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Toward a Unified Agenda for Change in Latin American Higher Education

The Role of Multilateral Agencies

ROBERTO RODRÍGUEZ-GÓMEZ
ARMANDO ALCÁNTARA

Introduction

This chapter explores the role of several multilateral organizations in the configuration of a unified agenda to reform higher education in Latin America. Our main interest is to document the principal policies and strategies that these agencies advocate in order to transform Latin America's higher education systems. A central purpose of the chapter is to identify both similarities and divergences in the approaches to policy design and implementation that are being used by the multilateral agencies participating in the ongoing debates.

During the last two decades the higher education systems of Latin America have experienced a number of structural changes including a dramatic increase in enrollments, systemic territorial expansion of institutions, diversification of the system through the founding of new institutional types, and opening to private investment in third level education. In addition, legal reforms have been adopted at a national level that have weakened institutional autonomy. It could be said that the most significant changes are those that are intended to increase institutional accountability to the state and which have resulted in a variety of policy instruments aimed at improving the system's productivity, efficiency, and quality. Accordingly, there are now policies mandating performance-based pay for faculty; funding for programs that are contingent on compliance with predetermined quality assurance indicators, and incentives to encourage faculty to earn the doctorate in order to achieve their professionalization.

Despite the uniqueness of each nation's system of higher learning, there is remarkable agreement and similarity in the ways in which their governments are pursuing their modernization. Thus, our first hypothesis is that in the realm of higher education policies in Latin America, there is a tendency to-

wards the creation of a unified agenda for reform, which would follow—albeit with some years of delay and under less favorable circumstances—the same path to transformation as has been followed in the more economically developed countries (Goedegebuure, Leo et al., 1994, Morsy and Altbach, 1998).

A second hypothesis proposed in this chapter is that multilateral agencies, through recommendations, their own policies and their programs, have assumed a leading role in shaping the higher education reform agenda in Latin America. We have to acknowledge, however, that the production of and socialization to a "unified agenda" is a rather complex process. On the one hand, the perspective of multilateral organizations is not homogeneous although a convergence exists in a number of crucial aspects. On the other hand, it is worth distinguishing between the development of criteria for reform, which is the province of the government and their implementation, which is under the province of the academic community. It is within the academic community that we witness strong resistance to reforms which are perceived as eroding institutional autonomy and academic freedom. As a consequence, in the current debates the compromises and negotiations that ensue have had the effect of placing the multilateral agencies on one side of the table, and the institutions of higher education (or their representing organizations), on the other.

In this chapter we examine only one aspect of the problem: that which corresponds to the different perspectives on higher education reform in Latin America being held by some of the principal multilateral organizations. We wish to note that a more comprehensive view of the issue under consideration would have to take into account the specific political processes of each country and their effect on the implementation of the transformation agenda that has been outlined by the multilateral agencies.

Our main interest in this chapter is to compare the perspectives of organizations representing the multilateral banking system and the organizations whose principal objective is the search of political consensus for social and economic development. The first case under scrutiny is that of the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank; the second case is represented by the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) along with the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA). A number of questions guide our analysis: What is the position of these agencies with respect to higher education in Latin America? What are the reform initiatives they support? What are the similarities and differences in the reform initiatives being proposed by these agencies? Answer to these questions will allow us, to outline some of the basic elements that constitute the current "unified agenda" and to raise issues that are of critical importance for the near future.

International agencies and higher education

The notion of international agencies covers a complex institutional constellation with purposes that go from economic exchange to the formation of political consensus. These agencies cover a variety of subjects that have cooperation and the regulation of competition in common. Some of them represent regional blocks, others have worldwide coverage and yet others form conglomerates on matters of shared interest (Jallade, Lee and Samoff, 1994).

In the Latin American educational field and particularly in the university, the participation of multilateral agencies has a continuous trajectory. Some of them, like the Union of Latin American Universities (UDUAL) or the Higher Education Regional Commission of UNESCO for Latin American and the Caribbean (CRESALC) have worked for decades to stimulate regional university cooperation. However, in recent years, the presence of multilateral development banks has been a factor in the definition of higher education policies in the countries of the region and has opened up a debate, which is still going on, about the pertinence of its recommendations. Other intergovernmental agencies, that propose the search for consensus with respect to development problems, have also made pronouncements on higher education and constitute a point of reference in the processes of change in Latin American universities (Tünnermann, 1995; Kent, 1995; Coraggio, 1998; Alcántara; 2000; Rodríguez-Gómez, 2000).

For these reasons, it is important to compare the perspective of these two types of organizations on higher education reform. Beyond the obvious differences arising from the very nature of the organizations, what is the position of the international agencies with respect to higher education at present and in the future? The following text is an attempt to answer this question. To do so, we divided the presentation into two groups, the first represents the broadest level of discussion, exemplified by the cases of UNESCO and the World Bank, both agencies with a worldwide coverage including all the countries of Latin America. The second group is comprised of regional level organizations and is illustrated with the cases of ECLA and IADB.

UNESCO

UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations Organization (UN), founded in 1948 with the purpose of "promoting education for everyone, cultural development, protection of nature, cultural heritage, as well as scientific cooperation, freedom of the press and communication". In its Declaration of Principles, the associate countries made the commitment to offer "complete and egalitarian educational opportunities" and procure an "unrestricted search for objective truth and the free exchange of ideas and knowledge". Although more than 180 countries belong to the agency, some have opted to cease being members; such is the case of the United States in 1984 and the United Kingdom and Singapore in 1985 (UNESCO, 1999).

From its creation, UNESCO has been a central instance in the international educational debate. As well as the General Conference that meets every two years in ordinary sessions, thematic world conferences are held periodically: in 1998 the World Conference on Higher Education (Paris) took place and in 1999 the World Conference on Science (Budapest); agreements and resolutions were made in both that are pertinent to our analysis.

