

# NEW MODES OF GOVERNANCE OF LATIN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION: CHILE, ARGENTINA AND MEXICO

## *Nuevas formas de gobernanza en la educación superior latinoamericana: Chile, Argentina y México*

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**INTRODUCTION.** Since the late eighties, Higher Education Systems (HES) have experienced a deep reform process, characterized by a profound redefinition of the role of the state with respect to HES, and by a significant change in the functions and objectives of Higher Education Institutions (HEI), in a context increasingly influenced by market demands. **METHOD.** Through a review of relevant literature comparing higher education reforms in several countries of Europe and Latin America, the author seeks to establish some levels of convergence. **RESULTS.** After thirty years, Latin American HES present two main trends: the growth and development of HE markets, and the emergence of new modes of governance. **DISCUSSION.** Some authors argue that the government has been exceeded, while others claim that its role has changed only qualitatively. The evidence shows that the government is not only still there, but continues to control the processes of transformation of higher education systems. The intention of this article is to stimulate policy debate on an issue that until now has been addressed from a technical perspective. It is necessary to consider some particular features of the region (demographic pressures, structural deficits, growth of for-profit HEIs), as well as the role of traditional and non traditional stakeholders in the HE policy arena.

**Palabras clave:** *Higher Education, Governance, Educational Reform, Government Role, Public Policy, Latin America.*

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### **The theoretical puzzle of governance in Latin American higher education**

We frequently find the word governance translated to Spanish as *gobernanza*, a term that is used as a synonym of “government” or in some cases, “ability to govern”. In the realm of Higher

Education (HE) research, there are more than a few papers which link this category to the capability of the government to determine the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); or to the way in which HEIs organize themselves and determine their orientation with respect to the role attributed to this educational level. While

in the first case we see the prevalence of a systemic approach (*top-down*), in the second scenario, the analysis focuses on the configuration of the government at an institutional level (*bottom-up*). In Latin America, the evolution of the debate between both approaches has been complex at best, considering the chaotic, contradictory and often controversial nature which has accompanied the HE reform since the 1980's.

In Western literature, the term governance is not less problematical and clearly divides those who think that the traditional role of the government has been surpassed, from those who doubt whether or not the government has really lost its central place in the decision making process. It is clear that this division is also reflected in the interpretations of the changes in HE, although in this case, the question falls more specifically in the present (in)capacity of the government to determine the ends of the HES as well as the means to reach them. As in Europe, in Latin America the question about whether or not the State has lost its capacity and influence, has also been motive of controversy between all the parties involved in the matter of HE. However, as opposed to what happens in Europe, the debate in the region has been strongly influenced by the participation of international financial institutions (IFI) such as the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in determining educational policy.

From an institutional point of view, the transnational actors offer Latin American HESs an opportunity for regional coordination to develop common objectives. Brunner (2011) for example, defines the process of transformation in the administration of HEIs based on the recommendations of the OECD, in the sense of giving greater freedom to the capacity for institutional management (personnel recruitment, funding, etc.), in order to respond to an environment more and more determined by the

market. For those inclined towards the systemic approach, the State is going through a complex capitulation process of its obligations in key-stone areas of social welfare such as healthcare, education, regulation of labor, etc., giving place to an interpretation of the decision-making process which falls directly on the role of the market and the international agencies in charge of promote it (see Genteli, 1999).

The essential difference between the systemic and the institutional approach in the study of the governance of HE in Latin America moves around a few fundamental elements (see box 1): a) the direction of the analysis (*top-down* or *bottom-up*); b) the conceptual value that each approach assigns to governance, either as an issue which needs to be explained (*explicandum*), or as the explanation itself (*explicans*); c) the nature of the policy-change, that is, whether it is exogenous or endogenous; d) the criterion underlying the policy-making process, whether they are defined as a political matter or as measures of a rather technical type directed towards the achievement of certain results; e) the role of the government which, as I have suggested previously, is defined as either instrumental (for certain interests) or pragmatic (a stimulus of the environment); f) the relationship between the parties involved in the formulation of policies at the level of each HES, defined as hierarchical or of a coordinating nature; g) the relevance of each approach in the practice (*outsider*=of little relevance / *insider*= relevant), and lastly, h) the normative axis, whether it is oriented towards a greater intervention of the State or towards a greater relevance of the market.

