

Chapter 10

Higher Education and Citizenship in Latin America

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ABSTRACT

In Latin America, public policies were promoted to encourage students to attend university and to create new institutions. However, the resources used for these purposes were scarce, as were those used to promote the integration of students from the most vulnerable social sectors. This research will carry out a comparative study and analysis of the evolution of government policies on education and education for citizenship in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Peru based on the analysis of two variables: (1) public policies for higher education for citizenship and (2) the reception and impact of these policies on public and private universities and their impact on the education system.

INTRODUCTION

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that everyone has the right to education and that access to higher education shall be equal for all on the basis of merit. A similar concept was reiterated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), stating that higher education should be made accessible to all (art. 13); and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which reiterated the need for access to different levels of education on a free and compulsory basis. The following year in Jomtien, Thailand, the World Declaration on Education for All was issued¹ establishing that education was a fundamental right that provided basic learning needs and enabled participation in society. This statement was confirmed during the Dakar Framework for Action², Senegal, (2000) in which countries reaffirmed their collective commitment to ensuring Education for All (Orealc/Unesco, 2015, pp. 18, 26). The 2003 World Bank document, “Higher Education: Lessons Learned from Experience”. proposed funding for the Higher Education Improvement Programme to strengthen the legal framework for higher education by introducing incentives for efficiency, equity and quality improvement.

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In Latin America, public policies were promoted to encourage students to attend university and to create new institutions. However, the resources used for these purposes were scarce, as were those used to promote the integration of students from the most vulnerable social sectors. During the 1990s, twelve such laws dedicated to improving access to higher education were passed in Latin America (López, 2015; Krotsch and Suasnábar, 2018, p. 12)³. In general, from the 21st century onwards, Latin America experienced sustained economic growth and a better distribution of wealth in its societies, which in turn led to a reduction in poverty⁴ and an improvement in the major indicators of social development - mortality, health, gender, child protection, infrastructure, access to basic services. These factors influenced government policies in almost half of the countries in the region including Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia, Honduras and Ecuador - through new, more inclusive laws and sanctions established in the interest of developing higher education in Latin America. On the one hand these laws led to the expansion and diversification of the university system, but, on the other hand, an important variety of private higher education institutions also began to emerge in response to increased demand. However, two of the most urgent needs for higher education in Latin America were not addressed by the political elites of the countries of the region. These are: internationalization and collaboration between the university and the productive sectors of the economy (Holm-Nielsen et.al, 2005, pp. 41, 66; Lamarra & Pérez Centeno, 2016, pp. 123, 127, 131-135)⁵.

The limitations of the policies designed to create inclusivity and improve the public's sense of citizenship in Latin America are reflected in the Report on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, issued in 2006. Firstly, this report argues that equal access to education is a human right. However, in terms of access, Latin America has the most exclusive higher education context in the world (Tejeda-Cerda & Fernández-Moreno, 2015, p. 34). The 2015 follow-up report of the Education for All programme focused on the central points of the post-2015 international education agenda endorsed in the Incheon Declaration (2015), which highlighted some of the achievements of the Latin American higher education establishment as well as the many challenges facing the region (Lázaro Lorente, 2016, p. 23).

Education for citizenship not only includes the right to educate the student in terms of democratic values and moral development, but it is also related to the exercise of establishing certain fundamental educational rights with the aim of contributing to the formation of a fairer and more equitable society (Ramírez Iñiguez, 2016, p. 179; Zurbano, 1988; Martínez-Martín & Carreño-Rojas, 2014, pp. 153-160; Garzón Díaz, 2017).

This research will carry out a comparative study and analysis of the evolution of government policies on education and education for citizenship in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Peru based on the analysis of two variables: (a) public policies for higher education for citizenship (b) the reception and impact of these policies on public and private universities and their impact on the education system.

EVOLUTION OF A UNIVERSITY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION POLICY

Higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean, during most of the 20th century, was developed by the State. During this period some of the region's existing public universities became macro-universities - large national institutions in charge of professional teaching, scientific research, and outreach to society in general, as they - through the State - took over the management of all of their sources of funding. These institutions account for the majority of figures for university enrollment throughout the period,

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