In Latin America, UNESCO is present through a decentralized unit (the Regional Education Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, OREALC) which is responsible for supporting the countries of the region in educational improvement (UNESCO, 1998c). The work of OREALC is complemented by the activities of the recently constituted International Institute of UNESCO for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IIESALC) to substitute CRESALC. The Institute is responsible for promoting the debate on university problems, disseminating studies on higher education and providing technical assistance for planning and implementing programs.

World Bank

Like UNESCO, the origins of the World Bank go back to the nineteen forties. It was founded in 1944 with the initial purpose of supporting the material reconstruction of the allied European block, but with time it has become the main multilateral instrument for financing development projects and also a highly effective means to promote the economic policy positions of the advanced capitalist countries.

The World Bank currently groups together 180 countries and mobilizes a volume of credits for US$30,000,000,000 a year that are distributed under three principal modalities: project loans, sectoral loans and structural adjustment loans. Each country has a number of votes in terms of their shareholding which, in turn, is determined by the size of their economies in relation to the world economy; thus the Group of 7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom and United States) represent 45% of the capital of the World Bank and the United States another 17%. The World Bank member countries participate simultaneously in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and, in accordance with the normativity in force, only developing countries are subject to the Bank's credit.

In different stages, the World Bank has assumed different missions. Once the reconstruction phase was ensured, the Bank turned to financing modernization projects through loans for infrastructure and equipment. In the eighties, it fostered economic liberalization processes and approved credits for the payment of foreign debt and structural adjustment. From the beginning of 1990, the Bank concentrated on a strategy "to combat poverty" that included the objective of "investing in people, particularly through the promotion of basic health and education; environmental protection; the fostering of private sector development; the strengthening of governments' capacity to provide

quality services in a sufficient, transparent way; the promotion of reforms to create a stable macroeconomic environment, and to direct investment and long term planning strategies". (World Bank, 1999a). These objectives represent a second generation of structural adjustment programs and coincide with the purpose of sustaining the viability of the macroeconomic reform and alleviating its social and political impacts. In this way, the part of the loans that the World Bank channels to financial and public sector management tended to decrease: in the eighties, approximately one half of the loans were directly linked to the macroeconomic adjustment program, while in the nineties, this proportion decreased to one third (World Bank, 2000).

The World Bank began operating in the educational field in 1963. In the sixties and seventies, loans were focused on training and technical formation; and in this period the proportion of resources for education was marginal given the total number of loans approved. In the eighties, the situation began to change: from 1980 to 1995 the volume of loans to the educational sector tripled and its share in total World Bank credits doubled. In the nineties, the overall average for education was 8.2%, with a peak of 10.9% in 1995. In the Latin American region the average for the decade was 8.6%, with a maximum of 12.3% in 1995, which in absolute terms represents more than US$600,000,000 a year.

The World Bank focus on educational priorities has also varied. In 1990, a preference for basic education was established as the central part of resource distribution; during the decade projects associated with primary and secondary education consumed more than half the credits of the sector. In 1995, a priority was established in education for girls and an interest in the educational needs of ethnic minorities and indigenous groups, while infrastructure loans began to decrease and loans for other educational inputs to increase (World Bank, 1995). In spite of this approach, the Bank continued approving credits for post-basic educational programs. In Latin America several projects to reform higher education were approved, as is the case of Argentina (1996), Mexico (1998) and Chile (1999) with credits for US$165,000,000, US$180,200,000 and US$165,000,000 respectively (World Bank, 1999b).

In its most recent document on sectoral policy, the World Bank proposes four global priority areas: basic education, with special attention to girls and the poorest sector of the population; early interventions, with programs aimed at early childhood and school hygiene; innovative delivery, including distance education, open learning and new technologies; and systemic reform considering actions such as: determination of standards, curricular reform, achievement assessment, governance and decentralization (World Bank, 1999c).

The Bank recognizes that these priorities are not necessarily the same for all regions and countries given the diversity of conditions and results the different educational systems and structures present. For Latin America, it suggests the

following order of priorities: "to improve the learning-teaching process; to include those who are excluded; to meet the needs of young people; to reform institutional management; to use technology to improve education and reform higher education" (World Bank, 1999c) and with respect to higher education reform it recommends; "diversifying tertiary education in order to raise quality and efficiency, improving university access for the lowest two-fifths in terms of income and strengthening the role of the private sector in financing and providing higher studies". (World Bank, 1999d).

ECLA

The Economic Commission for Latin America was founded in 1948 by a resolution of the Economic and Social Council of the UN, with the following objectives: to carry out studies and research; to promote economic and social development through cooperation and integration; to collect, organize, interpret and disseminate information and data relative to the economic and social development of the region; to provide advisory services to governments; implement technical cooperation and assistance programs for development; organize meetings of intergovernmental groups and groups of experts; to sponsor training courses, symposia and seminars; and contribute to the regional perspective of world problems being taken into account.

Throughout its history, ECLA has played an important role in defining development options for Latin America (Bielschowsky, 1998). In the fifties, the Commission recommended import substitution as the basis of an industrialization strategy suitable for Latin American reality, while it also insisted on stimulating exports and intraregional exchange. It also underlined the virtues of planning and recommended investment in human capital as a premise for technological advance. In the sixties, ECLA's thinking was sustained on two fundamental theoretical bodies: dependency theory and the thesis of structural heterogeneity. Through this reflection, that incorporated new analytical dimensions to the subject of appropriate development, it underlined the need for a more equitable social distribution of the product in order to respond to the demands unleashed by the modernizing process.

