active SLEPs in Chile.

with teachers and students. Focus groups were conducted separately with teachers and 10th-grade students in each SLEP—with 8-9 participants per group—selected by schools according to criteria established by the Reimagina research team. Sessions were moderated by the principal investigator using a semi-structured guide and ranged from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. The focus group data were analyzed alongside interview data using thematic analysis to deepen understanding of stakeholder perspectives and experiences related to breadth of skills development, rather than to generate representative findings. Each case study was analyzed individually, generating a school-level report; the five reports were then analyzed in aggregate to identify cross-cutting patterns for this report.

## School selection and study scope

Chile is divided into five macro-zones (North, Center, Metropolitan Region, South, and Austral), and one SLEP was selected per zone, prioritizing those that had been operational for longer under the new governance system. The SLEPs were responsible for identifying the participating schools, and while some used a random selection process, others directly nominated schools to participate.<sup>10</sup> This two-stage design—purposive at the SLEP level to ensure geographic and governance variation, random at the school level within each SLEP—reflects a deliberate effort to balance comparability with representativeness. The five case study schools are presented in Table 2.

**TABLE 2: CASE STUDY SCHOOLS DESCRIPTION<sup>11</sup>**

MACRO-ZONE	SLEP	PARTICIPANTS FROM THE SCHOOL PER MACRO-ZONE
<i>North</i>	SLEP Iquique	Principal, academic leader, UATP coordinator, teachers, students
<i>Center</i>	SLEP Valparaíso	Principal, academic leader, UATP coordinator, teachers, students
<i>Metropolitan Region</i>	SLEP Gabriela Mistral	Principal, academic leader, UATP coordinator, teachers, students
<i>South</i>	SLEP Llanquihue	Principal, academic leader, UATP coordinator, teachers, students
<i>Austral</i>	SLEP W	Principal, academic leader, UATP coordinator, teachers, students

<sup>10</sup> All SLEPs and schools participated voluntarily.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that all five schools are managed by SLEPs rather than by the municipal departments that still oversee the majority of public schools at the time of writing. This is a deliberate choice, and the study focuses on the emerging SLEP model as it is being implemented, rather than on the legacy municipal system it is gradually replacing. The findings are therefore illustrative of the SLEP-managed system at an early and formative stage and should not be read as representative of Chilean public education as a whole.



## Limitations

The study's qualitative and exploratory design means findings are not statistically generalizable. The sample of five schools captures depth rather than breadth, and the patterns identified are best understood as hypotheses to be tested at a greater scale rather than definitive conclusions. The focus on SLEP-managed schools limits the representativeness of the current national system, though it is deliberate as SLEPs represent the direction of system reform and are therefore the most relevant unit for future research and policy reform. Additionally, the final school sample emerged through a mixed process rather than a fully randomized one. This approach reflects the practical realities of conducting research within the Chilean public education system and should be understood as a limitation when

considering the representativeness of the school-level findings.

Furthermore, fieldwork was conducted in 2024 during a period of active reform and transition. The report was updated in early 2026 to reflect political and policy developments, but no additional data collection took place after 2024. The study also does not fully capture the perspectives of parents and community members, whose voices are important for a complete understanding of how broad skills development is experienced at the school level. The study also does not disaggregate findings by student population—including students with disabilities, indigenous students, or students from migrant backgrounds—which represents a limitation given the report's central concern with equity of access to broad skills development. These disaggregations are important to explore in future research.

# FINDINGS

The findings draw on evidence from all three phases of the study: national-level policy interviews with eight key actors across the Chilean education system, a content analysis of both the current Bases Curriculares and the proposed grades one through 10 update, and case studies in five public schools across Chile's macro-zones. Findings are presented thematically rather than by school, reflecting the integrative, analytical study design. Patterns were strikingly consistent across geographic contexts, suggesting that the challenges described here are experienced across the system, not in isolated school contexts. The evidence is presented in aggregate to protect participant confidentiality and to avoid implying a level of territorial differentiation that the data do not support. The analysis explores four interconnected themes: a lack of shared understanding around broad skills development, the burden and mismatch of the current curriculum and assessment structures, individual initiatives that lack structural, system-wide support, and delayed implementation of administrative and structural supports. Each of these thematic findings contributes to an understanding of the gap between Chile's formal commitment to broad skills and the reality in classrooms.

