THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF POLICY CIRCULATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
A CASE STUDY OF PARAGUAY 1998-2008

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the idea of global policy transfer, as it has increasingly appeared in the literature of policy studies, and has been used to understand recent educational policy transformations around the world. To carry out this investigation, I have conducted a case study of higher education in Paraguay in order to determine the uses and limitations of the transfer literature in explaining policy developments in the Paraguayan higher education sector since 1989. As an exploratory study, this dissertation does not seek to provide specific recommendations in terms of specific programs or policy reform. Instead, it explores the possibilities of using the notion of policy transfer, and the conceptual discussions that surround it, in understanding various policy shifts and continuities that take place at a specific national setting which could potentially result from a diverse array of global networks and interactions.

The key arguments in this dissertation suggest that, in the current period of globalization, policy environments within the borders of the nation-state cannot be adequately understood without an understanding of the role that externalities—exogenous factors and institutions—play in the processes of policy making. However, the influence of those external situations, as in the case of international transfer of policy, is always contingent on the national policy environment that past and present activities of national institutions within specific sectors of policy making have helped produce. Both global and local processes, in terms of public policy, are thus, always contextually located, as is the nature of the relationship between the two, and this is an insight that is fundamental to an understanding of the concept of global policy transfer.

To my family

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, José and Magela, and my siblings, Ramiro, Diego and María Laura, who have patiently listened and supported me through all these years.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Early in 2010, the Paraguayan Minister of Health announced that she intended to ban the hiring of professionals of non-accredited institutions in Paraguay. Frustrated by the poor quality of graduates these institutions were producing, she argued for the general need to improve the level of quality of higher education in Paraguay. This, she maintained, was required not only by the Common Market of the South, but was also in line with the demands of the global context. The Minister's claim was not surprising in light of the unparalleled growth of non-accredited institutions in Paraguay, known for their poor quality. This has led to mounting concerns and pressures from the key employers in the country, as well as from health care professionals. Hence, the Paraguayan Minister of Health and Public Welfare's proposal was now articulated as a proposal for policy by a public institution.

This concern about the quality of higher education is not new in Paraguay. The current debate represents the latest round in deliberations about the need to establish a law of higher education. There have been discussions of higher education policy reform for more than ten years without any apparent resolution. Paraguay still lacks a well-defined higher education act, especially with respect to private institutions. However, the latest debates seem to be related to the larger wave of regional accountability reforms of higher education across countries in South America (see Argentina, Chile, among others), and are now occurring not simply at the national level but within a global context. This raises the question of the extent to which it is useful to understand policy debates about

higher education within Paraguay through an exploration of the global context, and ways in which global-local debates shape developments in public policy within the national context.

In recent years, much has been written about the notion of policy transfer which is widely used in order to understand international dimensions of national policy processes within the current period of globalization. Globalization itself is now constituted through a multiplicity of flows and networks of communication facilitating different types of mobilities in ways that seem to destabilize notions of national boundaries and territorial authority in public policy (Aneesh, 2006; Castells, 2005; Sassen, 2003; Urry, 2007). If this is so, then, how is policy authority at the national level shaped by global processes? It is important to remember that state and non-state institutions claim to policy authority is derived in a large measure by their ability to allocate values (such as resources) in order to pursue specific objectives that justify certain expectations. For example, a Ministry of Education is unable to provide and enforce certain frameworks of regulation for an educational system unless the ministry is able to secure appropriate authority. But where does this authority come from, especially if authority as a type of power is exercised and not possessed? Today, this exercise is becoming increasingly complex, contested and contingent, and deeply affected by international dimensions.

In the context of recent discussions of the authority of public policy, it is often assumed that global networks and transnational spaces affect national higher education policies. For instance, as international policy arenas have become places of global production and communication of knowledge and policy advice, it has become

increasingly evident that across Latin America, educational policies seem to follow

global models of educational change promoted by the World Bank (WB) and other

international organizations (IOs). International agents are also increasingly providing

strategic structures, and helping to generate and communicate diagnostics and

prescriptions about policy change at the national level. This has resulted in a certain

convergence of higher education policies across countries that have widely differing

cultural, economic and political traditions.

The recognition of this convergence has resulted in a rich literature on a set of

ideas that suggest policy mobility: transfer, translation, flows, circulation, borrowing,

lending and so on. These terms are widely used to describe, and possibly also, explain

different aspects of the complex system of interactions and relationships across

transnational, regional, national and local spaces. They are designed to underline the

contemporary dynamics of policy ideas being produced in one space but transferred in

application and utilization in another.

Policy Convergence

A widely held account of educational policy is that global models have

increasingly affected the organization of the governance structures of education, as well

as the perceived purposes of educational institutions. For instance, following a

constructivist perspective of processes of policy diffusion in education, it is possible to

observe the ways global norms have affected nation-states since the end of the Second

World War (see Meyer, Ramirez, Rubinson, & Boli-Bennett, 1977). Such norms may be

observed in the emergent patterns of mass schooling throughout most countries around the world over the second part of the twentieth century. This indicates the global diffusion of ideas that have transformed the social expectations of education everywhere, and the subsequent support for public policies promoting mass schooling.

Another fundamental aspect of any contemporary research on policy must take into account that policy relationships, between national and international spaces, increasingly require the constitution of common codes, discourses and languages, in order to foster international consensus about shared values informing the purposes of change. For instance, Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett (2007) indicate in an article reviewing recent research on the diffusion of global public policies that the spread of mass schooling as public policy is linked to the changing of international conventions and the imagining of education as an "integral part to modernity" (p. 451). This has led to the spread of a common set of values that supports education becoming an integral part of the processes of state modernization and economic development. In this way, policy change and policy reform have begun to conflate in the international discourse as terms referring to the same project of transformation.

The spread of the belief among policy experts that education is an integral part of any national modernization project highlights the ways in which narratives of global reach need to be considered as an important aspect for understanding the nature of public policy choices and debates about policy change affecting countries around the planet. Today, policy change in education becomes embedded in an overlapping web of policy

narratives and discourses, including those directly affecting our notions of the purposes and values of higher education.[1]

An example in literature showing some effects of these shifts of values in Latin America is presented by Miguel de la Torre Gamboa (2004), in his work *Del humanismo a la competitividad*. Gamboa uses a critical discourse analysis of policy documents to explore recent shifts in the understanding of values and principles affecting the practices and perspectives about higher education in Mexico. He point to ways in which ideas of change in public policies have begun to be linked to global narratives of a neoliberal project of educational change, as circulated through international organizations. He argues that a neoliberal discourse is used to inform new perspectives and beliefs on the role of the national system of education. Thus, political actions and higher education institutional answers, since the 1980s, have begun to be linked to a discursive legitimating vision that renders educational purposes as subordinate assets of economic ends, including the need to improve the global competitiveness of individuals and national institutions.