The discussion in the seventies centered around "development styles", a concept suggesting a broader definition of development, not only economic but also social, political and cultural. In the face of the world economic crisis of 1973–1974, the Commission recommended a better combination of the use of the internal market and an export drive. In the context of Latin American militarism and during the crisis of the eighties, ECLA lost its role as protagonist as an instance promoting development strategies in the region—a role that was assumed by the IMF with its structural adjustment programs. Nevertheless, it continued with its work on theoretical reflection and the formulation of recommendations. Thus, in relation to adjustment policies, the Commission proposed that the recessive adjustment of the balance of payments be substi-

tuted by an expansive adjustment. At the end of the eighties, ECLA opened up a discussion on the long-term growth process, centered on the thesis of productive transformation with equity. In the nineties, the development model recommended by the Commission, in tune with the new conditions of global exchange, emphasized competitive trade liberalization based on the addition of intellectual value to exports.

In ECLA's trajectories, the theme of education is a constant. It insists on its key role in national and regional development with different shades of meaning. ECLA's influence on Latin American educational thought is also relevant and it parts from long term research projects (suffice it to remember the Development and Education in Latin America project of the eighties) and a vast editorial production on the subject.

IADB

The Interamerican Development Bank (IADB) was established in 1959—in the context of the Cold War and at the request of the American government—with the purpose of "accelerating the economic and social progress of Latin American and the Caribbean". Today, this bank is the main source of multilateral financing for Latin America and the Caribbean: since it was founded it has channeled direct loans for almost US$100,000,000,000. IADB belongs to 46 countries; 28 are "regional members" (the American continent) and the remaining countries are "extraregional" (from Europe, Asia and the Middle East). As in the case of the World Bank, the voting power of each country is derived from its shareholding; at present, 51% of the votes correspond to the conglomerate of Latin American and Caribbean countries, 32% to the US, 4% to Canada and the remaining 13% to non-regional members.

During the 1960's and 1970's, IADB was a pioneer in the multilateral financing of social projects in the areas of health and education; moreover, in the same period, it contributed to the creation of some hundred higher education institutions. In spite of this, the loans for basic infrastructure (roads, hydraulic works and energy, transport and housing) consumed most of the resources. In the eighties, the debt crisis put pressure on the Bank to operate principally as an instance of financial assistance. Indeed, the projects approved operated as resource transfer vehicles and not as IADB intended—to make investments that would foster productivity and economic reform. In this context, a debate arose within the agency between two positions, one that insisted on its role providing financial and technical assistance and the other that adjudicated it with a central role in promoting the economic policy recommended by the "Washington Consensus"; that is, in favor of structural adjustment. In 1994, some conciliation was achieved and put into writing in the "IADB-8 Agreement". This agreement authorized the eighth increase in the financial fund of IADB since its creation, increasing authorized resources from US$60,000,000,000 to US$100,000,000,000. The agreement also indicated the

"appropriate combination" with which the Bank may distribute loans for economic policy reforms and for social investments.

Recently, IADB reformulated its priorities on the basis of a broader definition of development, understood as "equitable, which supposes the integration of the poor, women and minorities in the benefits and obligations proper to development; balanced, in the sense that it demands the participation of the public sector to an equal extent as the private sector and civil society, and sustainable, bearing in mind its impact on the environment and the need to have more vigorous institutions" (IADB, 1999a). At the end of the decade, IADB did a five year planning exercise that included, among other goals, "to make US$40,000,000,000 available to the region in the next five years; devote half this sum to the social sectors and duplicate the amount of loans dedicated to education so that they will reach a minimum of US$5,000,000,000 in the five year period" (IADB, 1999b).

In the educational field, IABD's loans have supported different areas and programs in accordance with the criteria in force in each state. At present, priority is given to reform and extension of secondary education projects, the strengthening of higher technical, non-university education and the consolidation of the national science and technology systems; in the 1990's, Mexico and Brazil contracted credits under this last concept. In 1993, the Mexican project "Science and Technology Program" was approved with a total cost of US$300,000,000 of which IADB contributed US$180,000,000 and the national government a further US$120,000,000. This project includes a sub-program for Support to the Technological Modernization of Industry that the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACyT) is in charge of, and is aimed at distributed direct financing to micro and small, private enterprises so that they can carry out research and development projects, and a sub-program on the Formation of Human Resources that consists in an educational project at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) for scientific and technological development (IADB, 1997b). In the Brazilian case, in September 1995, a similar credit was approved for the "Science and Technology Program" project with a total cost of US$320,000,000 to which IADB contributed 50%. As in the previous case, the project consists of a sub-program for the technological modernization of local enterprises through which reimbursable resources are distributed to those involved, and an academic sub-program that transfers non-reimbursable resources and funds for research to public universities and public or private research centers (IADB, 1998). In both loans, amortization terms are over 20 years.

From the characterization provided so far, we should add that both the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank are included in the definition of lending banks, that is, the investor countries are exclusive credit subjects. In practice, the developing countries are the borrowers, but they have minimum power of decision in the definition of the banks' policies, since their

contributions to the fund limit their voting capacities. The influence of multilateral banking on the economic and social policy trends of developing countries is derived from this condition of basic inequality and operates under the logic of "crossed conditioning" (Manchón, 1995), based on the shared views of the actors with greatest weight in the international financial community. The political benefit obtained by the investor countries is nothing to be despised; in part because it ensures a continuous renovation of alignment in the world balance of power today in the framework of competition between regional economic blocks and, also in part, as a distension factor to avoid pressures arising from the erosion in living conditions in the poorest countries (Vilas, 1995).

The complexity of the system of international relations is not reduced, of course, to interactions between multilateral banks and countries; the role of intergovernmental adjustment agencies, like UNESCO and ECLA, already described, must be added. These last agencies lack tax instruments or ways of conditioning similar to those of the multilateral banks. Their recommendations are indicative and their power of conviction is based, almost exclusively, on their capacity to articulate and transfer rationality to the emerging social development models. Historically, there have been convergences, differences and frank opposition between the postures of multilateral banking and the consensus agencies, which is indicative of the contingent character in which the definition of said models occurs, a situation in which we can locate the debate on educational policy. For these reasons, it is necessary to go into the specific traits, into nuances and even into the details of the different educational policy proposals of the multilateral agencies considered here, an aspect that we shall look at below.