Without a clear national framework, schools were left to interpret the mandate on their own terms, and what counted as broad skills development varied from institution to institution and from classroom to classroom.

## No shared understanding of broad skills

The first and most foundational finding of this study is that participants did not share a common operational

understanding of what broad skills are across the Chilean education system. The Bases Curriculares formally identifies transversal competencies as cross-cutting goals, but at every level of the system—among national authorities, school leaders, teachers, and students—these competencies were understood differently, described in different terms, and linked to different priorities. Among national-level actors, terminology such as “breadth of skills,” “21st-century skills,” “transversal competencies,” “holistic skills,” and “skills for the future” were used interchangeably, without a common referent. As one researcher shared, “I think that in general we do not understand much about what we are talking about.” This ambiguity at the top of the system translated into inconsistent understandings across lower levels of the education system. Without a clear national framework, schools were left to interpret the mandate on their own terms, and what counted as broad skills development varied from institution to institution and from classroom to classroom. A mandate that no one has operationalized in the same way cannot produce coherent implementation.

Within schools, the findings also revealed misaligned interpretations of terminology related to the development of a breadth of skills. School leaders tended to associate broad skills with the competencies students need for the world of work, such as socioemotional development, digital literacy, and adaptability. Teachers emphasized empathy, collaboration, and communication as priorities, often

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framing them in relational rather than curricular terms. Students, meanwhile, prioritized practical and technological skills, viewing socioemotional competencies as secondary to the functional preparation they believe is required for their futures. As one teacher observed, “I believe that social skills are the first, because we are people. Empathy, dialogue, listening skills, interaction, and respect. All of that is needed before we can develop other skills.” A student in a different school expressed a contrasting view, explaining, “What we need to learn most are practical things, like using technology, solving problems, and communicating our ideas well. This is going to serve us in the future, rather than learning things that we don’t use later.”

These divergent interpretations did not necessarily reflect individual preferences but rather the absence of an institutional framework that provides a shared, operational understanding of broad skills across the system. As one school manager stated, “There is a lack of a clear framework for everyone. If there is none, each one teaches what he or she thinks is important, but without coherence.” The curriculum analysis further confirmed this finding, as discussed in detail below.

## The curriculum and accountability trap

The study identified two structural features of the Chilean education system that are in tension with the broad skills mandate. The first is an overloaded curriculum that leaves insufficient space for the development of transversal competencies. The second is an accountability model

centered on standardized assessment, which creates powerful incentives to deprioritize broader skills development. Together, these two features produce a structural contradiction at the heart of the system where assessments and curriculum do not work in tandem.

Curriculum overload was widely recognized and consistently described across all groups interviewed. The current Bases Curriculares, despite its formal inclusion of transversal competencies, was described by teachers as impossible to cover in its entirety. With hundreds of learning objectives across subjects and grade levels, the curriculum leaves little time or flexibility for the active, interdisciplinary, and student-centered methodologies through which broad skills are most effectively developed. As one educational authority described, “A curriculum with 30 or 40 learning objectives per subject, 500 objectives per year, is an impossible curriculum to achieve. How do I innovate there if I’m stuck in curriculum coverage?” Teachers interviewed in the schools consistently echoed this view, describing the curriculum not as a pedagogical resource but as a compliance burden. Rather than serving as a framework for instruction, it was often perceived as something to be covered and completed.

The curriculum analysis reinforced this picture. Broad skills are formally present in the Bases Curriculares but scattered across learning objectives without clear articulation or connection to specific pedagogical approaches. They appear as aspirational goals rather than actionable frameworks, which means teachers who want to develop them must do so by carving space

Because broad competencies carry no weight in the SIMCE, they do not carry institutional weight in pedagogical decisionmaking.

out of an already overloaded schedule rather than working within a structure designed to support them.