Independently of the contributions of both approaches to the debate, the truth is that both sides have mostly obviated the discussion about the role of the government in the process of change. On one hand, after the display of the Structural Adjustment policies promoted by the Washington Consensus, it is clear that markets (or market behaviors) are not phenomena which stem out of nature, or a spontaneous

update of the system, since in every case, the deployment of the power and public authority of the State has been necessary to create them, develop them and reproduce them (Tickell & Kell, 2006). On the other hand the difficult economic situation in the region, has ended by discrediting the idea that, on their own, the market's organization schemes are capable of generating the necessary incentives for the emergence of a virtuous administration of public affairs (Fuentes, *et al.*, 2009).

What I have so far called *systemic approach*, represents a widely spread way —not being the only one— to analyze the transformation of HESs in the region. Essentially, it is a critical and descriptive approach, opposed to what I have termed the *institutional approach*, directly related to the concrete policies put in practice by governments, ministries of education and HEIs, and which is noticeably influenced by the theories of the New Public Management (NPM). In my opinion, even with its limitations, the systemic approach continues to have a much greater explanatory potential than the institutional one, particularly considering that the latter has focused basically in responding *how* HE is directed and not *why* or *by whom* (Kehm, 2011: 23).

Throughout the article I assume that the problem of governance from the governmental

point of view, consists precisely on making universities behave as institutions, since that is a mandatory prerequisite to ensure that the HES as a whole, responds effectively to the needs of society and the public interest (Capano, 2011). Proceeding this way, not only rescales the question about the real weight of the actors involved in this decision-making process (whether they are traditional stakeholders or not) but also, in the light of the experience of the last decades, it is possible to analyze the redefinition of what is now understood as the “needs of society” and “public interest” or, in other words, which is the function of higher education and what role does it play in the face of society and economical development?

### Models of governance of higher education from a systemic perspective

Burton R Clark (1983) is probably one of the thinkers who has had a greater impact on the way to analyze the issue of governance in HE in the last few years. Among his outstanding merits is the development of a theoretical model to study the governance of HE in Western countries, considering the interactions between the State, the market and the academic oligarchies. However, Clark's models presents some limitations when trying to explain recent changes on

#### Box 1. Systemic and institutional approach in the study of governance in Latina American HE

	Systemic approach	Institutional approach
Orientation	Top-down	Bottom-up
Understanding of governance	<i>Explicandum</i>	<i>Explicans</i>
Policy-change	Exogenous	Endogenous
Policy-making analysis	Political	Technical
Government role	Instrumental	Pragmatic
Relationship between actors	Hierarchy	Coordination
Practical relevance	Outsider	Insider
Normative guide	State oriented	Market oriented

HE. For many we are basically dealing with a mixture of a substantial loss in the capacity of the government to control HES, with an increasing participation of new actors in the policy arena. By contrast Capano (2011: 1625) states that the interpretation problem lies in thinking that *government* and *governance* are two poles of a sole *continuum*, whose gradation would imply multiple forms of governing and coordinating the process of policy elaboration. Instead, we are talking about two different concepts, founded on two substantially different assumptions: while “*Governance* refers to the possible ways in which policy actors combine to solve collective problems and thus to the ways in which the policy-making process is steered. *Government*, on the other hand, is one of the possible actors in systemic governance, and its role may vary considerably, depending on the context”.

Based on Clark’s typology, Capano proposes a spatial representation which accounts for the new configurations of the governance of HE, by overlapping the level of governmental specification of the means to be used, with the level of specification of the goals to achieve them (figure 1). The result is a typology which offers four possibilities of governance, each with its respective *policy* instruments: a) procedural mode, b) hierarchical mode; c) steering at a distance mode, and d) self-governing mode. While procedural and hierarchical governance represent the two *traditional* modalities where the government plays a protagonist part, in the last two modes, the government’s participation is rather *indirect* (ibid: 1627-1728).

### Traditional governance

*Procedural mode.* The State imposes strict procedural rules but gives the HEIs substantial autonomy. The parties involved in this configuration of governance have the freedom to choose their objectives, so far as they agree with the general objectives pursued by the governmental institutions. The central part in this case is played by

the bureaucracy which has the discretionary faculty to establish privileged relationships with some of the groups of interest (the academic oligarchies are an emblematic example of this).