The growing spread of international conventions and agreement also represents an emerging and complex international institutional structure, consisting of networks facilitating the flow, and the subsequent implementation of policy ideas among nation states and policy actors. Arguably, then, states are now partially sharing[2] the sovereignty

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[1]I am using the term higher education, as Jane Knight (2005, p.3) does, to mean "educational institutions, providers, and programs that lead to credit or award at the undergraduate or graduate levels through full-time, part time, or continuing education."

[2] By regional, following Marginson and Roadhes (2002, p. 285), I refer to "a supra-national entity, not to regions within a country."

of their educational systems with a multiplicity of global, regional, national and local policy actors, even if the image of educational policy remains state-centric. In this way, such accounts of policy mobility emphasize the exploration of exogenous factors in the current process of movement in globalization, (thus, their international dimensions).

Proposed Research Project

In this dissertation, I examine some of the key debates around the idea of policy transfer, as a way of exploring the extent to which it is useful to understand contemporary policy processes in education.

My broader goal is to explore the ways in which international mobilities of policy ideas in higher education affect and help shape national policy environments and policies themselves. In order to work towards this goal, I will present a case study of recent policy debates in Paraguayan higher education, especially as they relate to the dramatic expansion of private higher education since the 1990s. This case study was researched over 2008-2009, and seeks to identify the way global policy ideas are received, interpreted and negotiated at the local level, and furthermore, if the theories of policy transfer are adequate in providing a satisfactory account of the global policy processes and effects.

At the very beginning of my research, I was skeptical of much of the recent research on global policy transfer in education. I believed that the patterns of transformations that take place at higher education national systems often generate diverse and complex outcomes in different countries. These outcomes may preclude an

understanding of simple causal relation between international policy prescriptions, communication and policy change at the local level in higher education. I was therefore interested in providing a more nuanced account of this phenomenon. Given this skepticism, my intention in the case study was, therefore, to explore if this conceptual framework of educational policy transfer was adequate for generating holistic understandings of aspects of complex process of public policy change at higher education systems. This exploration is made in terms of the constitution of a specific assemblage[3] (Latour, 2005) of global and local dimensions, at a specific territorial context of Paraguay, as country exemplar.

During my research process, I further narrowed my focus of interest to the study of potential policy transfer interactions mediated by intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) in relation to public policies and developments at the higher education sector in Paraguay from the 1990s to 2008. In this dissertation, I address three key questions related to the pertinence of recent literature on policy transfer to the development of policy change at local context. The theoretical questions that guide my investigation of policy transfer are:

1. How adequate is the literature/language of policy transfer to describe and understand the processes of recent policy changes with respect to Paraguayan higher education?

2. From the exemplar of Paraguayan higher education, what can we conclude about the limitations of the language of policy transfer in understanding public policy

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[3] According to Law (2008, p. 146), Latour refers to assemblage as the "provisional assembly of productive, heterogeneous and (this is the crucial point) quite limited forms of ordering located in no larger overall order." In this dissertation, I view assemblage as the provisional montage of heterogeneous "objects or persons" (Haraway, 1991, p. 162), in particular patterns of organization.

change?

3. What are the elements that provide a more consistent and systematic approach to policy circulation for understanding policy changes in Paraguayan higher education, in particular, but also Latin American in general?

In carrying out this research, I address, in particular, the following propositions widely assumed in recent literature on policy transfer, with respect to the potential role of intergovernmental organizations in policy mobility processes in education:

- Narratives, research and policy documents produced by IGOs contribute to the emergence of contexts of policy uncertainty/confusion in national public policy environments where political debates about higher education reform in Paraguay take place.

- International borrowing and lending in public educational policy are elements that contribute to explain the context of domestic policy developments and debates of higher education reform.

- IGOs play an important role as structures and agents promoting policy change in higher education at the national level.

- "The content of policy transfers normally reflects areas where indigenous state actors lack expertise" (Evans, 2004, p. 221).

- Intergovernmental organizations help to generate "educational crises at national level, which then are supposed to be remedied with the import of global reforms packages, and paid for from national revenues"[4] (Gogolin, Keiner, Steiner-Khamsi, Ozga, Yates, 2007, p. 291).

- "Policy transfer represents a mechanism of globalization and [regionalization[5]], leading to convergence/divergence of ideas, institutions, policies and paradigms, which provide further opportunities for policy transfer to occur" (Ladi, 2005, p. 154).

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[4] Steiner-Khamsi, presented this idea in reference issues of educational reform at basic and secondary education. However, it remains unclear if this proposition can be extended to higher education public policy reform initiatives.

[5] Ladi's original proposition refers to a specific type of regionalization process called "Europeanization."

Collectively, these propositions indicate the crucial role that IGOs play in policy transfer, as mediators of ideas, discourses and imaginaries. They, therefore, feature prominently in my discussion of policy processes relating to higher education in Paraguay.

Structure of the Study

The main objectives of this research lie within the recent literature of policy transfer. I attempt to lay out the basic approach of this literature in order to draw attention to the integral and complex relationship that exists between state policy processes and intergovernmental institutional narratives of policy change. An emphasis on the importance of complexity and contingency in policy processes guides my readings of both the literature of transfer and the current debates taking place over higher education reform in Paraguay.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review on the notion of policy transfer. In presenting this review, I pay particular attention to the ways in which the international spread of ideas of change in higher education operates through the system of regional and international agencies, as well as through various systems of sharing of policy ideas, consensus building and accountability.

Chapter 3 offers an account of the methodological approach used for the collection and analysis of data, mainly through interviews and documentation analysis. The semi-structured interviews of key actors of the system were conducted to provide a better understanding of the nature and limitation of the role of international organizations, and how they shape narratives taking place in the national debates. The interviews also

guided the search of pertinent policy documents. Moreover, the chapter explains the reasons for choosing Paraguay. Among these is the fact that it is a country that has witnessed only recently a relative expansion of state institutions and structures directly involved in the field of higher education.