Perspective of the international agencies with respect to higher education

In this section, we examine the proposals for higher education reform that the agencies included in our study have developed. It should be pointed out that we have reviewed documents with different dates (although all from the nineties) and issued in different contexts. Nevertheless, it seems to us that they reflect the principal policy approaches suggested and that, as a whole, they allow us to appreciate the essential and superficial differences that interest us.

The World Bank and the lessons of experience

In 1994, the World Bank published "Higher Education: Lessons of Experience" (World Bank, 1994) in which it presents a general diagnosis of what, from the perspective of the agency, constitutes the critical matters in higher education in developing countries. Although the empirical analysis concentrates principally on the African region, the inferences, conclusions and recommendations devolve upon the set of developing countries.

Among the problems diagnosed in the document (Kent, 1995) the following should be mentioned: 1) The bad quality of higher education as a result of a rhythm of expansion imposed on the national higher education systems in a context of limited economic resources. In the eighties, while net growth of the gross domestic product was minimal and in some cases regressive, university expansion continued, giving rise to "do more with less" strategies that, in the end, would be counterproductive for academic quality. 2) Problems with efficiency in the institutional use of government resources and subsidies. For various, although convergent, reasons, (statutes of autonomy, absence of an accountability culture, university governability based on relations of clientage, lack of efficient methods and systems of administration, corruption, etc.), both the handling of resources and productivity are diagnosed as inefficient. As the rates of terminal efficiency in the developing countries are also low, costs per graduate tend to be higher than those prevailing in the developed countries. 3) Problems in equity since, according to the World Bank, the priority granted to higher education in the developing countries caused a severe distributive imbalance giving rise to the university institutions consuming resources that could have been destined to basic or secondary education or the technological segment. Since, as a group, university students come from the middle and upper classes, university subsidies imply a biased subsidy in favor of these social groups, and in detriment to the education support needs of lower class sectors. This bias is translated into an inequitable distribution of opportunities and income among the population.

Based on this line of analysis, the recommendations contained in the document cover three public policy areas suggested in the following objectives: a) to increase institutional differentiation, b) to strengthen the institutions' financial base, and c) to improve the quality of teaching and research. As a corollary to the recommendations, the need to redefine the role of government in relation to national higher education systems is emphasized. Since the document is also offered as "a guide to support the developing nations in the formulation of effective reform strategies", the chapter on proposals is illustrated with examples of cases that have successfully implemented solutions and projects attending the objectives mentioned above.

"To increase institutional differentiation" is a proposal for redistributing the demand for higher education, avoiding excessive concentration of preferences in saturated areas and professional positions. Instead of a curricular structure concentrated on the traditional liberal professions, according to the World Bank, there should be a trend towards a system that, as well as the conventional degree, can offer short cycle technological modalities, higher technological studies, above all those focused on new technologies, postgraduate studies for research, teaching and specialized professional practice, among others. Together with the above, it is proposed to demolish bureaucratic barri-

ers that until today have prevented adequate mobility of students among cycles, modalities and degree courses.

"To strengthen the financial base of the institutions" is a proposal that suggests such actions as: combining government subsidies with registration fees and supporting this combination with educational credit systems independent of the government; diversifying the sources of institutional financing through projects with technological applications and through the sale of services; differentiating government subsidy through competition for programs for which funding is offered and by means of institutional productivity assessment instruments. Furthermore, recommendations are made in the sense of improving university administration and pressing for transparent accountability, as well as favoring competition between private individuals in the supply of higher education.

"Improve the quality of teaching and research" is also a general postulate that translates into a set of concrete proposals. The need is emphasized to have external evaluation instances that will give rise to positive competition between institutions and will favor the standardization of the quality of the results. The importance of constructing links between universities and the productive sectors is underlined since in this way it is possible to construct a higher education system more pertinent and sensitive to market needs and productive transformation.

As several specialists have noted, an uncompromising economic supposition underlies the World Bank's approach: higher education is significant in terms of value added, that is, to the extent that the individual returns the investment and to the extent that the national economy is favored through competitiveness. The subject of educational expenditure as investment has been the subject of interest of the World Bank for a long time and refers to the calculation of the "rates of return" of schooling. Until the beginning of the nineties, the Bank's economists had sustained that, in developing countries, basic and secondary education generate the greatest rates of return at both individual and aggregate level, which justifies government investment in these levels. In contrast, the higher education subsidy is regressive for national economies and should therefore be transferred to students and their families (Psacharopoulos, 1994). This orthodox thesis has been debated and modified in the thematic groups of the Bank (Betts, 1999) and, although the debate has not been closed, a broader view on the subject can be seen that is translated, for example, into proposals of a shared subsidy for higher education (Colclough, 1996).

Of course, the problematic of higher education is not exhausted in a discussion on financing, diversification and reform of contents and methods. Questions on the meaning, mission and functions of the universities appear together with these subjects, subjects that UNESCO has tried to recover

through a broad discussion of the social, political and humanistic objectives of higher education.

Agenda 21 of UNESCO

In October 1998, the World Conference on Higher Education sponsored by UNESCO was held, an act in which work commenced three years earlier with the publication of the organization's policy document "Change and Development in Higher Education" (UNESCO, 1995) was culminated. Between 1996 and 1998, several Regional Conferences were held in different parts of the world with the purpose of collecting the points of view of the communities of academics, directors, civil society groups, government bodies and other social actors on four key subjects: relevance, quality, financing and administration, and international cooperation. With this thematic agenda the following Conferences took place: Havana (November 1996), Dakar (April 1997), Tokyo (July 1997), Palermo (September 1997) and Beirut (March 1998). Another two meetings of experts at regional level were also organized: one with the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, July 1998) and another with the countries of North America in Toronto (April, 1998) in which Canada and the United States participated as well as representatives from Mexico and Puerto Rico.

