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**Neoliberals versus Post-Neoliberals in the Formation of Governance Regimes in Latin
America's Higher Education**

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Neoliberals versus Post-Neoliberals in the Formation of Governance Regimes in Latin America's Higher Education

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Abstract. Increasing enrollment in higher education and improving its financing and quality are goals that the governments of Latin America share. However, the policies adopted to reach these objectives vary from nation to nation. During the past decade, various scholars have explained such differences, based on the ideological profile of regional governments. This chapter, on the other hand, shows that no linear relation exists between the political orientation of Latin American governments and their policies of higher education. The argument is that differences are the result of an accumulated process of hybridization generated by *governance regimes*. The characteristics of such regimes are combinations of public policy instruments, the role of actors involved in the political arena, and the degree of compliance with the systemic objectives that governments establish. For our analysis, we have selected fifteen Latin American nations: eight that are identified as *neoliberal* and seven as *post-neoliberal*. First, we describe the political evolution of systems of higher education in the framework of the neoliberal reforms implemented in the 1990s, and the emergence of leftist governments in the region. Then we identify two stages of development in the higher education under study: 1) the stage from 1990 to 1998, known for the expansion of private education as well as the implementation of market reforms among public institutions of higher education; and 2) from 1998 to 2016, known for processes of *adjustment and adaptation* of policies aimed at correcting “market errors” (in neoliberal nations), or adopting a perspective of “expanded rights” (in post-neoliberal nations). Based on this analysis, we conclude by identifying three types of governance regimes: *a) private integration, b) dual governance, and c) loose governance.*

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1.- Introduction

A common idea in the literature on higher education in Latin America is that in the 1980s, neo-liberalism began to bring about a radical change in policies: an almost absolute retraction of the state and generalized market predomination (Schugurensky y Torres, 2001). A few decades later, when various Latin American governments began steering toward the left, neoliberal policies were believed to have reached their end (Sader, 2008; Sader y Gentili, 2003; Pulido, 2009). However, as this chapter will show, neoliberalism did not eliminate the state, nor did the market replace the old, underlying logic of political exchange in traditional statist policies. Leftist governments, identified as *post-neoliberal*, not only did not dismantled the reforms implemented in the 1990s, but also adapted some of them to develop systems of higher education.

The literature shows increasing recognition of the differentiated governance of neoliberal and post-neoliberal governments, although they paradoxically share objectives such as increasing the supply and coverage of education, expanding financing, and improving quality (e.g. Andrade & Feldfeber, 2015; Bruner & Ganga, 2016). However, the preeminence of ideological focuses still relegates to the background the analysis of differences and similarities among the concrete instruments and policies that are deployed in each nation to attain common objectives. In the same sense, production is still scarce on the way the reforms implemented before the regional political changes have conditioned the selection of policies and instruments in

regional systems of higher education since the second decade of this century.

Our hypothesis regarding the political/electoral upheavals in several nations since the late 1990s, in the sphere of public policies and the governance of higher education, has been expressed in terms of the *emphasis* placed on a certain type of policies, rather than on radical changes in the *steering* of educational systems. Therefore, the differences and similarities among systems of higher education would be determined by 1) the degree of conditioning of government action by the *policy legacy*; and therefore, 2) the processes of change in the forms of system control and administration, in terms of the adjustment and adaptation of policies.

To analyze these topics, the first section of the chapter discusses the neoliberal policies related to higher education in Latin America and the way these policies have produced systems with a public component (subject to market reforms), and a private component (with variable levels of state regulation). The second section of the chapter, based on the models of privatizing education developed by Verger, Fontdevila & Zancajo (2017), identifies three models of privatization in higher education. These models are based on: a) a structural reform of the state; b) the privatization of the supply and the reformation of public universities; and c) the expansion of low-cost institutions. The third section addresses the arrangements of governance that arise from processes that adjust and adapt policies, based on two forms of accumulation or overlap of policies, defined here as *linear* or *convergent*. In this respect, an analysis is made of the way governments—independent from their political orientation—have elevated their levels of coverage through the public or private supply, or a combination of both. In conclusion, we propose a categorization of regional systems of higher education, based on three governance regimes. Formed by a combination of actors, instruments, and performance in terms of systemic objectives (enrollment, financing, and quality), these regimes are: a) *private integration*; b) *dual governance*, and c) *loose governance*.

2. Governance of Higher Education: Between Neoliberalism and Post-neoliberalism

Governance alludes to the ways the actors involved in a certain policy arena coordinate in solving collective problems. In the case of Latin

America's higher education, the evolution of these forms of coordination must be analyzed from the perspective of how governments have directed change by conceding greater authority to market actors along with greater autonomy in decision-making to public-sector actors.

In the past three decades, the region's governments have structured governance, increasing or reducing actors' freedom as a function of medium- or long-term objectives. In this sense, "[...] governments design the systemic forms for the governance of higher education through a combination of strategic goals and means, and then establish the nature of the policy instruments to be adopted for the pursuit of said goals" (Capano, 2011:1626).

The above statement has relevance for our analysis because of the implementation of market-based policies from the 1980s up through 1998, without totally dismantling the traditional mechanisms of state control. Subsequent political shifts to the left in several countries of the region, and the conformation of neoliberal and post-neoliberal blocks, led to a reassessment of the state's role in education. The result, however, has not been processes of renewed state control of higher education or the abandonment of market policies and instruments. Latin America's move toward neoliberalism has translated into the abandonment of a development model in which the state was a protagonist in the political and economic organization of society. The privatization of public assets and the liberalization of the profit motive in previously restricted settings (education, health, and other sectors) detonated a transformation process based on the state's assumed inability to promote goods and services in an efficient manner. According to Ball (1998, cited by Magalhães y Amaral, 2009:184), "[...] reforms were driven by the suspicion that the state bureaucracy and government officials were major obstacles to the attainment of the public interest".

With the economic crisis of the 1980s, a new generation of Latin American rulers, government officials, and academics promoted measures aimed at reducing state intervention and favoring market action. In the sphere of education in general, these actions led to the increased rationalization of expenditure, administrative decentralization, and the transfer of responsibilities to smaller regional units, along with a series of reforms focused on deregulating teaching and the entry requirements for private-sector providers of educational services (Bonal, 2002).