Chapter 4 presents an overall exploration of the context in which current debates of Paraguay's higher education reform have taken place. It emphasizes the nature of the Paraguayan state and the historical trajectory of its higher education institutions. Particular attention is given to the regional and international pressures for policy change with possible effects on the current proposals of reform. I show how pressures and challenges for public policy change in Paraguayan higher education are continually increasing, as judged by local policy actors who speak of the demands of international processes of economic transformation and the integration of Paraguay with the international economy and community. These are transformations, at all levels of the Paraguayan society, that lead people, within and outside higher education institutions, to debate on the type of legislative responses that should be implemented.

Chapter 5 presents the data collected, and provides an account of the issues identified. An analysis of the data focuses on policy transfer and the ways in which it is shaping reform initiatives in higher education in Paraguay. This includes the exploration of potential instances of the transfer of ideas, institutions, and policy programs. The data is based on interviews with relevant policy actors, extensive review of local policy documents, and Internet-based research studies which are used to provide a narrative account of instances and processes of transformations and continuities in Paraguayan

higher education. In this chapter, I present evidence that suggests that higher education policy appears to be regarded by the state and key political actors as either irrelevant, or at best, of secondary importance to other projects of national development. This lack of attention to expanding the public system and of incentives for system reform could also be linked to persistent political and institutional resistances to policy innovations in Paraguay. The idea of transfer is thus refracted through a politics of policy inertia in Paraguay.

In light of the data provided by the Paraguayan case, Chapter 6 revisits the policy transfer literature in order to identify if this conceptual framework offers adequate, or even useful, accounts of contemporary public policy developments in Paraguayan higher education. I argue that much of the recent literature on policy transfer is useful but limited because it does not adequately capture the complexities of policy processes at the national level, and because the causal account it presents is largely misleading. In order to overcome some of these limitations, I propose a set of theoretical improvements to the idea of policy transfer—a framework for the study of policy shifts in terms of the mobility of policy ideas, in order to better understand and describe the complex context researched.

My overall argument is that, for the most part, debates by national actors and domestic experts are informed by international prescriptions of solutions, concepts and examples in diverse degrees. These are used partially to interpret extremely complex national environments and global demands that shape the outcomes of any policy development. It is within these local contexts that the interactions with the agency of

IGOs have some degree of impact, directly or indirectly, on the transfer of parameters of discussion about educational reform priorities. However, it is only within the realm of pre-existent local and national state capacities that those global policy ideas make sense and have salience.

Chapter 2

The Idea of Policy Transfer

Introduction

The notion of policy transfer is now widely used in attempts to understand international dimensions of national policy processes in the current stages of globalization. As I noted in the previous chapter, globalization itself is now constituted through a multiplicity of flows and communication networks facilitating different types of mobility in ways that seems to destabilize notions of nationally bounded conceptions of territorial authority in public policy. However, the idea of transfer in the literature on public policy analysis is relatively recent (Evans, 2004).

The study of transfer processes in educational policy is assumed to be increasingly important because of the ways in which an emergent set of organizational patterns (a mixture of bureaucratic practices and networks) are thought to be shaping an increasingly globalized policy agenda in education. These patterns include the increasing advocacy of transnational institutions for the adoption of distinctive responses about the role of higher education by local, national and states entities. These global patterns and agendas for transformation have been described as "traveling policy" (Ozga & Jones, 2006) or "international models of systemic change"[6] (Jones, 2003, p. 11).

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[6] The significance of these patterns seems related to a characteristic of globalization: international organizations are now "responsible for an increasing number of aspects of the public life" (Ladi, 2007, p. 2).

The prescriptive models of policy reform in higher education have striking similarities in public policy across countries. These patterns appear to suggest a form of "ideational convergence" (Radaelli, 2004) of public policies, often promoted by intergovernmental organizations, such as the World Bank, UNESCO and the OECD. Yet, according to the literature in educational policy studies, the spread of initiatives of change generates contradictory processes of creating, not only actual convergence of policies and institutions towards global or regional models of transformations, but also divergent and hybridizing outcomes or no specific changes at national settings.

Following Marginson and Rhoades (2002, p. 285), this raises an important question: What agencies and mechanisms have led to the introduction of similar policies and the development of increasingly common structures across one national system to the next? In other words, how has the convergence of patterns of policy development, at least at the rhetorical level, across many different countries and regions and localities emerged? What role has human agency played? How has the policy convergence in higher education been constituted through the activities of institutions and through a variety of channels of interaction? What processes have been involved?

The understanding of these processes may require exploring two key questions relating to studies of policy transfer: What are some of the ways in which the idea of global policy mobility been theorized in the literature? And, how does the transfer of educational policy relate to the activities of intergovernmental organizations at national systems of education?

In order to understand the uses of a policy transfer framework for the study of public policy change in higher education, it is important to review the policy transfer perspectives and their relationship to the policy diffusion and educational transfer literature. In what follows, I seek to provide this review, and also introduce some general notions linked to the theme of transfer from global perspectives: international organizations, globalization, networks, convergence and divergence, and structure and agency.

Policy Transfer and Policy Diffusion

Historically, the concept of "policy transfer" has been used in two ways: as an explanatory variable and as a conceptual framework[7] (Radaelli, 2000). Thus, it has been used in the literature both as an "analogical or heuristic model" and as a "meso level[8] concept" for the analysis of policy spread. In each of these forms, the concept policy transfer is used as an overreaching concept encompassing "the substantive similarities between a particular form of policy-making and mechanism of transfer, diffusion, convergence, emulation, or learning." At the same time, it has also been used to present an analysis of the relations between governance and policy decisions. Therefore, it is concerned with the broader questions about "the distribution of power within contemporary society" (Evans, 2004. p. 25).

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[7] Though as James and Lodge (2003) point out "the proponents of 'policy transfer' see explanation as central to their concerns" (p. 184).

[8] Basically it is a concept used in types of analysis of policy process dealing with "*how* policies come to be made, *who* puts them on the policy agenda, and the *structure* of the institutional arrangements in which policy is defined and eventually implemented" (Hudson & Lowe, 2004, p. 11; italics in original).

In recent years, and especially since the 1980s, there is an increasing interest in studying the international dimensions of public policy. This generates an increasing attention to explore concepts of policy transfer, convergence and diffusion (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). The increasing use of those notions has a number of "practical and scholarly reasons" (Stone, 1999).