The result of this program was an enormous amount of documents arising from declarations, conclusions, minutes and other texts that, taken as a whole, offer a complete view of higher education problems in the world, while providing a range of solutions with which to face the educational challenges of the twenty-first century. Similarly, the base documents were prepared for the thematic debates, that were held in parallel to the sessions of the World Conference, dealing with such aspects as education and culture, the new information technologies, the students' view, the role of the woman, sustainable human development, education for peace, the problematic of employment and the role of educational research, among others.

As expected, the documents approached the subjects contained in the 1995 text. Nevertheless, each document reaches a level of development and depth of analysis that is really remarkable. Similarly, these texts are outstanding for their explicit formulation of political and value commitments that, in each case, provide the fundaments for the orientation and postures presented. Of course, to review the content of all these documents exceeds the limits of this article, even more so if it is considered that they are syntheses. Nevertheless, we shall refer to one of them in particular given that it illustrates the general sense of the discussion and its main themes.

The text, "Towards an agenda 21 for higher education" (UNESCO, 1998b) synthesizes the challenges and tasks for the coming century seen in the light of the results of the Regional Conferences. It begins with a list of the missions that the contemporary university and higher education systems fulfil and should tackle more deeply in the immediate future. Thus, it indicates, in first

place, that "the eminent mission of higher education is to serve mankind and society", that "through its research function, its courses of study and training, its cooperative activities and its alliances with several social sectors, higher education is called to make a key contribution to opening up and illuminating new paths towards a better future for society and the individual and to give direction and orientation to that future". Based on such principles, higher education has two important missions before it: "to actively participate in solving the main global, regional and local problems (such as poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, social exclusion, exacerbation of inequalities between nations and individuals, widening of the gap in science and technology between industrialized and developing countries, and environmental protection), and to work intensely on the generation of proposals and recommendations that promote sustainable human development, the extension of knowledge, universal respect for human rights, equality of opportunities between men and women, justice and the application of democratic principles within their own institutions and in society, understanding between nations and ethnic groups, religions, cultures and other groups, in favor of a culture of peace and nonviolence and in the construction of intellectual and moral solidarity".

It is similarly considered that the traditional mission of maintaining, increasing and disseminating knowledge through research and intellectual creation is fundamental, as is the teaching and dissemination of said knowledge. This mission must include the task of "developing endogenous capacities to acquire and apply existing knowledge and to create new knowledge". Similarly, it is the task of higher education "to educate responsible, informed and active citizens as well as highly qualified specialists". It should be added with respect to this vision that one of the most important missions of higher education is concerned with ethic and cultural aspects: "to preserve and affirm cultural identity, promote the propagation and creation of cultural values, to protect and foster cultural diversity and to participate actively in the development of intercultural understanding". Finally, it is mentioned that higher education must "contribute to the implementation of lifelong learning for everyone". In this sense, higher education is considered to "have a great responsibility with respect to the educational system as a whole and the educational activities of society".

Another part of the document stresses the importance of higher education systems establishing and harmonizing relations with the different instances comprising society and the State. Emphasis is given to the strategic role of partnerships between higher education institutions and the different social actors in order to promote the development of said institutions in the perspective of reaching higher levels of pertinence and to promote the notion of co-responsibility in the educational enterprise. The subject of innovation is then approached. Innovation must be promoted so that higher education can successfully face the challenges of a labor market that demands greater competences and knowledge, as well as the need for most of the population to have

them. One challenge that is outlined on the horizon is how to take higher education to the groups and sectors that need to be updated in order to confront their new employment conditions. In this discussion, the notion of lifelong learning is the key and diversification and flexibility actions appear as feasible responses in the reform that is required.

The subject of access to higher education is central throughout the document. It is one point on which the documents produced by the Regional Conferences found convergence, from different points of view, when they indicate that: "All persons must have the possibility, at some stage in their lives, of access to education and to have an opportunity to go back to university life (Havana); it is important to extend and diversify opportunities so that each citizen can be a beneficiary of higher education, as well as competence and knowledge (Tokyo); diversification of demand implies institutional diversification, as well as new policies and flexibility to guarantee access (Palermo); special measures are required to facilitate access to those who have begun their working life or have had to give up their studies prematurely (Beirut); there is a need for policies aimed at specific goals to increase the number and rate of participation of women in higher education, in teaching and in positions of responsibility as well as in science and technology careers (Dakar)".

"Agenda 21" also considers the subject of university students and professors, recognizing that they are "the main protagonists in higher education". It is noted that, even recognizing the potential of distance teaching technologies, the professor-student interaction and the relations among students, with respect to human contacts, are formative and educational to such an extent that they are determinants of the quality and the results of the teaching-learning process. With respect to the students, the importance of their "playing an active role in higher education institutions" is stressed as is the importance of this role being recognized by the institutions and translated into the opening up of possibilities for them and their organizations to participate in decision making and in the design of courses of action. It is mentioned that "everything that concerns the students is of interest to the professors and vice versa", in such a way that "the formation and updating of the teaching body is a key aspect to being able to raise the levels of educational quality." Furthermore, it is recognized that "the participation of professors in research, as well as the link between research and teaching is essential in ensuring quality and effectiveness in higher education in order to contribute to the progress of knowledge and develop endogenous research and research and development capacities." This chapter of the document closes with a pronouncement on the need to increase mobility of professors and students on national, regional and international planes and the need to develop institutional networks to facilitate the exchange and mutual certification of knowledge.

The following point considers the topics of autonomy and accountability, academic freedom, objectivity and intellectual rigor. It indicates that "aca-

demic freedom in higher education and its wide autonomy are essential for the institutions to perform their mission" and it mentions that autonomy presupposes responsibilities in the face of society. The document ends with a section on research and anticipation functions. To begin, it indicates that research is a fundamental mission and a principal function of higher education, that the task of advancing in knowledge and focusing it on solving fundamental social problems is the responsibility of the institutions, but also of the academics in particular. Moreover, it notes that higher education institutions must have sufficient resources to do research and that the State is mainly responsible for the task of financing research, although other social agents must also commit themselves to this task. Finally, it indicates that anticipation is an important task of higher education. In this sense, universities must assume the function of anticipating the future needs and requirements of the societies that contain them in order to offer alternatives to the challenges they are facing.