Higher education in Latin America underwent—in varying modes, scope, depth, and speed in each country—a general process of privatization: a broadening of the private sector and the increased use of private resources in system financing. In response to intense questioning about the efficiency, quality, and economic pertinence of higher education, a reform agenda was created to generate mixed systems of higher education. Such systems were characterized primarily by: a) growing private-sector participation in the supply of educational services; b) the implementation of quality assurance systems; c) the adoption of market behaviors among public institutions; d) the strategic administration of part of the government's budget; e) the operation of diverse systems of conditioned financing; and f) the implementation of forms of institutional administration based on new public management (González-Ledesma, 2014).

Enrollment in higher education in Latin America grew from four million students in 1980 to ten million in 2000. A large part of this increase was due to the multiplication of the private-sector supply, especially in the 1990s. In 1995, 38.1% of the enrollment in higher education was in a private institution (García-Guadilla, 1996). The implementation of new forms of institutional governance and the Latin American state's strategic administration of public financing found counterparts in the developed nations of North America and Europe; however, the privatization of the supply is a distinguishing characteristic of the higher education systems of Latin America and other regions in the world, such as Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa. The changes in systems of higher education in the 1990s have represented the emergence of a new order—a new order that has seemed to suggest that the state is no longer at the center (Huisman, 2009: 3-5), and that the government is limited to steering-at-a-distance through evaluation of results, discouragement/encouragement of behaviors, and the creation of broad margins for the entry of other actors (Neave & van Vught, 1991).¹

However, the implementation of the plan of neoliberal reforms did not occur, however, without setbacks. Starting in the late 1980s, protests of various sizes took place in universities to dispute the most polemical aspects of the reforms, particularly those linked to the transfer of educational costs to students and their families, and restrictions in access to university enrollment. Student movements in Mexico, Ecuador, Argentina, and Colombia expressed general ill will toward the consequences of reduced social spending and increased poverty;

additional concerns were political instability and the corruption of high government officials.

Social distress and the emergence of a new and unfavorable economic situation between 1997 and 2002 (known as the “lost half-decade”), along with historic maximums of unemployment and stagnation (Ocampo, 2002; Carrera, 2004), established the conditions for the electoral victories of leftist parties and leftist movements in several nations.² The arrival of Hugo Chávez as the president of Venezuela, in January of 1999, marked the beginning of an unparalleled political swing to the left in Latin America. The economic upsets of the “lost half-decade” (1998–2003), the exhaustion of the Washington Consensus, and social discontent, were also determining factors in the change of government in Argentina, Brazil (2003), Uruguay (2005), Bolivia (2006), Ecuador, Nicaragua (2007), and El Salvador (2009). Thus by 2015, more than 60% of Latin America’s population was living under leftist or central-left governments.

According to some researchers (Panizza, 2009 and Segrera, 2016), this leftward swing divided the region’s political map into two major blocks: one formed by the *post-neoliberal*³ governments oriented to the “state’s return” and opposed to United States policy; and the other represented by *neoliberal* governments (Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Paraguay⁴), which have maintained free-market policies.

The ideological positioning of these blocks appeared in different political programs that openly confronted the Washington Consensus, compensating for the state’s renewed role by not renouncing capitalism as an economic system or representative democracy as a political system. At the same time, liberal governments opted to accept more vigorous state participation, without losing sight of the needed efficiency of the economic system and government administration.

In nations that experienced administrative changes with a leftist orientation, according to Pulido, the “point of inflection” in education was “caused by the progressive consolidation of the focus on human rights, versus the mercantilist trend of neoliberalism” (2010:3). These administrations promoted the public supply of higher education. On the other hand, with arguments centered on the economic importance of raising the population’s educational levels, liberal governments returned to the expansive agenda of public high school and higher education, focusing at the same time on addressing the quality

problems produced by unregulated expansion of the private sector. New agencies and agents came on stage in a context of revitalized democratic life and the relative economic bonanza resulting from the price of raw materials (Segrera, 2016).

The study of the governance of systems of higher education in Latin America, however, faces a dilemma that emerges from the combination of two situations linked to the *change, adjustment, and adaptation of policies*. The first situation has to do with the conditioning and lasting effect of policies that stimulate, on one hand, the growth of the private sector's educational supply, and on the other hand, the adoption of the market's forms of administration and operation in public institutions of higher education. The second situation is related to the way that both neoliberal and post-neoliberal governments responded to such realities to attain common objectives such as increasing the supply, financing, and quality; this situation lasted until 2016, when the post-neoliberal cycle began to show signs of weakening.

3. Policy Change: Conformation of a Shared Background

Until 1998, Latin America's systems of higher education were differentiated by the forms national governments selected to increase private-sector participation in providing educational services, as well as by the promotion of reforms in the heart of public universities. Although the limited or null presence of rules for operating the market of private education was a common element of the expansive wave of the private sector in the 1990s, it became clear that while some countries had opted to delegate almost all of the increased enrollment to the private supply, other countries followed paths directed to the conformation of mixed systems.

The new policy instruments destined to reform public institutions of higher education were based on the principles of a rational budget, economic pertinence of professional formation, efficiency, merit, and competency among institutions and individuals. Yet applying these instruments was problematic due to the political conflicts that some aspects of the reform generated and the contradictions that arose from interaction with preexisting instruments and practices. In the first case, we refer to measures of a structural nature, especially those of an economic type, such as the implementation of fees and service charges that encountered resistance in several countries in the region (mainly