*Hierarchical mode.* This is a form of governance where the State completely determines the objectives of the universities and the means to reach them. The range of activities corresponding to the institutional administration is very limited, so as the level of influence of the stakeholders.

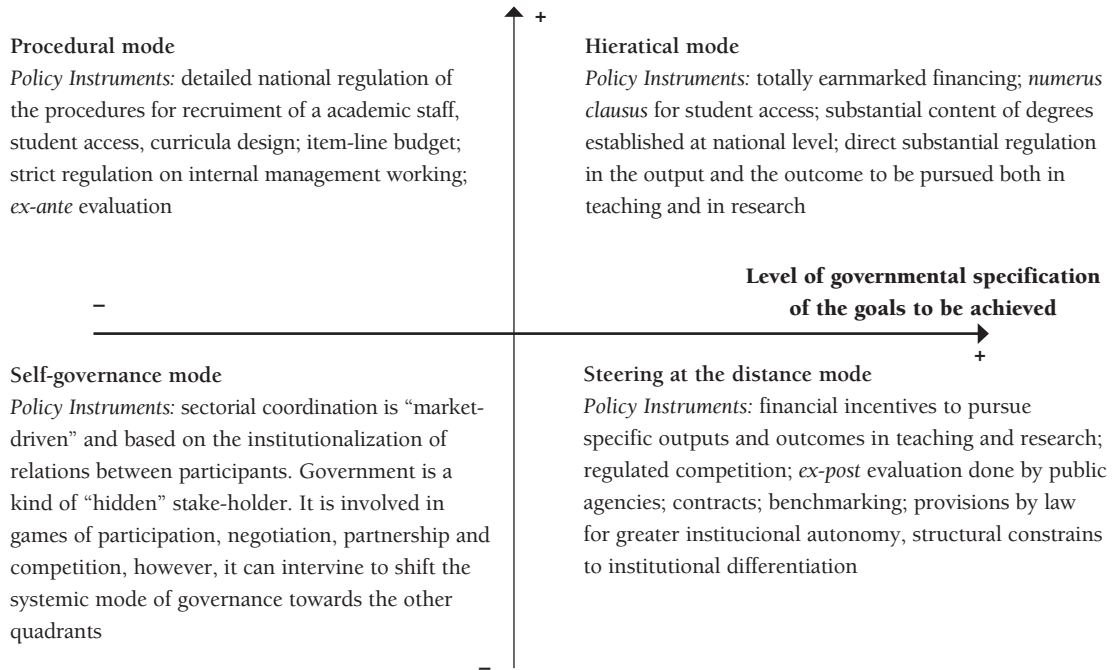
### Indirect governance

*Steering-at-a-distance mode.* As in the other modalities, the government is strongly involved in the achievement of certain collective objectives pertaining HE but allows the parties to freely choose the means to accomplish them. However, the government focuses on the design of a series of strategies involving incentives to ensure that the parties accomplish these ends.

*Self-governance mode.* This configuration of governance is characterized by a government which gives the decision-making arena almost complete freedom. In this respect, it is assumed that the fundamental criteria for sector coordination is based on the institutionalization of the relationships between participants. Other than this, it is clear that the government reserves its right to “verticalize” the decision-making process if necessary.

To illustrate the empirical viability of this typology, Capano compares the changes in England, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy. The transformations are analyzed based on the three different aspects which have characterized the reform of HE in the past years: institutional autonomy and its governance; financing mechanisms of the HEIs, and evaluation of teaching and research. Broadly, the conclusion is that the HESs of this countries have moved from the procedural and self-governing modes towards

**Types of systemic governance modes in Higher Education policy (Capano, 2011)**



the hierarchical and steering-at-a-distance configurations of governance. While the transformation in England (from self-governing to hierarchical) and the Netherlands (from the procedural mode to the steering-at-a-distance mode) appears more complete; Germany and Italy show a trajectory which starts off with the procedural mode, but adopts features of the hierarchical and steering-at-a-distance modes, evidencing a hybrid configuration of governance (Capano, *ibid*: 1629-1636).