The content analysis of the current Bases Curriculares confirmed this pattern in detail. Communication and collaboration are the most consistently represented broad skills across subjects and grade levels, present in both basic and secondary education in the form of learning objectives, skills, and attitudes. Critical thinking receives attention particularly at the secondary level, though its emphasis grows with grade level rather than running consistently throughout. By contrast, competencies such as metacognition and life and career skills are largely absent from learning objectives in basic education and appear only partially at the secondary level, where they are addressed through broad framing concepts rather than operationalized in specific objectives. The proposed curriculum update addresses some of these gaps—strengthening communication and collaboration as explicit transversal learning objectives across all levels, introducing digital citizenship as a new dimension, and elevating creativity and critical thinking to cross-cutting axes—but the underlying problem of scattered, unarticulated broad skills objectives without accompanying pedagogical guidance remains only partially resolved.

Compounding curriculum overload, SIMCE, Chile’s national standardized assessment system, measures a narrow band of academic skills and carries high institutional stakes, shaping schools’ reputations, public rankings, and resource allocation decisions. Because broad competencies carry no weight in the SIMCE, they do not carry institutional

weight in pedagogical decisionmaking. Teachers across the case studies described a familiar dynamic where they understood what broad skills development requires, and they systematically set it aside because the accountability system offers no reward for prioritizing these skills. As one teacher put it, “The SIMCE limits us a lot because it forces us to prioritize content and leaves us no room to work on transversal skills.” A researcher interviewed at the national level described the broader consequence of the assessment system as “(SIMCE) finally ties you to stick to that curriculum much more. There is less academic freedom or space for educational projects.”

The proposed grades one through 10 curriculum update is the system’s most substantive response to the overload problem, and it was viewed positively by most actors interviewed. Its emphasis on reducing curricular fragmentation, strengthening the transversal competencies framework, and introducing socioemotional learning as a formal objective represents real progress. The 2019 reform for grades 11 and 12 was similarly regarded as a step in the right direction. However, neither reform addressed the accountability contradiction where the curricular competencies do not match how learning is assessed.

## The teaching of broad skills through individual teacher initiatives

The study revealed that where broad skills instruction is actually happening in Chilean classrooms, it is almost

Professional development for pedagogies focused on broader skills development is rare and disconnected from the curriculum mandate.

entirely the product of individual teacher initiative. Active methodologies such as project-based learning, collaborative inquiry, socioemotional approaches, place-based and community-connected learning, were recognized by teachers as effective and valued by students when they experienced them. However, these more active pedagogical practices were rarely sustained, because the conditions that would make them sustainable—systematic professional development, adequate time and resources, curricular flexibility, pedagogical leadership, and institutional support—were not consistently in place. As a result, teachers from the study were willing to innovate but lacked the infrastructure and support to sustain these practices.

This pattern was consistent across the schools in the study. Teachers who have developed broad skills instruction have done so through their own effort to seek out training through university partnerships, NGO programs, or informal professional networks, without institutional recognition or support. As one teacher described, “Each teacher does what he or she can. Many of us work these skills by intuition rather than by a clear institutional framework.” Where innovative practices exist, they depend on specific individuals, are not documented or shared across the school, and are vulnerable to staff turnover. As one manager observed, “Without an institutional framework, the skills that are taught end up depending on the goodwill and creativity of the teachers, but that does not ensure results.”

Professional development for pedagogies focused on broader skills development is rare and disconnected from the curriculum mandate. Teachers

across the case studies consistently identified lack of training as a primary constraint. Project-based learning, the methodology most frequently cited as effective for transversal competency development, was cited as aspirational rather than systematic in most schools. One participant mentioned that “Project-based learning has been key to work on transversal skills, but we need more training to apply it effectively and more resources to do it well.” The overloaded curriculum compounds this issue—teachers described wanting to innovate and feeling structurally prevented from doing so. One teacher shared, “We are always willing to innovate and make changes that benefit students, but the lack of time and resources leaves us at a disadvantage. Sometimes we feel that we are putting out fires instead of moving forward.”