One of these practical reasons is the growing interest in the study of the processes of regionalization, and of the processes of cross-national integration (e.g. European Union). Furthermore, the need within the field of public policy studies of addressing globalization has led to a renewed attention to the ways in which policies spread across countries. For instance, in education policy, and especially since the 1990s, "the fact that educational reform proposals across nation states bear remarkable similarity" (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997, p. 60) has led to an increasing attention to the need for educational policy research "to consider the extent and character of educational policy "borrowing," "modeling," "transfer," "diffusion," "appropriation" and "copying" which occur across the boundaries of nation states and which lead to universalizing tendencies in educational reform" (Halpin, 1994).

Although the notion of transfer is a perennial object of interest in the comparative policy studies literature, the concept of policy transfer itself (and related notions) began to appear with an increasing frequency since the1980s, often associated closely with the literature on lesson drawing. In comparative policy studies, the idea of policy transfer became associated with the increasing international movement of policy, or traveling policy associated, in diverse and descriptive ways, with globalization processes.

The formulation of the idea of policy transfer was first systematized in the 1990s by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996, 2000). They viewed it as an overarching umbrella term for policy mobilities, as a "process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting" (Dolowitz, & Marsh, 2000, p. 5). In this way, policy transfer became a key notion in a conceptual framework for policy analysis.

More recently, the emergence of literature on policy transfer is perceived by many scholars, such as Stone (1999), as a way to overcome the limitations of "methodological nationalism"[9] in the comparative policy studies literature (see Green, 2003; Stone, 2004). As Jeremy Rappleye (2006, p. 224) indicates, the field of policy studies becomes "invigorated by divisive debates about globalization and an awareness of the arrival of new stakeholders and agents of transfer, the field has responded admirably with a flurry of work dedicated to the transfer theme."

The prolific array of different nomenclatures is a measure of the resurgence of interest in the process and conditions of transfer, including band-wagoning (Ikenberry, 1990); diffusion (Majone, 1991); policy shopping (Freeman, 2006); policy "borrowing" (Cox, 1993; Philips, 2004), learning (Common, 2004; Greener, 2001, 2002), lesson-drawing (Rose, 1993), and many others. The resurgence of the concept of transfer can thus be viewed as being closely associated with globalization dynamics, adding

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[9] For a detailed account of the concept, see Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002. It is important to note that Evans and Davies indicate "much of the literature on policy transfer" still "focuses on the nation state, with public officials usually considered the key agents of transfer" (Evans & Davis, 1999, as cited in Street, 2004, p. 114).

increasing relevance to the study of international dimensions. One of the more relevant

aspects common to the contemporary discussion of policy transfer is the emerging

epistemic communities of policy experts and supranational institutions, apart from the

state actors, an emphasis which limited transfer studies to state government bureaucracies

and pressure groups within states.

As I have already noted, it is a mistake to assume a singular concept of policy

transfer. Rather, it is clear that notions of transfer have a long trajectory in comparative

studies. However, only recently the idea of transfer has been elaborated as an operative

concept for use in the analysis of international movement of policies. According to

Dolowitz and Marsh (1996), studies following a policy transfer framework originated out

of "policy diffusion studies as a subset of the comparative politics literature" (Evans,

2004, p. 12) that had emerged in the 1940s.[10] The more salient aspect of this policy

diffusion literature was the attempt to offer a better understanding of the dynamics of

interaction between civil society and the state that was previously absent in the literature

of most comparative studies.

In the 1960s, policy diffusion[11] emerged as a way to deal with aspects of policy

processes related with the spread of policies and ideas. For instance, Walker (1969) uses

"diffusion" in relation to the spread of policy ideas at the federal level drawing from the

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[10] As Dolowitz and March (1996) point out: "before 1940 most comparative studies focused on the formal institutions of government and were thus 'state centered' and overly descriptive. During the 1940s such approaches became less fashionable and studies began examining how civil society interacted with the state. By the 1960s a key focus was upon comparative policy analysis." (p. 344)

[11] As Diane Stone indicates, the policy literature within the framework of policy transfer was first observed in the United States "as a means to explain the adoption of policy and spread of diffusion throughout this federal system" (Stone, 2001, p. 4).

pre-existent literature on research of social diffusion of innovations (for an overview of

the "diffusion of innovation" literature see, for example, Katz, Levin & Hamilton, 1963;

Rogers, 1995).

As Freeman (2006, p. 369) indicates "the idea of diffusion refers to a pattern of

successive or sequential adoption of a practice, policy, or program either across countries

or across sub national jurisdictions." However, a critical deficiency of policy diffusion

studies during the early period was that it paid little attention to the process of transfer

itself. Basically, as Evans (2004, p. 12) notes, research on policy diffusion was focused

on "identifying trends in timing, geography, and resource similarities in the diffusion of

innovation between countries, and, in the United States between states."

In the 1980s, the mounting criticisms on the limits of diffusion studies (Marsh &

Dolowitz, 1996) indicated that these studies paid scarce attention to an analysis of the

content of policies, as well as silencing some of the complex dynamics of international

interaction. This in part led to the emergence of the contemporary and multidisciplinary

approach of policy transfer analysis.

As I have already noted, policy transfer can be considered a type of "umbrella

term" (Lowe & Hudson, 2004, p. 165) for a number of different approaches used to study

international policy circulation. For instance, lesson drawing can be considered a form of

policy transfer, involving the study of "whether programmes can transfer from one place

to another" (Rose, 1991, p. 5). This essentially involves a focus on voluntary forms of

lesson learning. The literature mentions at least five types of drawing lessons: "degrees of

transfer" (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996, p. 351; Evans, 2004, pp. 37-38; Stone, 2004, p. 545).

Rose (1991, p. 22) describes these degrees of transfer in the following terms: the first degree of transfer, c*opying*, refers to the "adoption more or less intact of a programme already in effect in another jurisdiction." Second, *emulation* implies an adaptation of the content by the adopter in ways that it is possible to observe "adjustment for different circumstances, of a programme already in effect in another jurisdiction" Third, *hybridization*, represents a degree of transfer where it is possible to observe the combination of elements of "programmes from two different places." *Synthesis* implies an even greater degree of sophistication in the adoption of a program, by the receptor of the transfer. The adopter is able to access a variety of sources of information, thus it is able to "combine familiar elements from programmes in effect in three or more different places." The final degree of transfer is *inspiration* this modality of transfer is characteristic of adopter able to use the ideas and "programmes elsewhere [has] intellectual stimulus for developing a novel programme without an analogue elsewhere." This final degree of transfer implies the possession of capacities by the adopters of learning and introducing innovations in their own terms.