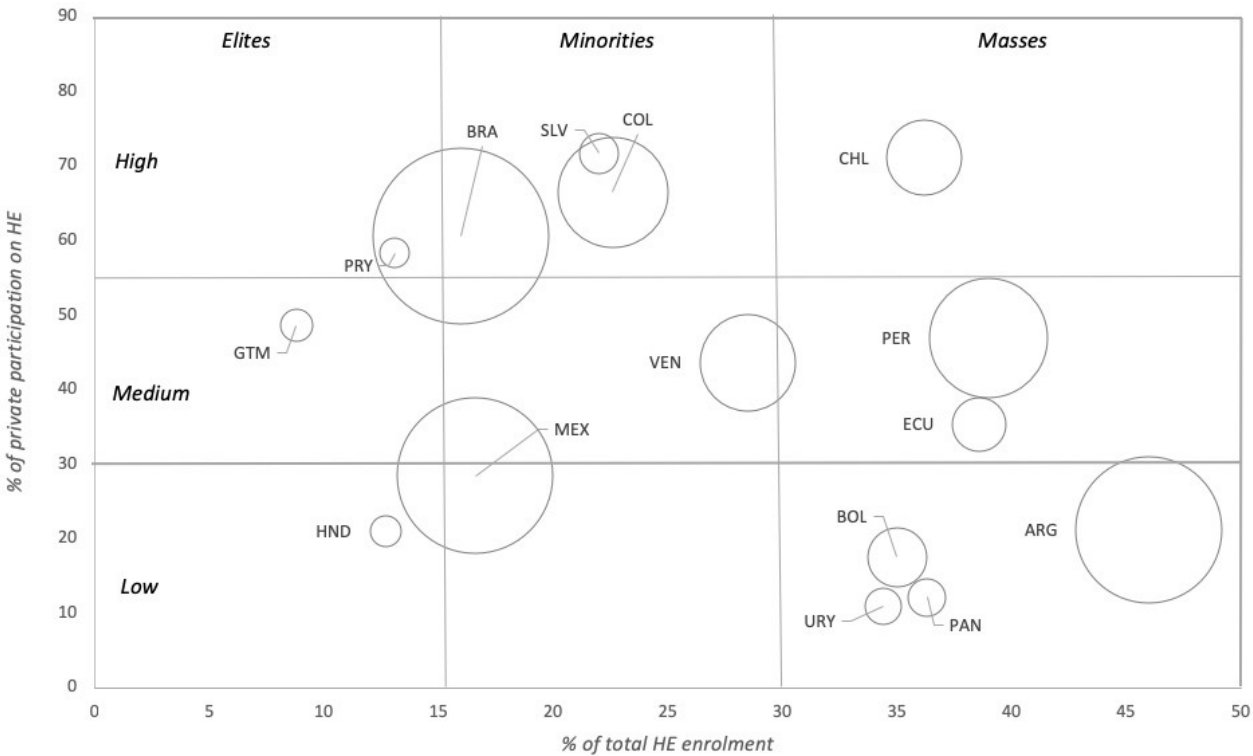
Mexico, Colombia, and Costa Rica). In the second case, we refer to the coexistence of contradictory instruments such as increased flextime in administrative and teaching posts versus the contract signed with traditional unions.

From the accumulation of political obstacles and gradual measures, a mixed governance of systems of higher education was devised. Such governance combined various degrees of development in the administrative reform of the public subsystem, with policies of involvement in market expansion. In this context, the privatization of supply was the most tangible result. This fact will help us to analyze the initial change of policies, since encouraging market participation was part of the solutions adopted to deal with the drastic cuts in social spending in the 1980s. It was also a way to meet the demand for educational services that public institutions could not satisfy. Because of projected growth in the sector, private education was a good option for attaining the objective of broadening the coverage of higher education, which had widely varying proportions in the countries in the region.

Taking into account the classification by Rama (2009) of the levels of coverage in Latin America, systems of higher education in the late 1990s can be divided into three groups: *elite* (from 8.8% to 13.1%); *minority* (from 16% to 28.5%); and *massive* (from 34.4% to 46%).⁵ At the same time, each nation had levels of privatization of the supply that ranged from *low* (from 10.9% to 28.4%), *intermediate* (from 35.3% to 48.6%), to *high* (from 58.3% to 71.7%). The combination of both dimensions in each country illustrates the trajectories of the increasing coverage and the relationship with the systems' opening to the market: factors that correspond to three of the six models of privatization of education as identified at the international level by Verger et al. (2017).⁶ These models are: *a) state structural reform*, *b) scaling-up privatization*, and *c) expansion of low-fee private schooling in low-income countries* (See Graph 1 and Annex at end of chapter).

According to Verger et al., each model includes a set of "contextual mechanisms, agents, and devices that operate in conforming visible trajectories of reform" (Ibid.: 2). In other words, the models give structure, based on meaning (in this case, privatization and expansion of coverage), to certain governance arrangements that can be evaluated according to their results.

Graph 1. Systems of Higher Education in Latin America: Privatization and Enrollment after Neoliberal Shifts (1998)



Elaborated by Authors. Based on Rama (2009) and Verger et al. (2017). Data from UIS-UNESCO, World Bank Data, National Institute of Statistics (Bolivia).

Models of Privatization

The Product of a State Structural Reform. This is about a radical reconfiguration not only of the state’s role in the educational setting, but also in the policies of education in legal, political, discursive, and ideological terms. Chile is the only country in the region that corresponds to this model. The reconfiguration of the Chilean state was possible thanks to a combination of extreme social discipline, imposed by the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), and neoliberal policies. The restructuring of the educational system permitted the implementation of market instruments for administering schools, as well as mechanisms for the functioning of a highly integrated services market. Institutions of higher education functioned as private suppliers of a public service, in a market where some institutions could obtain state financing of various types, but where student possibilities to attain higher education rested almost entirely on their purchasing power (Fried & Abuhabda, 1991). The Chilean system is distinguished by its combination of a high degree of privatization with

total coverage of the masses. However, Chile's higher education faced problems due to 1) the weaknesses of its structure of governance, specifically the difficulty of regulating the proliferation of low-quality private institutions under the protection of the liberalization of the 1990s; 2) the assignment of subsidies based more on historic (inert) criteria than on performance indicators; 3) inequity in access and persistence in higher education; and 4) the absence of transversal mechanisms for quality assurance (Brunner, 2005).

A Result of the Gradual Expansion of Privatization. According to Verger (2017), this type of privatization, in contrast with the above, advances through the accumulation of small, gradual changes that over the long term alter educational systems significantly. This is the case of the systems of higher education of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. They have all promoted the growth of the private supply, as well as the implementation of reforms in the public subsystem. Their variations depend on 1) the accumulation of problematic results upon the implementation of polemical measures; 2) the interaction among new policies, preexisting instruments, and system dimensions; and 3) the priorities of the neoliberal agenda, defined by the situations of national policy, which in various countries relegated elements of the educational agenda of neoliberalism. The first two factors are included in the sphere of higher education and are therefore easier to identify. The last factor is difficult to attribute to specific governmental choices without making an exhaustive analysis of the historical trajectories in each case. It is possible to identify, however, the way these dynamics operated and their consequences for educational systems through the priority financing of elementary education, and the incentives provided to self-financing and the recuperation of costs at public universities: matters recommended by international financial organizations (González-Ledesma, 2010).