Furthermore, teachers in the most geographically isolated and socioeconomically vulnerable schools have the least access to the professional development and institutional support needed to develop broad skills instruction—yet they serve the students whose needs make relational, culturally responsive, and socioemotional pedagogy most critical. The system does not compensate for this disadvantage; it compounds it.

## A support system still under construction

The SLEP transition was designed precisely to address the coordination failures that have historically prevented policy and curricular mandates from reaching classrooms. The UATPs embedded in each SLEP were conceived as the institutional bridge

between national policy and school-level practice, providing schools with consistent, technically qualified pedagogical support that the previous municipal system could not reliably deliver. Across the schools in this study, that bridge has not yet been built.

The study revealed that UATPs have been overwhelmed by the administrative demands of the institutional transition. Their engagement with schools on matters of curriculum and pedagogy was seen as episodic rather than sustained, and their role in practice was seen as closer to compliance monitoring than instructional coaching. As one UATP coordinator described, “From the UATP, the idea is to accompany, but resources and time are limited, which makes it difficult to do more in-depth work.” This is not primarily a failure of individual UATP staff but a constraint in the environment in which they are operating. As of 2024, only 15 of 70 SLEPs were operational, and the transition process has consumed much of the institutional capacity that UATPs were intended to dedicate to pedagogical support. As such, the architecture designed to make the Bases Curriculares real in schools is still under construction.

Responsibilities for curriculum design, assessment, school support, and oversight are distributed across multiple institutions: MINEDUC, the UCE, the ACE, the Superintendence of Education, and the DEP, which operate with limited coordination among entities. Schools receive overlapping and sometimes contradictory signals from different institutional actors, generating what teachers and administrators describe as regulatory

confusion and policy fatigue. As one educational authority explained, “When the school is receiving 10 programs in parallel, the first thing they say is ‘come to an agreement.’” The absence of a unified direction connecting curriculum, assessment, teacher training, and school-level support means that each actor in the system resolves the implementation question on their own terms, producing fragmentation across the system.

Additionally, the consistent alternation between left- and right-leaning governments that has characterized Chilean democracy since 2010 has made it difficult for programs and agendas to achieve sustainability over time. This alternation sends shifting signals to schools, making it difficult for leaders and teachers to commit to long-term agendas whose continuity cannot be guaranteed beyond the next administration. Teachers and school leaders described a pattern of reform fatigue—the cumulative effect of successive policy initiatives that have promised transformation without delivering follow-through—that makes sustained investment in new agendas difficult to justify. As one educational authority observed, “What discourages schools the most is not having the certainty that you are going to embark on something that is going to change in two more years.”

This dynamic is compounded by a prolonged uncertainty around curriculum reform. Unlike other areas of education policy, Chile’s national curriculum has long functioned as one of the few genuine state-level policies, relatively insulated from electoral swings by design. The current Bases Curriculares has been in place

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since 2012—except for grades 11 and 12, updated in 2019—making the curriculum one of the more stable reference points available to schools. Yet since 2022, a comprehensive reform spanning grades one through 10 has been under development, and it has faced repeated rejections and has yet to receive approval. This creates a distinctive burden: not the disruption of a curriculum that keeps changing, but the exhaustion of waiting for a change that has been promised but not yet delivered. And even if the revised curriculum is approved in 2026, full implementation across all grade levels is not projected until 2029, leaving schools to plan and invest under conditions of sustained uncertainty.

### **CROSS-CUTTING ANALYSIS: THE 3 CS OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION**

The four thematic findings reveal patterns that are consistent across schools and geographies in the study, suggesting that the challenges they describe are systemic rather than local. This section synthesizes those patterns through the 3C framework, drawing on evidence from all three phases of the research.