These degrees of transfer are presented generally as voluntary types of lesson drawing involving rational or bounded rational learning. However, it can be argued that these typologies of transfer provide little explanation of many aspects of the current processes of policy convergence, involving non-rational aspects of policy adoption. That is, they do not adequately explain "the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, processes and performances" (Bennett, 1991, p. 213).

According to Evans (2004), it is possible to identify "four main approaches employed in policy transfer analysis theory encompassing the literature directly using the "label of policy transfer" or aspects of the process of 'policy transfer'" (p. 12): process-centred approaches; ideational approaches; comparative approaches; and multilevel approaches. Each of these approaches describes a particular focus on the study of description, explanation, or prescription of policy transfer. According to Evans (2004, p. 14) comparative approaches "involve single comparative case study analysis and across national aggregate comparison." In comparative educational policy, David Phillips' (2004) framework of cross-national attraction and educational transfer[12] may be considered, for example, as being related to the comparative approaches of policy transfer. On the other hand, an ideational approach point of departure is the assumption that "it is systems of ideas which influence how politicians and policy-makers learn how to learn." Hence, ideational approaches "address, in different ways, the problems of when and how policy makers and societies learn how to learn" (Evans, 2004, p. 14). These approaches represent different points of departure for the study of policy transfer.

Yet, Diane Stone (1999) argues that "policy transfer is the broader concept encompassing ideas of diffusion and coercion as well as the voluntaristic activity of lesson-drawing"[13] (p. 52). This concept allowed the inclusion of coercive dimensions in the spread of policies ignored in the policy learning and policy diffusion literature. For

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[12] I made a distinction here between educational transfer and policy transfer. Educational transfer can be defined as "the movement of educational ideas, institutions or practices across international borders" (Beech, 2006, p. 2). In this work, I am referring specifically to the transfer of policies in general.

[13] Lowe and Hudson (2004) indicate that policy transfer is "a complex, multifaceted dimension of the policy process" (p. 165).

instance, "processes such as colonization and the sorts of constraints imposed by conditionality" (Freeman, 2006, p. 368). As Oliver James and Martin Lodge (2003, p. 182) point out, the concept of policy transfer may indeed "include 'voluntary' adoption", but also "Rose's 'lesson drawing,' and 'coercive transfer', where a government or supranational institution encourages or even forces a government to adopt a policy" (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996, pp. 344-45, as cited in James & Lodge, 2003, p. 182). In those terms "lesson drawing," or "borrowing," may be considered to a certain extent as a form of voluntary transfer.

It is important to note however that, as Stone (2001) argues, though overlapping, "these terms…are not interchangeable." For instance, "lesson-drawing is a voluntary process. Learning may lead to policy transfer but it may also produce policy outcomes or not apparent outcomes" (Stone, 2001, p. 14).

Moreover, recent perspectives of policy diffusion[14] are beginning to make contributions that seek to overcome some of these limitations. In other words, the ideas of policy transfer and policy diffusion are starting to complement each other, in the work of some scholars, in their common search for creating a coherent theoretical framework that escapes mechanical notions of convergence.

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[14] As Braun and Gilardi (2006) indicate "in this literature diffusion is defined as a process where choices are interdependent, that is, where the choice of a government influences the choices made by others and, conversely, the choice of a government is influenced by the choices made by others." (p. 299)

It may be argued that policy diffusion offers another way to explore the international spread of policy.[15] Until recently most studies on policy diffusion in sociology and policy sciences were linked to descriptive accounts of the outcomes of the process transfer or to be more precise, accounts of "processes associated with a likely outcome" (Elkins & Simmons, 2005, p. 36, as cited in Busch & Jörgens, 2005, p. 865). It is necessary to point out that, although their differences in their focus of study, transfer and policy diffusion share the common interest of studying processes (rather than outcomes), that might result in increasing policy similarities across countries (Elkins & Simmons, 2005, p. 36).

Diffusion studies, often evoking an idea of "contagion," tend to neglect the "political dynamics" involved in policy transfer (Stone, 2001, p. 5). Thus, they try to claim the neutral character of the process. The prevailing quantitative studies of policy diffusion reflect this trend.

The policy diffusion literature has shown an increasing attention to the study of interdependence involved in the process of policy circulation. This is observed in the integration made by Mintrom and Vergari (1998) of the policy diffusion framework developed by Berry and Berry (1990) which links policy diffusion with social network analysis to study the spread of policies through policy networks (Sabatier, 2007).

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[15] James and Lodge (2003) indicate two other types of literature that deal with the "spread of policies across space": (a) "sociological organization literature about the spread of similar forms of organization across different bodies" (see Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991); (b) "cybernetics literature about control in complex environments."

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More recently, Elkins and Simmons (2005) have created a framework describing the development of the diffusion of ideas of economic and financial liberalization in public policy. These authors argue that the emergence of similar economic policies across nations is the result of the creation of "clusters" of learning of economic policy responses. Basically, their work indicates that common responses of economic liberalization are based on cultural emulations and informational learning.

The basic assumption of Simmons and Elkins (2004) model for explaining the diffusion of policies of economic liberalization across countries is that governments not only obtain information but also obtain insights that can be used to formulate "rational policy decisions." In their model, decisions are not merely based in external "hegemonic pressures" but are also based in the cultural relationships of the government actors.

Finally, a number of other recent theories are also relevant to the study of policy transfer. These include developments in the study of policy diffusion that begin to unfold a deeper interest in the study of the context of diffusion (see Howlett & Rayner, 2008). Furthermore, the notion of networks is increasingly used as a way to address systemic processes of diffusion and transfer, now involving a plurality of global actors in policy-making processes.

Policy Networks

Policy transfer and policy diffusion as interrelated perspectives for the study of the phenomenon of transfer are increasingly using network centered approaches to the study of the international systems of interactions characteristic of contemporary process

of policy making. I use the notion of system here as a conceptual abstraction to describe specific global and national assemblages, such as those observed between local institutions and international organizations. These assemblages constitute their own dynamics and capacities of self-production. In other words, they may be self-referential systems: "systems that have the ability to establish relations with themselves and to differentiate these relations from relations with their environment" (Luhmann, 1995, p. 13, as cited in Christis, 2001, p. 329). In short, they have a characteristic shared by autopoietic systems (according to some perspectives systems that can be seen in all social systems [see Mingers, 2002, 2004]), and the capacities to self perpetuate the relationships that allow its constitution through time. These assemblages are not static social constructs but could constitute through policy networks.