As indicated above, the vision of UNESCO, product of a wide consensus that collects the points of view of a large variety and diversity of actors in education, attempts to create a balance between the requirements of the contemporary world and the traditional, permanent mission of the university. Similarly, it takes into account not only the function of higher education in economic development, but its cultural role, its importance for individual and social development, as well as its weight in the construction of a democratic space. But are these two visions, that is, that of the World Bank concentrated on the profitability of higher education and its contribution to development, and the broad view of UNESCO, totally incompatible? Or are there perhaps possibilities for a synthesis that would recover the economic and social imperatives of the contemporary university? One tentative reply to these dilemmas can be found in the joint work of the World Bank and UNESCO that we review below.

World Bank + UNESCO = Peril and promise

In March of the year 2000 a document was put into circulation entitled "Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise" that was drawn up by a task force jointly sponsored by the World Bank and UNESCO, as follow-up to the agreements of the World Conference in Paris 1998 (World Bank and UNESCO, 2000). The document in question consists of six sections.

The first deals with longstanding problems and new realities. This chapter constitutes the context of the whole analysis and examines the expansion of demand, tendencies to diversification in higher education systems and potential implications of the knowledge revolution. Chapter two, "Higher education and the public interest" emphasizes the contribution of higher education to the economic, social, political and cultural development of nations and therefore its public interest. This argument is set against the traditional approach of measuring benefits according to the "economic rates of return" derived from

public or private investments in higher education. The third chapter considers the higher education systems, discusses the theme of functional diversification of the university systems and indicates that the conception of free market, according to which systems tend to adjust themselves through competition, is mistaken in the case of higher education. This idea is opposed to the need for a non-centralized coordination of systems that seeks to protect university autonomy, foster competition between similar institutions and give coherence and rationality to the system as a whole. At the end of the section, it concludes that "governmental guidance is an essential part of any solution."

Governability constitutes the principal theme of the fourth chapter, indicating in first place the general principles of good institutional government: academic freedom, cooperative government, clear rights and responsibilities, selection for academic merit, financial stability and accountability. It also develops a set of 'instruments' with which to achieve the objectives of good government: effective, capable collegiate bodies, organs of government with broad vision, practices of responsible, flexible, transparent financial programming and administrative control, access to data for decision making, solid leadership, selection and promotion of academic and management personnel based on academic merit, security of employment, adequate remuneration and internal and external evaluation and accreditation systems. The fifth chapter is devoted to examining science and technology and it notes the backwardness of the developing countries in this terrain, as well as the need to promote science and technology systems through government resources and the construction of links and alliances with both enterprises and international cooperation. It also stresses the responsibility of governments to promote science and technology activities given the incipient character of university and industry cooperation.

In chapter six the document pleads for the establishment of liberal education in some higher education institutions of the developing countries, since this approach is pertinent for the formation of flexible professionals with the capacity to adapt themselves to a rapidly changing environment. Unlike the traditional approach that underlines the need to offer specialized technical formation, an argument is presented in favor of liberal studies, providing measures are taken to offer a solid, updated, flexible formation. Finally, in the conclusion section recommendations are postulated around two groups of objectives. The first has to do with the need to increase resources and the second with improving efficiency in handling them. It is necessary to extend the financial base to 1) improve educational infrastructure, particularly computers, networks, science laboratories and equipment, although they are also needed to reinforce conventional infrastructure: classrooms, libraries, dormitories, recreational spaces and cultural installations, 2) design, test and implement new programs and curricular designs, as well as expanding or introducing liberal education, 3) recruit, retain and motivate a permanent ac-

ademic staff, 4) increase access to socially unfavored populations, 5) foster teaching and research in basic and applied science areas. In order to improve efficiency in university management, institutional measures are proposed such as a) reinforcing internal government, b) improving the quality of academic programs, c) developing and motivating academic personnel. It is also suggested that government instances develop the architecture of a more rational higher education system that will, at the same time, promote mass education and excellence, as well as attending the character of public interest in higher education. Similarly, it stresses the importance of implementation for, as it is said, "the field of international development is plagued with good ideas that have never been seen to bear fruit". For this reason, the document concludes, "we must above all be practical if we wish to achieve a successful reform".

The perspective of the UNESCO-World Bank task force on higher education reform allows us to suppose that the position of multilateral banks in the future will assume a profile of greater flexibility, more sensitive to the political and social dimensions of change. The outline of a new profile can begin to be glimpsed in the credit preferences of the World Bank, with greater aperture towards post-basic teaching and higher education proposals and also through the pronouncements of some of the most influential intellectuals in the design of the World Bank policies on education. Thus, an attitude more favorable to the strengthening of the higher education, science and technology systems of developing countries would be expected providing projects which are congruent with the "hard" lines of the proposal: pragmatism, reinforcement of private participation, insistence on quality and efficacy, formulas of social compensation, use of distance education options, lifelong education approach, among the principal aspects. Below we shall see the Latin American view of the subject.

ECLA: Education as the nucleus of productive transformation with equity

The proposal "productive transformation with equity" reflects the conceptual tendency behind ECLA's proposal with respect to Latin American development at the end of the "decade lost to development", as the Commission itself characterized the nineteen eighties. This proposal sustains a central thesis: deliberate, systematic incorporation and diffusion of technical progress constitutes the pivot of productive transformation while making it compatible with political democratization and a growing social equity. The set of actions recommended by the Commission to reach sustainable development, appropriate to Latin American reality, is articulated around this idea (ECLA, 1990).