#### **COMMITMENT: PRESENT AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL, ABSENT AT THE SYSTEM LEVEL**

Across all schools in the study, there was genuine individual commitment to the idea that students deserve an education that goes beyond academic content. Teachers spoke about wanting their students to develop as whole people and about implementing innovative pedagogical practices for skills development. This individual

commitment, however, was not institutionalized across the system and, therefore, lacks the consistent prioritization, support, and direction needed to sustain broad skills development at scale. Additionally, while there was rhetorical consensus across institutional actors that broad competencies matter, there is no agreed operational framework for what this means in practice. Commitment has been further undermined by the limited continuity of educational policies. Actors across all levels of the system described a pattern of reform fatigue. The cumulative effect of successive policy initiatives—each promising transformation, few delivering follow-through—has led schools to disengage with new agendas before investing in change.

#### **CAPACITY: PRESENT BUT SELF-GENERATED, FRAGILE, AND UNEVENLY DISTRIBUTED**

The capacity to develop broad skills in Chilean classrooms is not completely absent, but it is unevenly developed and largely self-generated by school leaders, teachers, and civil society organizations working toward educational innovation. Here, capacity refers to teachers' and other school actors' ability to translate broad competencies into classroom practice by drawing on pedagogical knowledge, concrete tools, and institutional support. Across the study, this capacity emerges despite, rather than because of, the system. In specific classrooms in urban centers, in community-centered projects in rural contexts, and in the improvised practices of teachers in geographically isolated settings, teachers described strategies and tools they utilized in their classrooms. In each case, teachers

**Cohesion requires not only that all actors work toward a shared direction, but that the system has the instruments to acknowledge and build on existing pockets of broad skills development.**

have sought out, adapted, or created their own approaches, often without sustained training or guidance. As a result, capacity remains fragile, dependent on individual initiative, difficult to sustain over time, and unevenly distributed across schools and territories.

Capacity is also distributed unequally across geography and territories. Chile's profound socioeconomic and territorial disparities mean that often the teachers most in need of training in relational, socioemotional, and culturally responsive pedagogies are precisely those working in the most under-resourced and geographically isolated contexts. The system compounds inequality rather than compensating for it. This unevenness is the result of a system that has not yet built a coherent institutional infrastructure through which capacity could be developed, recognized, and sustained at scale.

#### **COHESION: FRAGMENTED AT EVERY LEVEL**

The most fundamental problem this study revealed is not a lack of commitment nor a lack of individual or system capacity, but a lack of cohesion. The fragility and unevenness of capacity documented in the previous section are themselves a symptom of cohesion failure: capacity cannot be built or sustained at scale without the

coherent institutional infrastructure—aligned frameworks, functioning support structures, consistent policy signals—that system cohesion would provide. Across all schools in the study, there is no coherent framework that aligns what the Bases Curriculares requires with how teachers are trained, how schools are supported, how learning is assessed, and how SLEPs organize their pedagogical work. The result is a system in which every actor, from the Ministry to the classroom teacher, is technically oriented toward the same goal, while operating in institutional conditions that make it very difficult to work toward it consistently.

One pattern emerges from the study with particular force: the disconnect between what schools are doing and what the formal system can see. In geographically isolated and rural contexts, teachers are developing community-based, place-grounded pedagogies that genuinely cultivate the broad competencies the curriculum calls for—but this practice is invisible to SIMCE, to SLEP monitoring systems, and to the national evaluation architecture. The system cannot recognize, reward, or build on what it cannot see. Cohesion requires not only that all actors work toward a shared direction, but that the system has the instruments to acknowledge and build on existing pockets of broad skills development.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

While individual commitment to broad skills was evident and pockets of capacity existed across the system, weak cohesion prevented these efforts from translating into sustained and equitable implementation.

Although the study is exploratory and should not be interpreted as nationally representative, the four recommendations highlight core areas where policymakers can focus attention to support institutionalized and coherent policy implementation.

## 1. ALIGN NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS WITH THE CURRICULUM'S STATED PURPOSE AND MANDATES AROUND BROAD SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Across the study, pressure to perform on standardized assessments redirected teachers away from the pedagogical approaches required for broad skills development. The SIMCE and other structural barriers have systematically undermined the Bases Curriculares' emphasis on broad competencies.