The literature on networks in social sciences has a long history, in at least two different and divergent traditions of social sciences: social network analysis (SNA) and the network analysis practice within social anthropology (Knox, Savage & Harvey, 2006). SNA is based on a common quantitative approach that focuses on social structures. It emerged as a reaction against "methodologically individualistic approaches" in social sciences. But, the excessive emphasis it placed on methods of data collection and on the absence of systematic thinking about the assumptions underpinning its methodology, as well as the absence of technical capacity to establish clear boundaries for the objects of study, resulted in the development of a rigid and mechanical vision of social structures and interactions.

Network analysis practice within social anthropology has a different history. It was based on qualitative approaches for the study of partial networks that were developed in reaction to structural-functionalist anthropological understanding of social structures. But, in this approach, the excessive emphasis on the use of network as an analytical category has led to the scarce development of a consistent theory for the study of complex interactions, as well as the increased use of the metaphor of networks as a mere truism. Exceptions are observed in the work of theorists like Bruno Latour (2005), and in the use of networks to address the existence of complex systems of social interaction.

In response to those criticisms, Knox, Savage and Harvey (2006) point out that the "cultural turn" in SNA and its recent reproach with anthropological traditions of network analysis has the potential to combine the strengths of these two traditions in a helpful direction. However, such a synthesis also has its own underlying problems. For example, since the notion of networks has simultaneously different meanings, it can be used as a form of analysis or to prescribe forms of social organization.

With respect to policy networks, as Evans (2001) and Dowding (1995) argue, this idea is "essentially a metaphorical term characterizing group-government relations" (Evans, 2001, p. 542). While the policy transfer analysis approach provides some insightful suggestions on using this concept as a meso-level concept for analyzing policy making, it is often silent over the importance of networks for the study of international and local policy processes, particularly in developing countries. In those contexts, networks are often constituted and utilized with specific purposes of promoting particular kinds of change. Yet, the lack of attention in the literature on policy transfer often

overlooks the role of regional institutions in promoting the emergence of networking initiatives at national settings in relation to specific issues, through the creation of various epistemic communities.

For instance, in the case of developing countries, it is often the case that IGOs promote particular policy sets through forums or network building venues for policy circulation. IGOs have a long history of promoting international communication, but in recent years their development can be linked to facilitating processes that make contemporary global convergence possible. In short, they have enabled the emergence of institutional frameworks that make possible contemporary transnational connections, and that are linked to current attempts of the organization of *global flows* that characterize today's globalization.

According to Akira Iriye (2004), international organizations can be classified in two main categories: the first composed of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), and the second encompassing intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Basically, Iriye (2004, pp. 1-2) explains that IGOs are "institutions that come into existence through formal agreements among nations and represent their respective governments." Michael Barnett and Martha Fennimore's (2004, p. 2) study on the ways that IGOs behave today indicates that these organizations are now operating as central agents in world politics developing "their own ideas" and pursuing "their own agendas," as well as facilitating instances of policy transfer. Non-governmental organization (INGOs), on the other hand, began to acquire relevance in the second half of the nineteenth century, and their numbers have increased exponentially, as well as their

influence and autonomy since the 1970s (Iriye, 2004, p. 129). However, as Iriye points

out, both IGOs and INGOs now operate through various systems of policy networks,

often in consort with each other, reflecting the emerging processes of globalization.

Complexity and Globalization

A systemic notion of networks as metaphor and analytical tool is useful in

describing contemporary processes of globalization that are driving increasingly complex

dynamics of policy communication. Before I continue, it is useful to present an account

of globalization. To begin with, it needs to be noted that there was much in the hype

about the "new" among theorists and commentators of globalization in the 1990s. Justin

Rosenberg (2005, p. 42) argues that while "no concept is without explanatory limits and

weaknesses, and these always need to be acknowledged through qualification when . . .

applied," during the1990s, globalization "came to resemble the intellectual equivalent of

an architectural folly."

While this is a fair criticism, and while, as Leslie Sklair (2007) points out, the

term 'globalization' "by the turn of the millennium it was to be found everywhere, and

applied to almost everything" (p. 93), it is nonetheless a useful term. As Sklair (2007)

suggests,

> Concepts, if they are doing their job properly, ask questions about empirical
> reality, however flimsy and/or difficult to represent that might turn out to be under
> the scrutiny of the trained researcher. But they do more than this; they direct
> attention to how certain aspects of reality fit into the totality that the theory is
> attempting to conceptualize and organize. (p. 103)

Therefore, globalization is not just "globaloney." It is rather a "fuzzy" term that may be used to describe a number of complex and interrelated dynamics that are increasingly difficult to understand "because of their complexity" (Veseth, 2005, p. 2), especially with the demise of the traditional state-centric perspectives on reality in the social sciences. With the erosion of artificial boundaries of territory and sovereignty of nation states, globalization describes the complexities of transnational processes. As Urry (2007) indicates, global complexities are main aspects that the fuzzy concept of globalization seems to address. In this sense, the fuzziness of the concept implies complex processes of contingent interpretations that seem to require the need to "think in fuzzy and relational terms" (Morçöl, 2002, p. 3).

However, a lingering question persists: What is complexity? Morçöl offers a useful account of its meaning in relation to a set of theories collectively known as the "sciences of complexity"(Morçöl, 2002, p. 6). These theories were originally developed over the last two decades within the natural sciences, and share the common interest in the study of nonlinear contextual phenomena of "complexity."[16] First, we need to understand, as Morçöl points out, that complexity is a relational idea: it depends on the perspective of the observers and participants. Second, the complexity of a system does not fully describe or explain relationality between objects, events and processes. Like any living language, or living creature, complexity points out to the self-organizing processes

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[16]As Urry (2007) noted the recommendations of the *US Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* advocated that "complexity" is a common subject of interest of both natural sciences methodology in social sciences. Therefore, they shared a common object scientific analysis that blurred the divisions between ways of study the "social" and the "natural."

of change within systems. As useful as this account is, the problem with the idea of complexity, as with the idea of globalization, relates to attempts at establishing its conceptual limits.