In light of government cutbacks and student opposition to the collection of fees, public universities have been financially strangled. In addition to the loss of competitiveness and the deterioration of institutional quality, such events have translated into a severe contraction of the public supply. The result has been the exclusion of increasingly higher numbers of young people lacking in economic resources to pay a private institution or overcome barriers to entry, especially in public universities with greatest demand. Toward the end of the past century, the accelerated expansion of private higher education came to a halt. The supply had surpassed

the aggregate demand for this type of service, and the state was beginning to reactivate its role as a provider of higher education, a phenomenon that appeared in full during the first decade of the current century, as in Mexico (Álvarez, 2011). In some countries with massive coverage, such as Bolivia, Panama, and Ecuador, the result was a significant loss in the capacity of public supply to meet the growing demand for higher education. This phenomenon is similar in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, with coverage of minorities and masses, but with the difference that the private sector did not absorb the growing demand, since the elevated relative costs and the economic dynamics in each case prevented ulterior growth. In the case of Mexico and Venezuela, classified as systems for minorities, the restriction in growth was the product of combined deficiencies in the public and private subsystems.

Private growth in Argentina and Uruguay was limited by the difficulties associated with preexisting policies and instruments. Both countries had strong public systems, with institutions of direct, unrestricted access and ample freedom for students and teachers in decision-making. In this context, although the market for higher education broadened, the new institutions could not compete with the old institutions of a religious nature, which were not interested in expanding beyond the elites they traditionally served (Bernasconi, 2008). Therefore, in the late 1990s, Uruguay had the least private participation in the region (10.9%). Argentina, on the other hand, stood out for having the highest levels of coverage (46%), mostly by public institutions.

The problems of the mixed systems vary according to the emphasis placed on either increasing private supply or reforming public institutions. The principal problems include: 1) the exclusion of students due to economic reasons, available supply, or both; 2) evidence of low quality and poor practices among the private institutions of higher education; 3) the absence of clear rules for operating private institutions of higher education; 4) the lack of public investment in higher education; and 5) reduction in the rate of growth of coverage.

The Result of the Expansion of Low-fee Private Institutions. This type of institution exists in low income countries where the state's role is limited or nonexistent and the demand for educational services is met almost exclusively through the market or through humanitarian aid. For Verger et al., the nations that correspond to this model are in Africa (Malawi, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana), southern Asia (India and Pakistan), and Central America. Most of the private institutions of

higher education from the expansive phase of the 1990s in Latin America could fit the authors' description, especially because of the quality deficiencies in the course they offer, profitability as their first objective, and the assumed economic convenience for clients with limited resources. However, these elements assume unique characteristics in countries like Guatemala, Honduras, and Paraguay, due to their low levels of coverage. El Salvador, with a high degree of privatization, dedicates a very low percentage of its GDP to public higher education (0.2%). In cases such as this one, although the coverage is of *minorities*, it is clear that the state does not have the will or the ability to encourage the development of a public supply.⁷ In fact, the main characteristic of these systems of higher education is the government's decision not to expand or develop the public subsystem.

The problems this development model of higher education faces are similar to those of the private spectrum of mixed systems, while aggravated by the government's permissiveness toward expansion. With few exceptions, the educational supply consists of catchall institutions that offer formative options not requiring major investment and directed to sectors with low resources. In contrast with private elite institutions, the prestigious market in this type of institution of higher education is based on the mobilization of aspirational messages that do not reflect the quality of education offered (Álvarez y González-Ledesma, 2018). The owners and authorities at this type of institutions sustain that they offer better quality (Tooley and Dixon 2005 cited by Verger et al., *Ibíd.*:16). Families choose them because access to the limited space available in public options is extremely competitive; in addition, they perceive public institutions as deficient, disconnected from the job market, and low in quality. On the other hand, most nations with systems of higher education of this type lack information systems that allow obtaining data on the number of institutions and their students, or the quality of private institutions of higher education.

4. Neoliberals versus Post-neoliberals: Two Ways of Adjusting but One Way to Adapt

In the current decade, systems of higher education are distinguished by their forms of articulating *governance regimes* as they: *a*) confront the problematic results generated in the 1990s; *b*) establish the rules of the game for coordinating among educational actors; and *c*) make the

necessary adjustments for increasing coverage, improving financing, and increasing the quality of higher education. In contrast with the stage of reform we addressed in the previous section, these arrangements arise from ideologically differentiated national governments, based on different diagnoses of the nature of the problems at hand, the identity of the actors that need to coordinate in their solution, and the type of policy instruments to attain their objectives.

Still controversial among scholars is the degree of relevance of these differences in explaining the evolution of systems of higher education in Latin America. The emergence of post-neoliberal governments motivated some to announce the dismantling of the privatizing policies implemented in the 1990s (De Sousa, 2015: 88-153). Other scholars warned of a possible modification of the market's role in higher education in countries that had remained firm in implementing neoliberal reforms (Bruner, 2016). In general, as the left accumulated electoral wins, many authors attempted to establish an identity between the ideological profile of governments and their policies in higher education (Gentili, 1999). Yet according to our analysis, this division does not explain the maintenance, adaptation, and even implementation of policies of higher education based on market instruments in countries with post-neoliberal governments; nor does it account for the implementation of policies centered on state intervention in countries with neoliberal governments.

In the first place, the individuals, parties, and movement that led political change claimed power thanks to competitive elections. Once in power, they did not dispute representative democracy as a political system, or capitalism as an economic system, although they rhetorically rejected the policies of the Washington Consensus and in general, neoliberalism. In second place, higher education was not among the political priorities of the new governments, as it was the recuperation of control of strategic resources (oil, minerals, and water). Lastly, the evidence accumulated in the past twenty years shows that the trajectories of regional systems of higher education are more coherent with the central ideas of the reform that began in the 1990s, rather than with any other alternative educational project.

Based on the classification of Rama (2009), no country analyzed here has *elite* coverage, and the systems of higher education that boasted high levels of enrollment have moved toward *universal* and *absolute* coverage. From 2000 to 2014, the percentage of Latin American youth

aged 18 to 24 and enrolled in an institution of higher education, increased from 21% to slightly more than 40% (World Bank, 2017). According to the World Bank (Ferreyra et al., 2017), this increase was due to: 1) the higher participation of young people living in poverty (which grew from 16% to 25% of the enrollment); 2) the diversification of the supply of higher education and the rise in enrollment in existing public institutions of higher education; and above all, 3) the growth of the private sector, whose average participation in the region reached 50%.