The proposal distinguishes two types of economic growth: one that makes it possible to raise the standard of living of the population by means of an increase in productivity and one based on the depredation of natural resources and the reduction in real remuneration. In the first case, technical progress acts as the variable that articulates the objectives in tension: competitiveness and social sustainability. According to ECLA, to activate technical progress it is

necessary to strengthen the entrepreneurial base, have a technological infrastructure, participate in the international economy and propitiate the formation of human resources with capacity to handle new knowledge. However, the Commission indicates that backwardness in education and in the field of the generation of knowledge are obstacles that prevent advances in this direction.

On this conceptual basis, the Commission elaborated a general and a specific proposal for education. The first, entitled "Equity and Productive Transformation, an Integrated Approach", prepared for the twenty-fourth period of sessions of the Commission at the beginning of 1992, discusses the means to reach a situation of convergence between growth and social equity. The second, published that same year, entitled "Education and Knowledge, Nucleus of Productive Transformation with Equity" (ECLA, 1992) establishes the purpose of "contributing to the creation, in the coming decade, of certain educational conditions, training and the incorporation of scientific-technological progress that permit the transformation of the productive structures of the region into a framework for progressive social equity".

Below we present a summary of ECLA's document, specifying the arguments and proposals most closely related to educational reform and the scientific and technological research systems.

From ECLA's perspective, education is strategic for development. This condition comes from its role in the formation of subjects with the values and behavior of modern citizenship and their functions in the construction of the capacities and skills that generate productivity. The strengthening of the knowledge production and diffusion system which, of course, includes education at all its levels, is understood as a decisive instrument for facing both the internal challenge of citizenship and the external challenge of competitiveness. This perspective is recognized in the developed countries and in those with late industrialization and has been translated into important policies to foster education, science and technology. In contrast, in the developing countries, even when valuing the relation between education and technical progress, there is a persistent backwardness and the effort to improve has been insufficient, generally ineffective and with unsatisfactory results. In effect, although the Commission admits that the educational, training and science and technology systems of the region have experienced an important quantitative expansion, it indicates that insufficiencies in the quality of the results persists in most countries and there is little pertinence with respect to the requirements of the environment and evident problems in equity in the social distribution of access opportunities. Furthermore, the institutionality of the system is characterized for its rigidity, bureaucratization and lack of linkage with the productive and social milieu.

Based on the ideas and the diagnosis presented, ECLA establishes the need for a strategy to stimulate the transformation of education and training and to

increase the scientific-technological potential of the region with a view to forming modern citizenship, linked to both democracy and equity and international competitiveness. The proposal defines competitiveness as the central objective, performance as policy guideline and decentralization as a component of the institutional scheme. The Commission states that the proposal recognizes tensions between citizenship and competitiveness, equity and performance, and integration and decentralization, but concentrates on the sphere of complementariness that exists on each of these planes.

The strategy for change is oriented towards the following directions: i) from a political point of view, attempt to assume knowledge production and diffusion activities as strategic, long term tasks that require the broadest consensus possible between the different social actors and a stable financial commitment to their development; ii) from a contents point of view, to focalize action on the results of education, training and science and technology and on their articulation with performance demands from people, enterprises and institutions in the different spheres of society; iii) from an institutional point of view, break the isolation of the educational establishment and the generation and the transmission of knowledge and introduce action modalities in which the actors have more room for autonomy in decisions and greater responsibility for results.

In order to reach these objectives, the proposal defines actions in seven policy fields. The first refers to the need to overcome the isolation of the educational, training and acquisition of scientific and technological knowledge systems, opening them up to social requirements. The following two fields refer to the results sought with this aperture: to ensure universal access to codes of modernity, and promote creativity in access, diffusion and innovation in scientific-technological matters. The following four are of an instrumental character: responsible institutional management; professionalization and protagonism of the educators; financial commitment of society to education, training and the scientific-technological effort, and regional and international cooperation. In these different spheres of policy, guidelines are established that influence the different components of formal education (pre-school, primary, secondary and higher), training and the scientific-technological effort and, very specially, the links between them and the productive sector. The preparation and specification of policies, as well as their application in various national circumstances, is a task that falls to each country.

ECLA's document stresses the role of regional and international cooperation to reach the objectives indicated. On this subject, it proposes the formation of human resources in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean with a view to a more efficient use of installed capacity in universities and academic centers of the region. In specific terms, the following lines of cooperation are stressed: improvement in quality; innovations at middle education

level; accreditation of institutions, programs and units of higher education, formation of academics and researchers; institutional reform and local administration; technical training; educational research; student exchange and strategic cooperation.

In spite of the fact that ECLA's document omits particular recommendations on higher education reform in Latin America, it is clear that the principal challenges evolve around notions of pertinence, integration and linkage. Pertinence, in the sense of a better relation between university supply and the demands of society. Integration, understood as the effort to harmonize the set of subsystems that comprise the educational structure in each country. Linkage, in the sense of relating the needs of the productive structure with the capacities generating knowledge in the higher education institutions through specific projects. (Cf. Labastida, et al., 1993).

The document does not ignore the need for greater financial backing from multilateral banks for projects involving education in general and the knowledge producing sector in particular. In this respect, it notes that during the eighties, these organizations decreased their reply in these areas in terms of resources and the profile of their activities. However, ECLA concludes that in the nineties there are new economic and political conditions that permit greater collaboration between governments, consensus agencies and development banks through which support is given to the performance of tasks directly linked to education and the production of knowledge as the nucleus of productive transformation with equity. On this last aspect, it is of interest to know the proposal of the Interamerican Development Bank, a subject we will consider below in order to close the section on an analysis of the documents on strategies for university reform issued by the multilateral agencies.

IADB's proposal for reforming higher education in Latin America

The document entitled "Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Strategy Paper", published in 1997, presents the position of IADB on higher education in the region, as well as a strategy to improve it (IADB, 1997a). It also attempts to appraise its position and its implications in policy matters. It similarly attempts to take into account what lies beyond the universities and the social task they are associated with. One of the central arguments of the document is that higher education performance in Latin America and the Caribbean varies substantially in the different countries and sectors as well as between institutions and internal units of the institutions themselves. It attributes such heterogeneity to different functions the university establishments fulfil.