*Policy actions:*

MINEDUC initiates a formal review of the scope of national assessment systems to ensure greater alignment with the curriculum's emphasis on broad skills development. This process includes teachers and school leaders, whose experience reflects how assessment frameworks shape teaching and learning priorities in schools.

The ACE, in collaboration with the UCE, develops and pilots complementary

assessment approaches that make broad skills visible without increasing the testing burden on schools.

SLEPs clearly communicate broad skills development as a system priority, reinforcing this through UATP support plans that provide practical tools for integrating broad competencies into subject teaching.

## 2. BUILD SUSTAINED, PRACTICE-ORIENTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS

Teachers have not received systematic training in the pedagogical approaches and strategies required for broad skills development. Where such practices existed in the study, they were the result of individual initiative and were not sustained over time, particularly in the most vulnerable and geographically isolated contexts.

*Policy actions:*

SLEPs, led by UATPs, design and deliver territory-specific professional development focused on active, broad skills-oriented pedagogies. This support is sustained over time, grounded in classroom practice, and delivered through ongoing engagement rather than isolated events.

Teacher training institutions update pre-service preparation programs to incorporate broad skills instruction and active pedagogies, aligned with national curriculum expectations.

For geographically remote territories, the DEP develops differentiated professional

development models, including remote accompaniment platforms and cross-school peer networks, that are sustained over time and do not depend on an in-person UATP presence.

### **3. ESTABLISH A COHERENT IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR BROAD COMPETENCIES**

Teachers across the study received a curriculum that names broad competencies as goals, but no shared guidance on what these competencies mean in practice, how they develop across grade levels, or how they connect to subject teaching and assessments. This absence of a common framework makes coordination across the system impossible and leaves conceptual fragmentation unaddressed.

#### *Policy actions:*

MINEDUC's UCE develops and publishes a nationally recognized framework for broad competencies, including clear definitions, grade-level progressions, and concrete classroom examples across subjects.

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The framework is co-developed with teachers, school leaders, and civil society organizations to ensure both technical rigor and practical usability, and to build legitimacy that holds across government transitions.

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Student perspectives are incorporated into the framework development process and into school-level implementation planning, recognizing the need to consider students' own understanding of what learning experiences feel meaningful and relevant.

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Ensure SLEPs develop the technical capacity and competencies to adapt the framework to their territorial contexts,

with UATPs leading this process in dialogue with schools.

### **4. REORIENT UATPS TOWARD THEIR PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT MANDATE**

UATPs were designed to serve as the bridge between national policy and school-level practice. Across the study, the findings revealed that this role is not being fulfilled. UATPs are absorbed by administrative demands and operated largely as compliance monitors rather than instructional partners. The Bases Curriculares' broad skills mandate cannot reach classrooms without functioning UATPs.

#### *Policy actions:*

MINEDUC and the DEP establish a clear and protected pedagogical mandate for UATPs, specifying the proportion of time and resources dedicated to instructional support as distinct from administrative tasks, holding SLEPs accountable for meeting that standard.

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UATPs are equipped with a clear operational framework for broad competencies and trained in broad skills pedagogies, enabling them to provide sustained, practice-oriented support to schools.

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SLEP governance structures include school-level representation in UATP planning, ensuring alignment between system support priorities and school needs.

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For the most geographically remote SLEPs, the DEP develops differentiated support models, such as remote accompaniment platforms and cross-SLEP peer networks, that do not require in-person presence.

# CONCLUSION

While the Bases Curriculares provides an important baseline for the development of a breadth of skills, the study suggests that implementation remains constrained by weak system cohesion. Teachers, school leaders, and national actors broadly support the goals of broad skills development, and examples of innovative practice exist across Chile. Yet, these efforts remain fragmented and dependent on individual initiative rather than sustained institutional support.

As Chile continues its curriculum reform process and public education transition, the challenge is no longer defining what matters, but creating the conditions that allow those priorities to be enacted consistently across schools. Strengthening alignment among curriculum, assessment, professional development, and school support systems will be critical to ensuring that all students have meaningful opportunities to develop the skills they need to thrive.

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