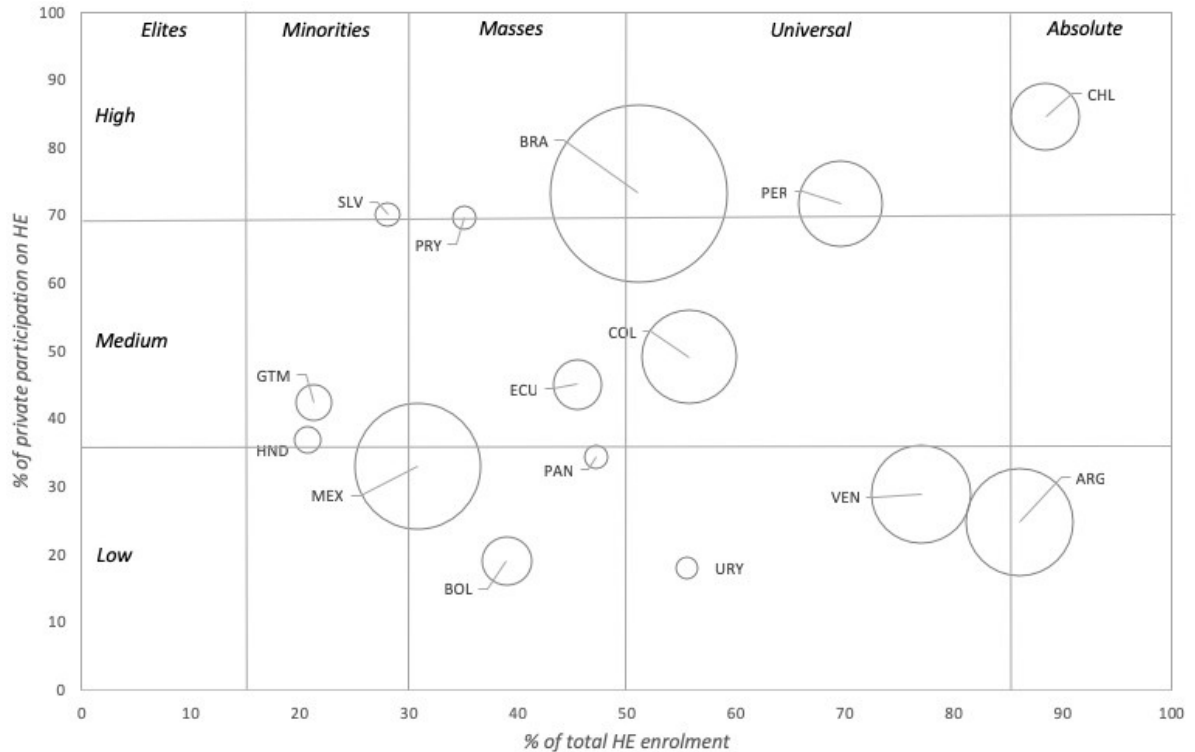
During this period, the systems of higher education under analysis are divided into *minorities* (20.7% to 30.8%); *massive* (35.1% to 47.2%); *universal* (51.1% to 77%), and *absolute* (86% to 88.4%). To understand better the levels of privatization in the supply we have broadened the range of each group, so that the systems with a *low* level of privatization are from 18.1% to 34.4%; the *intermediate* level is from 37% to 49.2%; and those with a *high* level are from 68.8% to 84.6%. The types of privatization led to processes of *policy adjustment and adaptation* that are linked to the ideological profile of the government in power, as well as to the nature of the processes of policy accumulation and policy instruments associated with the objectives of privatization.

With regard to the ideological profile of the government, neoliberal administrations can be considered a relatively homogeneous block. Their differences (in addition to the dimensions of their economies and degree of development) lay in the way they attempted to strengthen their models of privatization, while correcting the errors of their emerging educational markets in order to improve the indicators of coverage, financing, and quality (Sader, 2008; Briseño, 2013). Post-neoliberal administrations, on the other hand, were divided into governments of *agreement* (Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, and Uruguay), which sought to establish a balance among the preexisting market policies and a more active state, but were self-limiting in their actions; and governments of *rupture* (Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela), which have looked to create an educational system in which the state reassumes the central role as provider and coordinator (Sader, 2008; Stefanoni, 2012). According to Pulido (2010), the post-neoliberal governments aimed at indicators of coverage, financing, and quality, with a focus on the “expansion of rights”.

The processes of accumulation of policies of a *linear* type are characterized by the coherence of objectives and instruments, and although they are not lacking in conflict, they follow a logical route with previous policies. In processes of a *convergent* type, on the other hand, accumulation is through successive approximations, at times indirect or imprecise. The difference between one type and another lies in the degree of coherence of the projection of policy objectives and the instruments used to attain those objectives. In the case of Chile and Peru, the processes of accumulation were of a linear type, with a predominantly private impulse, and in Argentina and Venezuela, a predominantly public impulse. The remaining countries, with reforms of *scaling up* and the *expansion of low-fee private schooling*, produced convergent processes of accumulation. In countries like Chile and Argentina, coherence has historically been very high, while in Colombia, Brazil, and Mexico, the processes of accumulation have been gradual, with low alignment between objectives and policy instruments, although meaningful due to their *political* and *policy-related* consequences (Verger et al., 2017:8).

If an identity exists between the government's ideological profile and the type of policies implemented, this identity should be expressed as either an increase or decrease in the privatization of the supply. However, of the seven countries identified as post-neoliberal, only Venezuela demonstrates a clear tendency away from privatization, with a decrease of 14.1% in private enrollment. Argentina, Bolivia, and Uruguay experienced marginal growth (in contrast with the increase in public enrollment); El Salvador experienced a slight decrease (-1.5%). In Ecuador, private enrollment rose by ten points and the nation retained intermediate levels of privatization, in spite of a government of *rupture*, while Brazil, with a government of *agreement*, is the only nation from the post-neoliberal block that has, for historical reasons, one of the most privatized systems of higher education in the region (73.4%). Among the neoliberal nations, Paraguay, Honduras, Panama, and Peru boast levels of private growth between 11% and 25%, a trend clearly in agreement with their market opening. In Chile, the private sector strengthened its expansion with the implementation of broader instruments of indirect financing, with a positive response from demand. The low growth of coverage in Mexico, one of the most coherent nations with free market policies in general, depended primarily on the public supply, as in Guatemala.