As well as stressing the social importance of higher education, beginning with what it means for the life of the people and with its demographic and economic aspects, the document emphasizes that the need for persons formed

through advanced education has never been as great as it is now. In this sense, it affirms that the modernization and integration of Latin America within an increasingly globalized economy and society depend to a very large extent on higher education. Based on this, IABD rejects the view that higher education is marginal to national development or that the State is removed from higher education. But it also opposes the perspective that higher education can only perform its role well if it is expanded and strengthened with greater public funds. The document insists that the development of higher education requires a reorientation and redistribution of rules and resources, a process that IABD is willing to promote through work with reformers in each country.

After enumerating the achievements and limitations of higher education in the region to date, the document focuses on an analysis of what it considers to be its main functions: academic leadership; professional tasks and work; formation and technical development; and liberal education. These four functions are considered fundamental for the diagnosis, reform and strategy of IADB. It recognizes that the typology has a strong economic emphasis and stresses the teaching and learning process. It also proves to be complicated and difficult to apply in institutional contexts in which a juxtaposition of functions can frequently be observed.

Further on, three crucial aspects of sector policy are reviewed: equity and public subsidies; incentives, financing and government; and improvement in quality and control. Each of these aspects is focused on the four functions mentioned above. Finally, it points out that IADB will support applications whose goal is to favor broad reforms that reasonably seek to improve quality and efficiency. Another objective is to support programs whose results exceed the benefits that students can obtain individually. They will also favor applications that promote equality, as for example, scholarships for students with economic needs and aid for institutions in impoverished countries and regions. As a consequence, it is considered that a typical project would contain a budget item for organizational reform that would be administered by the educational authorities, and a competitive fund to support the initiatives of individual institutions or programs within institutions.

IADB's proposals are similar to those of the World Bank in several aspects, such as promoting efficiency and quality through reforms in the academic and administrative structure of the institutions, stimulating general evaluation and accreditation mechanisms, establishing mechanisms for mixed financing, facilitating the articulation of the higher education system with the social and productive environment, and propitiating transparent, systematic accountability. In spite of these coincidences, that show that there is a shared approach by both agencies to higher education and the possibilities of reforming it, there are also important differences, above all at the level of priority assigned to higher education projects (in practice, IADB has conceded greater importance to initiatives of this type) and also on the operative plane that range

from the financial conditions under which loans are agreed on to modes of supervision and evaluation of the respective projects, subjects that merit a detailed study.

Final comments

In this article we have attempted to offer the reader an overview of the debate under way on higher education in Latin America from the perspective of the multilateral agencies. It should be stressed that this is an open, well-developed discussion, in which the interlocutors influence one another and tend to agree, in principle, on postures. For example, it is essential to support higher education and scientific research in order to advance towards a society of knowledge; it is necessary to expand and differentiate higher education systems and add quality to the teaching-learning processes; care must be taken to guarantee equity in supply and equality of opportunities based on academic merit; new, more solid links must be forged between higher education and the social system in order to obtain better levels of pertinence and effectiveness; it is important to attend administrative and government aspects so that institutions can become more efficient and can concentrate on innovation; a greater effort is needed to consolidate academic staff and thus improve the formation of professionals up to the task of facing present challenges.

Important differences can be found, however, with respect to the means proposed to carry out transformations like the ones indicated and also with respect to the actors who are considered capable of being the driving force behind them. For example: What should the role of the State be in higher education and science and technology policy? In what way should the private sector participate in order to stimulate the formation of professionals and scientific and technological research? Who should pay for higher education and through which mechanisms? What types of assessment translate into quality and innovation? How can an improvement in the academic level of professors be promoted? What means can be used to advance towards the objectives of equity and pertinence? What is the optimum distribution of the educational modalities comprising the higher education system? What priority should be given to the development of open and distance education options? What type of social contract should be established in order to reach an appropriate balance between the demands of society and the possibilities of response from universities? How can labor market conditions and a formation in higher education be harmonized? What are considered to be desirable scenarios in the middle and long term and how can progress be made towards constructing them?

It is precisely around these questions that a definition of policy guidelines for higher education opens up new avenues. In this context the role of multilateral agencies becomes critical and goes along two complementary ways, each having a different kind of impact:

a) The first way is created through research, diagnoses, and consultation that, after being systematized is transformed into recommendations and proposals for reform or in positions in favor of specific courses of action. We also find that these agencies promote their views by sponsoring a variety of activities such as debates, courses, workshops and seminars. The technical assistance that these agencies provide in response to the request of national governments also provide an opportunity to communicate their agenda. Finally, the numerous publications (printed and electronic) produced by these agencies play an important role in the diffusion of information that reinforces their perspectives.

b) In the case of the multilateral banking system, the equivalent strategy consists of offering educational credits for programs aimed at implementing specific reforms. In the case of Latin America, the main programs being promoted through this mechanism are those linked to evaluation and accreditation of programs, the strengthening of professorial bodies, the linking of research units to private firms, and scholarship programs that strengthen the private sector of higher education.

Although it has not been the purpose of this paper to provide a detailed analysis of the dynamics between the market and the state with respect to higher education, we agree with Torres and Schugurensky (forthcoming), that the current changes in Latin American higher education cannot be examined in isolation from larger political and economic changes in the region. These changes, in turn, are related to the dynamics of globalization. Furthermore, it should also be noticed that global trends are promoted, resisted, and negotiated differently in each national context and in each individual institution. Finally, the very dynamics of the debate we pointed out in this article advises against any attempt to characterize the postures of the different types of multilateral agencies through an excluding polarity. Instead, the need can be seen to delve deeply into subjects on which it is possible to reflect. If this contribution encourages the reader to look into the debates it describes, it will have faithfully fulfilled its objectives.

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