

**THEORISING POPULAR EDUCATION AS A  
KNOWLEDGE PRACTICE:  
THE CASE OF CHILE**

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## **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP**

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*El sueño se hace a mano y sin permiso,  
arando el porvenir con viejos bueyes  
(S. Rodríguez)*

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to provide a theorisation of popular education as a knowledge practice, with particular focus on the realm of popular education in Chile. Popular education constitutes an educative practice targeting disadvantaged groups in society to address their educative needs. This practice is generally carried out in informal settings, organised predominantly by the same communities participating in the practice of popular education. Its social significance lies in its commitment to the socially disadvantaged and to the promotion of organisation and participation of communities in the quest for a more egalitarian society.

The field of research on popular education has exhibited a general concern for the pedagogic nature of its practice and what distinguishes it from other forms of pedagogic activity. However, to date, no comprehensive pedagogic description of popular education has been offered. This is partly explained by the general dismissal of theoretically-informed research in the field, and the invisibility of its internal principles. This research aims to provide a theoretically-informed exploration of these intrinsic principles of popular education.

This thesis proposes a model of analysis informed by two complementary bodies of theory, one sociological and one linguistic: the sociological theory of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton 2000b, 2010a, 2014), including particular aspects of its inherited Bernsteinian framework (Bernstein 1975, 1990, 1996, 2000); and the linguistic theory is systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Martin 1992; Martin & Rose 2007; Martin & White 2005; Rose & Martin 2012).

The model proposed is organised around three field and levels of analysis. Data of the research includes specialised papers on popular education from the field of knowledge production, public documents from sites of practice of popular education in Chile, that is from the field of re-contextualisation, and the transcribed discourse of lessons in the practice of popular education, that is, in the field of reproduction, in one site of popular education in Chile. Data is analysed using relevant discourse semantic tools provided by SFL theory. Patterns of meaning in discourse are then interpreted based on conceptual and analytical principles from LCT. This analytical and interpretative path enables the identification of principles determining what counts as the legitimate field of popular education in Chile.

The thesis contributes a comprehensive description of popular education, which addresses the significant gap in its field of research regarding a description of its intrinsic pedagogic features; at the same time, it contributes to the cumulative building of knowledge on popular education. The thesis provides a theoretically-based model for the study popular education in Chile that can be adopted for the exploration of other contexts, as well as of other kinds of educative practices. This model also contributes a specific framework for the analysis of classroom practices that may enhance the understanding of this practice in diverse contexts.

The exploration of popular education in Chile is of great importance, as it positions this educative practice as an object worthy of study, contributing to emerging approaches in the field.