Graph 2. Systems of Higher Education in Latin America: Privatization and Enrollment after Post-neoliberal Shifts (2016)



Elaborated by Authors. Based on Rama (2009). Data from UIS-UNESCO, World Bank Data, National Institute of Statistics (Bolivia).

Colombia, however, is the most surprising case, since the years from 1998 to 2016 show a trend away from privatization greater than that of Venezuela (-17.3%) (See Graph 2).

An analysis of the behavior of coverage in the region clearly shows that during this second stage, the objective of increasing the participation of young people in higher education has been more relevant than the ideological coherence of the policies used to attain it. The ideological principles have an impact on the way the governments select a determined course of action, yet other factors also exist and at times are more powerful in influencing decision-making. These factors may be linked to problematic results that appear during the first stage, such as low market performance in satisfying the demand for higher education. In addition, the pressures exerted by traditional actors (students, teachers, workers) to promote the growth of public universities, counteract the trend toward privatization; while new actors (business leaders in education, economic sectors, agencies of evaluation) often react against government policies that endanger the processes of opening systems of higher education to the market, the economic sector, or to evaluation.

Argentina (*agreement*) and Chile (*neoliberal*), for example, attained levels of *absolute* coverage in completely different ways. Argentina has maintained a growth policy sustained by the public supply and a minimum increase in public spending (0.3% of GDP from 1998 to 2016), which assumes a reduced cost per student and low investment in research and development. In Chile, starting in 2005, the large amounts of public funds channeled through Credit with State Guarantee (CAE, acronym in Spanish for Crédito con Aval del Estado), a financing instrument that along with private loans and other economic aid, has allowed the nation to increase its coverage to almost 90%. In the first case, the weight of co-governance and universities' autonomous tradition is a decisive factor for maintaining the status quo. In the second case, private sector interests have been more in tune with the government, even when traditional actors have demanded the deprivatization of higher education.

Venezuela (*rupture*) and Peru (*neoliberal*) are examples of policies of differentiated attention for the public and private sectors. They showed notable dynamism in the period under analysis, both with processes of linear accumulation (although with more important public/private components than Argentina and Chile). Both nations have universal coverage, but while Peru implemented incentives for private expansion at the same time that it increased the financing of its traditional public universities, Venezuela—due to ideological reasons—created a third system of universities through *Misión Sucre*, to promote the growth of enrollment without becoming involved in (or supporting) the development of traditional autonomous universities. It did not regulate or prohibit, however, the activity of private institutions.

In Ecuador (*rupture*), which has *massive* coverage, enrollment has increased to a large degree thanks to the private supply. However, the nation's ministry of education keeps strict control over private institution of higher education; for example, in 2012, with the help of the police, the ministry closed fourteen universities, based on their low quality. This measure, which affected more than 40,000 students (without including alumni), represented strong encouragement for other institutions to accept the quality verification procedures as demanded by the state (*El Espectador*, 2012). Bolivia (*rupture*), with similar coverage, followed a policy of inertial growth, but increased subsidies for universities and research (from 1.4% to 1.8% of GDP).

The case of Mexico (neoliberal) shows a modest comparative increase in its percentage of coverage (lower than that of other nations with equivalent or lower levels of economic development), primarily through public institutions, yet with important participation from a loosely regulated private sector. Paraguay (neoliberal) has a higher rate of coverage, of 35.1%, whose growth follows a dual logic of encouragement for both the public and private sectors.

The case of Brazil is unique. In the analyzed period, the nation moved from a neoliberal government to a government of agreement, whose policies of expanded coverage attained, within a decade, the system's advancement from the coverage of elites to universal coverage (from 16% in 1998 to 51.5% in 2015). The means was predominantly private with policies of positive discrimination to enable access for students from public schools and African or indigenous origin (Lloyd, 2016). Colombia is also a special case since it encouraged, without relevant change in the ideological orientation of governments (neoliberalism), the expansion of coverage to a large scale; it advanced from a system of *minorities* to a *universal* system in the analyzed period (from 22.6% to 55.7%), through the public sector. Growth in coverage was achieved primarily by expanding the non-university supply of higher education (Melo Becerra, et al. 2017)—which according to Ferreyra et al. (2017) is “low range.”⁸

El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras form a separate group of nations because of their low level of coverage. Important differences are seen, however, in El Salvador's movement from a neoliberal government to one of agreement, which allocated support to the private sector and achieved growth in coverage from 22% to 28.1%. Guatemala, under neoliberal government, also backed the public sector, making notorious effort on raising coverage from 8.8% to 21.3%. While also under neoliberal government, Honduras, weakly promoted coverage through the private sector.

5. Politics and Policy: Different Governance Regimes of Higher Education in Latin America

According to Guy Peters, “policy choices can be conceptualized as both a dependent variable for the political process [...] and an independent variable for explaining the steering capacity of the political system” (2008:22). In the conformation of higher education governance

regimes in Latin America, Peters' reasoning is relevant if we take into account the politically contingent character that prevails in the decision-making at all times, that is, the dimension politics, or if we consider the way in which the policy mix affects the governance performance of the SES over time, that is, the policy dimension. If we read the actions of governments with respect to the privatization of supply and the evolution of coverage in terms of the *adjustment* and *adaptation of policies*, rather than in terms of ideological positions, we can offer alternative interpretations of the dynamics produced by the combination of the dimensions of politics and policies.

On contrasting the “focus on rights” of the policies of post-neoliberal governments with the neoliberal governments' state intervention in “market errors”, what emerges is that the differences between one and the other lie in the emphasis given to one or another type of policy. Post-neoliberal governments do not object to capitalism or to market participation in education. The proof is that the private supply has continued to grow and diversify, becoming the main engine behind the region's increased coverage. In any case, private actors' capacity for action varies from country to country. Some can access public funds, obtain earnings, open lines of credit, and even establish alliances with economic groups that operate in the educational markets of other nations. Such is the case of Chile, Peru, Brazil, and Ecuador. In certain countries, such as Brazil and Mexico, an important portion of the private supply corresponds to corporate groups that include various locations or campuses and even institutions with different names. Outstanding among these groups are the transnational suppliers, such as Laureate International.⁹ In more restrictive contexts, such as Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Venezuela, institutions of higher education still operate as nonprofit associations or foundations linked to religious groups; this situation has not represented an obstacle for conserving or even expanding their market niches (Albach, 1999; Rama, 2017).