In addition to bringing the government back to the center of the stage, one of the merits of this analytical proposal is its explanatory potential beyond the normative load attempted to be imposed on the term *governance*. As Capano states, it is not a concept “necessarily positive: the new forms of governance may not always be the best ones, or the most effective and efficient; they might even be less democratic than the

previous ones” (*ibid* 1939). Lastly, it is necessary to emphasize that the typology which I have referred to so far, is limited to the analysis of the new modalities of governance in Western countries. Beyond the obvious, we have to keep in mind that both Clark’s and Capano’s (2011) analysis, assume a series of conditions common to HESs of industrialized countries, such as the *massification* of HE; robust public *funding* as the initial condition, as well as social inequality levels considerably inferior to those found in Latin American countries.

In sum, the transformation of HE in industrialized countries has been built upon much more homogeneous and stable conditions. In Latin America, on the contrary, the formulation of policies for HE in the past years supposes a combination of structural problems that go way back, together with the difficulties derived from the reforms implemented in recent years. So

even taking into account the relevance of the Western categorizations about the subject at hand, it is necessary to consider the singularities of the region when thinking about the new forms of governance and the possible future trajectories.

### **A few considerations for the analysis of governance of HESs in Latin America**

According to several authors (Geiger, 2004; Capano, 2011; Casanova, 2013), the HE reform in Europe was favored mainly by the financial crisis of the Welfare State; the growing importance of highly qualified human capital, as well as the complex process of conformation of the European Higher Education Area. The main modifications which have shaped the new configuration of European HESs have passed through the concession of a greater institutional administration on the government part, as well as the promotion of changes in the internal administration of the HEIs; the diversification of funding sources, and the *ex-post* evaluation of the quality of teaching and research (Capano, *ibid*: 1624-1625; Magalhaes and Amaral, 2009). However, the concrete experiences of each country complicate the scene, adding new elements which must also be addressed. These elements have to do with a) differences in velocity and depth of the changes at the systemic level; b) re-signification of the power of governments over the HEIs, and c) the interaction between the directional modalities at the national and transnational levels (Huisman, 2009: 2-3),

The reform in Latin America present multiple similarities with its Western homologous. From the mid 1980s up to the present, the systems of the region have experimented substantial changes in administrative, financial and quality control aspects, both for teaching and research. In general terms, we can say that Latin American HESs have moved from an absolutely public

model to a mixed one, with constituting elements which remind us the mentioned *steering-at-the-distance* government. In the same sense, we can say that in order to explain the complexity of the process of change in the matter of governance in the region, it is also necessary to clear the questions presented by Huisman for the case of Western countries. Nevertheless, there are at least three differential elements which involve the government, the IFIs and the HEIs, that we must consider:

*Structural deficit.* The economical contingency established by the debt default crisis of the 1980's marked a turning point in the region. From the point of view of governments, the main concern back then was to face the huge burden of external debt, so the administration of education systems was reduced to the application of dramatic budget cut-backs. The result was a noticeable stagnation of HES, whose characteristics became the target for the promoters of modernization during the 1990's.

*The participation of IFI.* Along the nineties, expert groups from the WB, IMF and OECD to the countries of the region, made numerous visits concluding that the HESs suffered an efficiency, efficacy and productivity crisis (Gentili, 1999). From these elements, they formulated a series of recommendations in order to modernize their HES. Based on the experience of Western countries, the experts coincided in stressing the need to a) lighten public finances from the costs of HE; b) structure the administration of HEIs to face the growing lack of public resources; c) prepare them to respond effectively to the requirements of a productive environment based on a free market economy, and d) establish the conditions for creating a market of educational services.

*University autonomy.* In Latin America, university autonomy has been forged counter to the States, which have had very little influence in the internal decision-making process of the HEIs which enjoy an autonomous type of administration. This is a fundamental characteristic

**Box 2. Evolution of the differential elements of HE governance in Latin America (1982-2010)**

	1982-1999 (t 1)	2000-2010 (t 2)
Structural deficit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cutbacks in public spending</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic investment of public spending</li> <li>• Conditioned financing for HE</li> <li>• Selective incentives</li> </ul>
IFIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conditioned loans (Top-down conditionals)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared planning (Country-ownership model)</li> <li>• Coordination mechanisms</li> <li>• Policy communities</li> </ul>
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional self-governance</li> <li>• Strong influence of traditional stakeholders (professors, workers, students)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managerialism</li> <li>• Increased discretion management</li> <li>• Weakening of traditional stakeholders</li> <li>• New stakeholders</li> </ul>

because, this order has been the condition of possibility for strengthening the traditional stakeholders, whose participation has been relevant for the decision-making process within their corresponding institutional contexts and, in some cases, at the national level, either as carriers of initiatives or as fierce opponents to changes proposed by governments or university authorities.