A further problem with both the ideas of complexity and globalization, as Zygmunt Bauman (1998) argues, is that "*no one seems now to be in control*" (p. 58; italics in original) This does not mean that "organization" does not exist. For, as Randall Collins argues, many of the current developments and "chaos" in the apparent way in which global dynamics operate is not a consequence of the lack of regulatory regimes or obsolescence of bureaucratic forms of organization. Instead, it is a consequence of the proliferation of "competing and overlapping forms of recordkeeping and regulation" (Collin, 2007, p. 391). Among the builders of these regimes are IGOs and INGOs, as they attempt to regulate or foment the spread of bureaucracy. In the same manner, the absence of a sole authoritative voice does not mean that the rational organization of institutional authority disappears. Instead, it indicates a multiplicity of competing voices attempting to promote a diversity of worldviews.

Similarly, Karin Knorr Cetina (2007) has suggested that global complexity is not so much institutional as systemic. Her argument is that "global systems" are best characterized as complex micro-structural processes. These processes imply the existence of "complex patterns" of integration that have a global scope. In this way, the patterns Knorr Cetina speaks of are "global microstructures" [17] rather than complex institutions. It

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[17]Microstructures are not "simply networks" (Cetina, 2007, p. 68), but comprise systems of coordination," reflexive systems," with "specific textures": values, ideas, imaginaries, and representation. In other words, they require the constitution of "Global

is necessary to clarify the importance of this point. Microstructures imply a lack of institutional forms, in the Weberian sense. They are "light structures" which do not speak of "institutional complexity" in the sense of "complex forms of organization." Instead, they suggest types of systemic complexity in terms of "complex patterns of coordination" that escape the scope of Weber's description of rational institutional systems, and thus the concept of "authority" (see Weber, 1996). If so, an important question is: How is the function of authority, in the absence of institutional forms of authority, assumed and by whom? [18]

Within such as a complex global system, "it is not clear what 'being in control' could, under the circumstances, be like" (Bauman, 1998, p. 58). The complexity of a system or organization (for example, global bureaucracies in the form of IGOs) does not refer to its immanent intricacy but to the way in which it is "socially constructed and maintained" outside artificial boundaries: the contextual, contingent, relational interplay

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reflexive systems" (GRS) in order to pursue and inform specific projects. In the global context, these are autopoietic systems, constituted as mediation mechanism built through information technologies: Scopic systems allowing the temporal coordination of reality in ways that seem to fulfill some of "the functions Weber associated with rational authority structures" (Ibid, p. 82). This idea seems to open a number of venues for research on questions that refer to the different ways in which global integration is taking place: What constituted global financial markets? What are the context and cultures implicit in the different types of coordination of global groups? How are the global assemblages that are pursuing a particular project of global economy and society generated, and the more important question of who are the developers of those mechanisms?

[18] At this point it seems appropriate to follow Rosenau's (2007) suggestion on the need to begin to "focus on relational rather that possessional phenomena" (Rosenau, 2007, p. 314). In other words, power as an analytical concept linked to possession needs to be replaced with a different terminology to indicate both the possessional ("capacities") and relational factors ("control") involved in the ways in which authority is exercised and becomes unstable.

between its participants that constitute the system itself.[19] Furthermore, it is perhaps a

mistake to consider the institutional and systems perspectives as mutually exclusive. We

should assume instead that we are observing both the interplay of institutional and

systemic complexity in the way that educational policy flows in the transnational system.

The idea of system, it should be recalled, is defined following biological analogies, rather

than mechanical perspectives. Systems in biology are considered as "overlapping images

of entities and processes," with rather fuzzy boundaries. Therefore, systems and

subsystems are interdependent, and "modify their structures constantly"[20] (Morçöl, 2002,

p. 155). Applying this logic to thinking about globalization implies working with

categories that are dynamic and fuzzy. So, for example, the common assumption of

globalization theorists that current "problems cannot be adequately studied at the level of

nation state" does not mean abandoning the category of nation state. This implies that

categories, such as nation state, are evolving through complex interactive processes. It

also points to the need for research on globalization to address relations outside the

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[19] Moreover, it is important to understand with Collins (2007) Weber's difference between Formal rationality and Substantive rationality. A complex system is not irrational in a formal sense. Formal rationality is the one that exists between processes of organizational regulation while substantive rationality is the one that characterizes the individual understandings of those regulations. It is not surprising that, with the proliferation of so many competing organizations in the current phase of globalization, individuals witnessing and enduring these phenomena are aware of an inherent irrationality and complexity in the contemporary world. However, for Collins this is a substantive irrationality. The many competitive and overlapping voices of authority are using similar modalities of organization, a formal rationality, to pursue their objectives.
[20] Systems are complex "because they include multiple-use components, unintended or unfamiliar feedbacks loops, indirect and inferential information sources and poorly understood processes" (Morçöl, 2002, p. 153).

boundaries of nation states, as in terms of "globalizing (transnational) processes" (Sklair, 2007, p. 95).

Finally, in this discussion of globalization and complexity, it is important to draw a distinction between those processes that generically characterize the current historical form of globalization with those that have been produced by dominant historical modalities relating to capitalist globalization. According to Sklair (2007), generic globalization in the contemporary world refers to a number of moments (forces) affecting each sector of society across nation states.[21] Capitalist globalization, on the other hand, refers to a project of transnational integration whose main driver is a "transnational capitalist class (TCC)." This is a class with common interests in fostering and organizing (generic globalization), as part of a global system.[22] In this way, as Sklair (2007, p. 94) points out, globalization can be understood in opposition to Collins (2007) and others, as "a contested world-historical project with capitalist and other variants."

What implications do observations about complexity and globalization have for understanding the processes of policy transfer? To begin with, it suggests that policy transfer as practiced within the system of states is always contingent of local realities. The international priorities for policy change are transformed through time, and the

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[21]Electronic moment (New communication technologies), postcolonial moment, the moment of transnational social spaces and new forms of cosmopolitanism (Sklair, 2007, p. 96).

[22] For instance, since the late seventies, those changes, as Castells (2000), Schirato and Webb (2003), Harvey (2005), and many others point out, have being characterized by a pattern of global economic restructuring, differentiated by a series of reforms, both at the level of institutions and in the management of firms, arranged "hand in hand with the implementation of neoliberal policies in many nations" (Burbules & Torres, 2000, p. 5).

ongoing processes of transfer constantly modify the conditions in which changes in the narratives and priorities of public policy are discussed by local actors. Charles Tilly (2004) has argued that the global flows of ideas and forms of organizations, knowledge and methodologies in education, as in other fields of practice, are thus linked to the complexity of both discursive and material transformations taking place in contemporary societies. Indeed, these flows contribute to the construction of contemporary education systems, while influencing the manner in which planning and policy development on education takes place. In what follows, I discuss some of the changes taking place globally in education through the processes of policy transfer.