Except in systems consisting mainly of low-cost institutions, the public supply experienced dynamics of growth and diversification in almost the entire region. The autonomous universities and technical universities that appeared during this second stage were favored by the increase in public spending, a result of international increases in raw materials prices, particularly oil. The backing for these institutions of higher education, however, was part of government policies designed to deal with the limits of growth of the private supply. In addition, the

creation of technological universities was part of national development plans based on the training of human resources with high technical abilities. Found in this situation are the systems of higher education of Mexico, Paraguay, Brazil, Bolivia, and especially, Colombia.

It is important to point out that both public and private institutions of higher education created or strengthened different types of associations of rectors (in some cases, simultaneously public and private), with the purpose of collectively negotiating government policies of higher education. This type of association frequently participates, proposes, or opposes government decisions with varying degrees of success. Among private institutions, on the other hand, membership in groups of this type is a relevant factor in accessing government resources, and thus attaining a privileged market position (Brunner & Miranda, 2016; Rama, 2017).

Agencies of evaluation and certification constitute another type of actors that can have considerable influence on systems of higher education and are present in all nations. Although such agencies evaluate increasingly more private institutions of higher education, their influence is greater in the public subsystem. Evaluating agencies can operate from the government—either as part of an area of the ministry of education or as autonomous public agencies—or perform as private organizations. In many cases, systems of higher education have a mixture of all of the above. The power of these agencies lies in their ability to define the access to economic and symbolic resources for institutions (universities and their programs) as well as individuals (students who hope to enter a university, economic stimuli, and financing for teachers' projects).

Another common element in Latin American nations was the introduction of various instruments to promote the expansion of coverage of higher education. In many nations, this type of instruments is directed to students from both public and private institutions, and in some cases constitute mechanisms of positive discrimination aimed at remedying unequal access. *Acción Afirmativa*, in Brazil, is perhaps the most notable example. The program was first tested in the state of Río de Janeiro in 2003, and later spread to all public institutions of higher education and to hundreds of private institutions throughout the nation, ultimately becoming national policy through the Fees Federal Law of 2012 (Lloyd, 2016). As in Colombia, Brazil's institutions of higher education can grant loans to students with certain economic

stipulations (interest rates, discounted fees, part-time work on campus) and academic conditions (merit- or fee-based), at prices always lower than market prices. In Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay, and Bolivia, scholarships are concentrated in the public sector (which offers practically free education) and consist of monthly stipends to support student living expenses. In Ecuador, Peru, and Chile, existing instruments are designed exclusively for private institutions of higher education whose end is to cover part or all of the cost of education.

Governance Regimes

For our purposes, *governance regimes* are based on three elements: a) the emergence of new actors who have various ends, interests, and capacity of action; b) combinations of instruments that oscillate between coherent configurations and problematic mixtures; and c) effectiveness in attaining common objectives. Governance regimes are the result of the ability to adjust or adapt policies to solve the problematic consequences of previous policies, which can become aligned with more or less effectiveness for attaining systemic objectives (Knill & Tosun, 2012). In some cases, the confluence of diverse actors occurs in a search for common objectives in the system, such as the growth of enrollment, forms of financing, and quality assurance, while adjustment and adaptation occur in decision-making processes with broad consensus. In other cases, the results of the governance arrangement reflect the interests of certain dominant groups in society, a situation that erodes the legitimacy of the system as other interests are ignored (Peters, 2008).

According to the characteristics and processes of development of the systems under analysis, we can identify three types of governance regimes:

a) Regime of Private Integration. The mixed character in the provision of educational services is, as we have seen, a characteristic of all regional systems of higher education. In this regime, however, governance occurs primarily through a process of public and private sector integration, with a predominance of market participation and organizational market forms. Actors, instruments, and policies are aligned through plans of systemic conduction aimed at privatization. 1) *Actors.* Ministries of

education, associations of institutions of higher education, autonomous assessment agencies, private companies, credit institutions (in the case of Chile, student organizations). 2) *Instruments*. Incentives and disincentives, conditional financing, credit market, instruments of positive discrimination, competition among institutions, restricted access, general examinations to select and classify students. 3) *Objectives*. The systems of higher education in this regime are distinguished by having greater coherence between instruments and the objectives of the general arrangement. The differences among the nations that have this type of governance regime are related to degree and have to do with the absence or low performance of some instruments, as well as the degree of integration of the public and private subsystems in each case. According to their levels of coverage, the most successful systems of higher education in this group are Chile (88.4%) and Peru (69.6%), followed by Brazil (51.1%) and Paraguay (35.1%). The accumulation processes in the first two cases are linear, while those of the latter two cases are convergent. The main difference between Chile and the other nations consists of the structural character that it has showed since the beginning of its process of reform.

b) Regime of Dual Governance. Systems of higher education can be fundamentally public or private, but no trend toward integration exists. In most cases, the subsystems are governed with different criteria, although government actions promote the expansion of the supply according to the public sector institutions on one hand, and to the private sector institutions on the other. Because of its characteristics, this regime has actors of greater diversity (although their resources and capacity of influence are asymmetrical), and instruments tend to combine in a contradictory manner. 1) *Actors*. Ministries of education, associations of rectors of private universities, assessment agencies (public and private), student actors (students, teachers, workers) with different degrees of participation (institutionalized) and influence; business leaders, credit institutions. 2) *Instruments*. Unrestricted or restricted access; incentives and disincentives; block and conditional subsidies; selective or universal supports. 3) *Objectives*. Except for the case of Argentina and Venezuela, which have a degree of coherence based on processes of linear accumulation, the coexistence of subsystems tends to be problematic or contradictory in the remaining nations. In terms of coverage, the most successful country is Argentina (86%),

followed by Venezuela (77%); both have linear processes of accumulation, although Argentina has maintained a more coherent policy in terms of the expansive model of the public supply. Colombia (55.7%), Uruguay (55.5%), Panama (47.2%), and Ecuador (45.5%) have shown better performance. Ecuador and Panama are outstanding, and their growth engine has been fundamentally the private sector. Bolivia (39%) and Mexico (30.8%) are the farthest behind in this group, although because of different reasons. While Bolivia has opted to increase considerably its investment per student and in general has granted priority to developing elementary and secondary school, Mexico has selected an inertial policy in coverage as well as in financing, which has resulted in more than a decade of stagnation in the nation's systems of higher education.