Many of the key factors necessary to understand the changes in governance of HE are found in the evolution of the mentioned elements between 1999 and 2010 (Box 2). In terms of structural deficit, the fiscal discipline characteristic of recessive periods of the Latin American economies, has given place to a policy of selective distribution of the budget for education, with the attention directed mainly to the basic level in detriment of mid and HES. The involvement of the IFI's has considerably changed in the past years, going from the familiar model of rescue loans in exchange for structural adjustments, to a model of shared planning. At an institutional level the traditional self-governance gave place to more managerial-oriented approach to HEIs administration.

**Main tendencies in the new governance of HE in the region: Chile, Argentina and Mexico**

**Chile, paradigm of modern governance?**

From the beginning of the 1980's, the military government led by general Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), promoted a radical reform of the whole educational system, in the turning context towards a free market economy, that this country was taking. In 1981, after the approval of the 1980 Constitution, the public budget directed to HE was virtually eliminated, at the same time as the largest universities were divided into small self-financed entities. The constitutional process was a differential factor with respect to the other authoritarian processes characteristic of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the south of the American Continent, because Pinochet was the only *de facto* ruler in the region who managed to institutionalize the changes imposed by the military council under his charge, determining the policy of that country even after the return of democracy.



The State allowed private actors to determine the means and, to a lesser extent, the ends of the HES, not without ensuring that the system functioned as a whole. The “General Law of Universities”, approved in 1981, set the grounds for the formal and orderly differentiation of the Chilean higher education system, based on three types of institutions: universities (traditional and private), professional institutes, and centers for technical-professional formation. These institutions offered programs which didn’t compete with each other: universities continued to provide a wide variety of academic degrees (bachelor, masters and PhDs); professional institutes offered programs for obtaining professional certification in short cycles, and the centers for professional formation produced qualified workers after two years of instruction or less (Fried y Abuhabdam, 1991: 138).

In 1990, a few months before the Democratic Transition, Pinochet’s government enacted the Constitutional Organic Law for Teaching (LOCE<sup>1</sup>). Through this law, the subsidizing role of the State was clearly defined, formalizing the distribution of complementary financial support (scholarships and student loans) and selective incentives, tied to the performance of educational institutions. On their part, HEIs were defined as non-profit, private-law corporations. The LOCE contemplated a series of policy instruments for the *ex-post* evaluation of the HES, among them, a National autonomous system for the certification and accreditation of HEIs; as well as the creation of various complementary organisms for evaluating the academic achievement of students, like the System for Measuring the Quality of Teaching (SIMCE<sup>2</sup>) and the National System for Evaluating the Performance of the Subsidized Educational Establishments (SNED<sup>3</sup>), directed to the teaching staff and the institutions themselves (Núñez, 2012; Manzi y Rossetti, 2004). In this context, the development of scientific research and graduate studies function under the logic of competitive budget.

The Chilean HES has reached important levels of enrollment (46.6%), an organized horizontal differentiation and the development of a National System for Innovation which is among the most efficient and competitive of the subcontinent; everything with a minimal impact on the public treasury. Obviously, these merits haven’t gone unnoticed for those promoting the reform in Latin America and it isn’t strange that this system is presented as a role model for the rest of the countries in the region. Nevertheless, after little over twenty years, some of its constituting elements of the system have started to show serious signs of exhaustion, particularly aspects related to quality and financing issues.

For example, the stratification of HEIs with respect to the purchasing power of the students has vertically segmented the HES in terms of quality, so those who pay less receive a deficient education and vice versa. This situation is directly linked to the growth and expansion of private HEIs with no kind of State regulation. On the other hand, the high costs of HE in Chile induce the majority of low-resource students to use public and private financing in order to pay for their professional studies. In recent years, with the difficult economical situation, there is a growing number of graduates who cannot afford to pay their debts, creating an important source of pressure for the economic stability of the country.

