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**Abstract**

This paper examines higher education policy in Chile after the return to democracy in 1990 from an equity perspective. Chile faces the challenge of implementing equity-oriented policies within the legal confines of an education system constructed under the neoliberal model and introduced by the military government (1973-1990). This has resulted in tensions between policy and practice, which have constrained the role of the state in a highly market-oriented system, in its efforts to promote equitable access to higher education. The principal barriers to access are found in institutional funding arrangements, the admissions process and the quality of education at secondary level. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)