Regime of Loose Governance. The systems that form this group have been coherent with *laissez-faire* policies toward the private sector. 1) *Actors.* In all cases, the participation of government public entities is weak; public institutions, especially in El Salvador and Guatemala, operate under difficult conditions, although they are able to compete and remain afloat thanks to their dimensions and policies to recover costs. Private institutions of higher education concentrate most of the demand, but are not grouped into associations; within a permissive context, they are focused on winning market niches based on the territory and the characteristics of their academic supply, primarily in majors that require little investment. 2) *Instruments.* At the government level, except for sporadic financing (such as public infrastructure) and block resources for public institutions, the governments of these nations opt to *not-do* (Bobbio, 2017). The public universities, in contrast, have their own scholarship programs for the economic sustenance of students or substantial discounts in fees; in addition, they channel international student support (such as the Carolina foundation scholarships from Spain). 3) *Objectives.* Due to historical issues, in addition to the development models of higher education that nations select following a neoliberal shift (*from privatization through low-cost institutions of higher education*), El Salvador (28.1%), Guatemala (21.3%), and Honduras (20.1%) have the lowest levels of coverage and in general, the lowest performance in the region.

6.- Final remarks

This chapter has shown that no causal relationship exists between the political/ideological orientation of Latin America's governments and the reform processes of their systems of higher education. In the neoliberal phase, governments established the bases of new governance arrangements based on market or market-like mechanisms to conduct institutions of higher education from a distance, under new rules of the game. In the public sector, the new rules consisted of assessment systems of individuals, programs, and institutions to grant incentives and thus condition institutions' and actors' behaviors. In the private sector, greater freedoms were granted to open institutions and permit or tolerate educational profits. In some cases, private institutions of higher education were obligated to enter into processes of quality assurance.

In this phase, the systems' coverage grew, quite noticeably in some countries. In contrast, the private sector gained preeminence in almost all of the nations. Over the years, as actors' resistance was overcome, the types of evaluation, conditioned financing, and privatization of enrollment became the normal forms of conducting systems.

However, after two decades, the neoliberal systems began to show exhaustion. Several countries made a leftward shift and the state's role in providing education acquired renewed importance. Focuses based on rights and justice and expanding enrollment gained relevance, and the private sector faced severe questioning for its low quality and interest in profits. Thus, public financing in many countries tended to increase, encouragement was given to the growth of coverage, and pressure was placed on the control of private institutions of higher education. Nevertheless, all of these actions occurred in markedly different ways through processes to adjust and adapt policies. Both neoliberal and post-neoliberal governments kept instruments of market inspiration while using instruments of direct state intervention to finance systems and control them: a process we have called the *accumulation of policies*. In some cases, countries followed more or less *linear* processes of accumulation to expand systems; in other countries, thanks to gradual change and the expansion of low-cost institutions, policies have accumulated in a *convergent* manner, through successive, imprecise, and indirect approximations.

The specific form that both neoliberal and post-neoliberal governments used market or statist policies results in three types of

governance regimes. In some countries, actors and policies depended on the market and market-like instruments to take charge of most expanded coverage, system financing, and quality. This sort of integrating regime is predominantly private. However, other countries developed a different type of governance regime that is dual, in which the public and private sectors seem to develop on different paths: public policies and instruments intended for the public sector do not reach the private sector or only reach it in tangential form. The third type of governance is predominantly private, with low state interference, as experienced in Central American nations

Notes

¹ Almost all nations, regardless of the political orientation of their government, increased public spending and conditional financing, and continued using quality assurance policies in the public sector that were also promoted in the private sector. In various forms, all of the countries in Latin America encouraged programs of positive discrimination and localization to expand traditionally marginalized sectors' access to higher education or support economically disadvantaged students. These countries also tended to conserve policies of efficiency in educational administration, inspired by the principles of New Public Management. In short, more than creating paradigms of totally statist or totally neoliberal policies, systems of policies have acquired mixed forms that combine elements of both, centered on justice and the right to education in the first case; and in the second case, on economic considerations (conditional financing, competency instruments, and human capital).

² "In 1999, 9% of Latin America's population was unemployed and 43% was below the poverty line" (CEPAL, 2004 cited by Stoessel, 2014). It is important to underline that in Latin America, government/opposition interaction tends to influence voter behavior more than voter identification with political parties on the left/right scale (Panizza, 2009: 77). As Stoessel indicates, "[...] [t]he electoral victory of the left responds more to the anti-party stances that new leaders offer, than to their ideological stances" (Ibid.: 130). This fact is fundamental for understanding how the discourse of personalities like Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, or Lula da Silva in Brazil, was successful in linking the political exhaustion of the right in power, with the need for a change in direction under their own leadership.

³ Regarding the debate on terms, Stoessel, 2014.

⁴ From 2008 to 2012, Paraguay was governed by Fernando Lugo, from the leftist Alianza Patriótica para el Cambio.

⁵ Martin Trow (1974) stated that the development of higher education can be analyzed from the gross rate of enrollment, which he divides into *elite* (<15%), *massive* (from 15% to 50%), and *universal* (>50%). For the case of Latin America, Claudio Rama proposes a different scale in search of “[...] more divisions that permit distinguishing more clearly [...] the access of elites up to 15%, the access of minorities from 15% to 30%, of the masses up to 50%, universal access up to 85%, and absolute access with a higher percentage than universal access” (Rama, 2009).

⁶ The other models identified by Verger et al. are: privatization in social democratic welfare states; historical public- private partnerships in education systems with a tradition of religious schooling; and privatization through catastrophe.

⁷ Verger et al. consider Peru to be part of the group of poor nations with a low-cost educational supply. While the nation undoubtedly has these characteristics, the dimensions of its system (more than one million students), the proportion of public-private supply in total coverage (47-53%), and the tradition of its public universities do not justify its inclusion in the category

⁸ The shift toward expanding coverage through the public sector is probably explained at least in part by the government’s peace efforts and attention to social needs carried out in a political context of conflict and negotiation to disarm Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC).

⁹ For the case of transnational suppliers and corporate groups of higher education in Mexico, see Álvarez, 2015 and Álvarez y Urrego, 2017.

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