The generalized discontent caused by this situation has favored the reactivation of traditional actors who had remained marginalized from the decision-making process, at least since the transitional period to democracy. Students are probably among the most active who since 2006 began to articulate a series of demands oriented towards guaranteeing a greater investment from the government for both, the financing of HE, and for improving the quality level (Urrea, 2012). The last two administrations have responded partially to the demands of the students, imposing more control and requirements for private HEIs, together with a plan to modify



the State guarantee-credit system by changing it to a system run by a public organ, which gives scholarships and credits to all students excepting the wealthiest 10% (Atria, 2012).

### **Argentina: creating the conditions for a steering-at-a-distance government**

Contrary to what happened in Chile, the military council which governed Argentina between 1976 and 1983 didn't achieve an "orderly" transition to democracy. The effects of the economical crisis of the 1980's, the disastrous result of the Malvina's War and the systematic violations to human rights, imposed a transition agenda on the military which didn't contemplate institutionalizing the government policies which they had imposed during their control of power.

During the dictatorship, the government intervened every university, for which thousands of students and professors were incarcerated, and many of them assassinated or disappeared, while many others turned to exile. As opposed to what was happening in the rest of the continent, the total number of students in HE fell 22% between 1976 and 1983, going from 430,024 to 337,998 (Fernández, 2002). The military government completely controlled Argentinian HE by means of the De Facto Law N. 22.207 which, among other things, stated that university authorities had to be appointed by the military and that the HES had to pursue the objectives established by "The Process".

The first democratic government, led by Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989) eliminated the De Facto Law, restoring the legislation current up to 1966. In 1984, the Congress approved a series of measures for reinstating the Argentinian HES: it rehired hundreds of professors which had been fired by the military education authorities; it invited the exiled academics to return to their activities in the National universities, and it promoted an increase in enrollment. With

these measures, between 1984 and 1990, the number of students in all the modes of tertiary education increased 65%, going from 443,400 to 679,400. In 1994, during the government of Carlos S. Menem, the regulatory frame of HE was made considerably more flexible, allowing the emergence of numerous private HEIs. However, despite these changes, in Fernández' words (Ibid: 29), there was still not a clear definition about HE and even less clear about its objectives.

Based on the recommendations of the international financing institutions, between 1995 and 2001 the Argentinian government promoted an ambitious reform of the system. One of the more relevant aspects of this reform was the inclusion of HE in the Constitution, so for the first time, the general objectives of public HEIs and their inclusion in the National Education System were clearly defined, at the same time as the creation and operation of private HEIs was regulated. In the same direction, we find the creation of several agencies for the *ex-post* evaluation of HEIs, staff and students (Mollis, 2007).

The Higher Education Law of 1995 authorized HEIs to define their own student admission, term and graduation policies; to determine the contracting and salary regime for the administration and teaching personnel, as well as authorizing the constitution of societies, foundations or other types of associations destined to support the financial management and institutional relations with the outside. On the other hand, without directly imposing the charge of fees and the selling of services, the government gave HEIs the faculty to freely establish their tariffs and other means of self-financing. However, up until today, and despite the programmed subsidy cut-backs, the biggest part of the HE budget comes from the government (Mollis, Ibid). Moreover, differently to the Chilean HES, higher education in Argentina presents a high degree of fragmentation which manifests itself in the apparent absence of a

common purpose for the whole system and the overlapping of functions, diplomas and contradictory objectives between university and non-university HEIs.

It is possible that this situation is also owed to the way in which the government configures itself at the institutional level, and to the role played by the actors within the HEIs in this country. Indeed, the whole system seems to indicate that the government has tried to promote the reform in an indirect way, giving greater freedom to HEIs in terms of institutional governance and financing; in addition to promoting the involvement of the private sector. However, there doesn't seem to be a correspondence in the ends that the institutional actors are setting for themselves and those pursued by the government at a formal level. This leads to believe that the actual configuration of governance of the Argentinian HES presents hybrid features, since it brings together policy instruments which are distinctive of the steering-at-a-distance mode with characteristics of the procedural mode, particularly the presence of strong university bureaucracies and their relationship with the academic oligarchies.

### **Mexico, a differentiated governance mode?**

Well into the decade of 1980, the Mexican HES was defined by its limited differentiation and the absolute dependence of HEIs on the public budget. Private universities were scarce and mainly of a religious origin, with an educational offer directed exclusively to the elites. The hiring of academics, the creation of new programs and the division of public funding depended on political calculations and on the available resources. Every year, the HEIs mobilized unions, political organizations, professors and students in order to put pressure on the assignation of public funds by the government.

As in Argentina, the economic crisis of the 1980's was a decisive factor in preparing

the grounds for the change in direction in matters of HE. In the case of Mexico, the lack of resources fractured the bases over which the relative stability of the system rested, creating a conflictive environment in which the traditional actors, mainly related to autonomous universities, played a leading role, both in the recessive and modernizing stages ( $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , see box 2). One of the remarkable effects of the crisis is that without the need to reform any laws or formulate specific objectives, the budget cut-back of the government ignited the implementation of fees for enrollment and services provided, in most universities around the country. It wasn't until a few years later, in the context of the Structural Adjustment policies, that the government specified with more clarity the objectives that HE should pursue, under the rules of a liberalized economy strongly based on competition.

Modernization was then defined in terms of the financial reforms, quality and the government at an institutional level, in accordance with the recommendations of the IFIs. However, the influence of the government in autonomous universities (spread over every state of the Federation) during the first half of the 1990's was scarce, so the new actions of the government were focused towards the basic level of education and the creation of new professionalizing and short-cycled HEIs around all the country (Rama, 2006). Parallel to this, the government decentralized the division of the budget, giving greater responsibility to the local governments of every state and municipality in financing HE.

During 1993, in the context of negotiations for the enforcement of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the government of Carlos Salinas reformed article 3 of the Constitution, making it more specific about the educational modes for which the State is responsible (preschool, primary and secondary levels). With this reform, the aim was to give private actors more certainty by recognizing their participation in the National Education System. In

the concrete case of HE, the involvement of the government is defined, not without ambiguities, in rather subsidiary terms, opening the door for direct and indirect financing of private HEIs, which by then were going through a noticeable growth process.

The new private institutions offered a wide range of bachelor programs and training courses, economically more accessible for a greater percentage of the population. In contrast with the Argentinian case, this type of institutions have received strong support from the Mexican government, because it was considered that with their participation in the total educational coverage, they would eventually surpass the coverage of public HEIs. However, the demand for private education is conditioned to the economic situation of its potential clients and both the 1995 and the most recent 2008 crises have changed the provisions for the potential growth of the sector, which presently reaches  $\geq 30\%$  of the total enrollment (Aboites, 2003).

If we think about Mexican HES governance, keeping in mind Capano's typology, it is possible to notice that the influence of the government in determining the ends and means of the system is of a hybrid type. Before the modernization and differentiation of the system, HEIs seemed to effectively correspond to a particular version of the procedural mode of governance, although the independence of autonomous universities was considerably greater than in other types of institutions. However, after the diversification of the system, there's an insinuated trajectory towards the hierarchical model in the case of the new Technological Institutes, and towards the steering-at-a-distance model for the case of autonomous universities and the wide range of private institutions spread throughout the country. In this sense, the government directly controls a good part of the HES, letting autonomous institutions decide for themselves the means to use, although it uses financial restrictions and selective incentives to direct them towards the established ends.

## **Final notes**

Up to this point I have mentioned some of the outstanding tendencies which give meaning to the new forms of governance of higher education in Latin America. It seems valid to venture the hypothesis that the trajectory of the HESs analyzed tends to lean towards the hierarchical or steering-at-a-distance modes of governance, just as Capano states while having in mind the Western experience. This is not surprising considering the characteristics and direction of the HE policies are global in nature (Texeira *et al.*, 2004: XIII). Nonetheless, the comparative exercise becomes more complex when considering the diversity of outcomes which have emerged from the, apparently similar inputs. After a few decades of profound change in matters of financing, institutional government and evaluation strategies, the diversity of concrete experiences in each case contradict the idea that the direction of the reform is univocal. The evidence shows that for every situation, the decision-making context counts, not only as a mandatory reference frame for the design of the reform, but also as the potential ground for the constant redefinition of the objectives pursued.

Higher education in Latin America is a matter which attracts a lot of interest and not rarely provokes strong arguments. This isn't casual if we keep in mind that it is a very active policy sector, where there is a constant definition of fundamental matters. One of the stronger tensions and the most important, has to do precisely with the role of the State towards education in general. The debate, still strongly determined by the tensions between the supporters of increased intervention and those who think it should be limited to fulfilling a marginal role. Throughout the present paper, I've attempted to give more elements to show that the government is "still there" and that the new modes of governance of HE should lead us to question as emphatically, *how* it is governed as well as *why* and *by whom*. In the specific case of Latin America however, it is necessary to pay

special attention to the role of the different actors, specifically those of international relevance, the autonomous HEIs and the renewed capacity for action of the traditional actors. Taking into account these elements, together with

the particular characteristics in which HE is functioning in the region, we will be in a position to contribute to the wider theoretical debate about governance from a of Public Policy perspective.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza.

<sup>2</sup> Sistema de Medición de Calidad de la Enseñanza.

<sup>3</sup> Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de Desempeño de los Establecimientos Educativos Subvencionados.

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## Resumen

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### *Nuevas Formas de gobernanza en la educación superior latinoamericana. Los casos de Chile, Argentina y México*

**INTRODUCCIÓN.** Desde finales de los años ochenta, los sistemas de educación superior (SES) han experimentado un profundo proceso de reforma, caracterizado por importante redefinición del papel del Estado con respecto a los SES, así como por cambios sustantivos en las funciones y objetivos de las Instituciones de Educación Superior (IES), todo ello en un contexto influenciado por las exigencias del mercado. **MÉTODO.** Mediante una revisión de la bibliografía pertinente se comparan reformas de educación superior en varios países de Europa y América Latina, buscando establecer niveles de convergencia. **RESULTADOS.** Después de treinta años, es posible observar dos tendencias principales en los SES de la región latinoamericana: el crecimiento y el desarrollo de mercados de educación superior, y el surgimiento de nuevas modalidades de gobernanza de los SES. **DISCUSIÓN.** Algunos autores sostienen que el gobierno ha sido rebasado, mientras que otros afirman que este solo ha experimentado un cambio de tipo cualitativo. Las evidencias demuestran que el gobierno no solo sigue estando ahí, sino que sigue al mando de los procesos de transformación de los sistemas de educación superior. La intención del presente artículo es estimular el debate político sobre una cuestión que hasta ahora ha sido abordada desde una perspectiva más bien técnica. Es necesario considerar algunos rasgos específicos de la región (las presiones demográficas, el déficit estructural, el crecimiento de las instituciones de educación superior privadas), así como el creciente papel de los nuevos actores de la educación superior.

**Palabras clave:** Educación superior, Gobernanza, Reforma educativa, Papel del Gobierno, Política pública, América Latina.

## Résumé

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*Les nouvelles formes de gouvernement dans l'enseignement supérieur latino-américain.  
Le cas du Chili, l'Argentine et le Mexique.*

**INTRODUCTION.** Depuis la fin des années quatre-vingt, les systèmes d'enseignement supérieur (SES) ont connu un processus de réforme, caractérisé par une profonde redéfinition du rôle de l'État en matière de SES, et par un changement dans les fonctions et les objectifs des établissements d'enseignement supérieur (EES), dans un contexte de plus en plus influencé par les demandes du marché. **MÉTHODE.** Grâce à une révision de la bibliographie pertinente, on compare les réformes de l'enseignement supérieur dans plusieurs pays d'Europe et de l'Amérique latine, en recherchant définir les niveaux de convergence. **RÉSULTATS.** Après trente ans, c'est possible observer deux grandes tendances dans le SES en Amérique latine: a) la croissance et le développement des marchés d'enseignement supérieur, et b) l'émergence de nouveaux modes de gouvernance des SES. **DISCUSSION.** Quelques auteurs projettent que le gouvernement a été dépassé, alors que d'autres affirment qu'il a seulement expérimenté un changement de type qualitatif. Les preuves empiriques montrent que, en effet, le gouvernement n'est pas seulement là «mais reste également en charge». Le but de ce document est de stimuler le débat politique sur une question qui a été principalement abordée dans une perspective plus technique jusqu'à présent.

**Mots clés:** *L'enseignement supérieur, Gouvernance, Rôle du Gouvernement, Politiques publiques, L'Amérique latine.*

## Perfil profesional del autor

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