Policy Transfer in Education

In the previous section, I showed how globalization undermines a view of policy making as bounded to the nation-state, and emphasizes instead a closer approach to the complex global dimensions of policy. In education, thinking about globalization, policy transfer and analysis parallels the developments in the broader policy literature. This is so because education is a social system that is affected by policy processes in much the same way as other fields of practice. Accordingly, the last two decades have witnessed a growing interest in the international dynamics affecting national education systems, partly through increased activity of international organizations, resulting in the perceived spread of common policies for educational reform.

At the same time, an interest in policy transfer in education has a long tradition in the comparative education literature. Jason Beech (2006) provides an account of the

diverse constructions of notions of transfer in education since the early nineteenth

century. According to Beech, transfer in education first appears in the nineteenth century

as part of an effort by Jullien de Paris for building a "science" of education. Following a

natural sciences model, Jullien and other French scholars conceived the study of

education as an independent field of knowledge that was universally applicable. In this

way, the study of education was ahistorical and, for the most part, decontextualized. In

consequence, educational transfer across countries of good practices was not only

considered possible but also a desirable pragmatic objective for education as a

"scientific" discipline (Beech, 2006, p. 2). Michael Crossley and Keith Watson (2009)

have similarly pointed out that:

> The origins of systematic comparative studies of education can be traced back to
> seminal European initiatives in the early 19th century when French scholars such
> as Marc-Antoine Jullien called for research on the nature and impact of foreign
> education systems. The motive for this was to help shape the reform, and
> competitiveness, of education in France itself. This is a familiar rationale for
> change—and one that demonstrates the continuity of long-held assumptions about
> the potential of comparative studies to help decision-makers to better understand
> the workings, needs and priorities of their home system. (p. 634)

This conception of transfer in comparative education—as part of a practical, positive,

science—was informed by an assumption of linear progress, and was perpetuated with

diverse variations by nineteenth century scholars of comparative education, such as

Victor Cousin (1834) and James Kay-Shuttleworth (1862).

This assumption of a universal decontextualized model of education began, to be

challenged by the mid-nineteenth century by scholars such as K. D. Ushinsk (1857/1975

cited in Sobe & Ortegon, 2009, p. 52; Beech, 2006, p. 5). Ushinsk's 1857 essay "On

National Character of Public Education" reached a very different conclusion than those

reached by Jullien on the feasibility of transfer across different contexts. He argued that due to socio-historical contextual and cultural differences across nations, successful educational transfer of universal models was not possible, even if it was desirable.

In the early1900s, Michael Sadler (1909) and others proposed to shift the initial pragmatic aims of comparative education towards a better understanding of the contextual differences and general principles in order to make these pragmatic aims for transfer of supposedly good educational ideas more feasible (Beech, 2006). In this way, universal assumptions about the value of education persisted, as did the claims of the scientific neutrality of the content and processes of educational policy. The emergence of international organizations in education were seen by comparativists such as Noah and Eckstein (1969) as a way to fulfill those scientific and pragmatic aims for the field of comparative education as a legitimated tool of "educational planning" (Beech, 2006, p. 8). It is in this context that the initial emphasis on studying instances of policy borrowing and transfer began to be addressed from a more critical perspective.

Since the 1970s, the notions of neutrality in educational transfer also began to be challenged. Martin Carnoy (1974) and others introduced the idea of coercive forces involved in international transfer of educational ideas across nations. Philip G. Altbach, and Gail Paradise Kelly (1978), among others, provided alternative readings of the processes of transfer using dependency theories, in order to show the coercive impositions of educational systems under colonial domination.

As indicated by Beech (2006), recent approaches to comparative education have attempted to address some of the limitations of educational transfer literature, by

problematizing the notion of transfer itself, in order to indicate the unpredictability of ways in which educational ideas or practices are not only borrowed and transferred (see Cowen, 1994; Phillips & Ochs, 2004; Schriewer, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2006) but also "resisted, modified or indigenized as they are implemented in the recipient country" (Beech, 2006, p. 171). One of the key insights around research on the lending and borrowing of educational ideas and practices is that transfer cannot be assumed to be a linear and progressive process, and that explanations of policy change must involve the ways in which policy learning takes place.

Transfer studies in general now share a common characteristic of emphasizing the relevance of individual and institutional agency, such as the one exercised at the international level by intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). This attention has been extended to the study of the role that non-governmental knowledge institutional actors (Ladi, 2002; Stone, 2004) play in the processes of policy transfer. However, little theoretical reflection has dealt with the phenomenon of policy transfer itself, including policy transfer analysis and the meaning of current policy mobility processes. Mark Evans (2004) is one of the few scholars, along with Dolowitz and Marsh (1996), and Ladi (2002, 2005), who have attempted to theorize policy transfer from a global perspective. Evans and others have also indicated the lack of attention in study transfer in developing countries. Evans has proposed a research agenda indicating some venues for future empirical research and theorization. In the same manner, he has provided an extensive list of normative and analytical propositions for future research (Evans, 2004).

Evans's normative propositions are partially derived from the initial analytical framework proposed by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996, 2000) to define a comprehensive approach to study policy transfer. This framework is organized around a series of normative questions:

> Why do actors engage in policy transfer? Who are the key actors involved in the policy transfer process? What is transferred? From where are lessons drawn? What are the different degrees of transfer? What restricts or facilitates the policy transfer process? . . . How is the process of policy transfer related to policy "success" or policy "failure"? (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000, p. 8)

Within the context of education policy studies, this perspective is used in educational borrowing and lending. An approach to educational transfer discussed by Perry and Tor (2008). They have argued that:

> Educational borrowing and lending denote a relatively narrow range of partners and mechanisms. They also imply a deliberate and unidirectional process. While borrowing and lending are important, they are not broad enough to serve as an overarching label. Rather, they are specific processes that fall under a larger, more general heading. Such a broader heading should be able to capture the range of processes and mechanisms that comprise educational transfer. (Perry & Tor, 2008, p. 510)

In this way, the term educational transfer represents an overreaching label that denotes a complex range of interactions and mechanisms. They provide a concise classification of four major explanatory frameworks for the study of educational transfer in the literature of comparative education and educational policy, indicating a number of assumptions implicit in each of these perspectives: neo-institutionalist/social positivist, phenomenological/culturalist, dependency, and transcendental/meta-theoretical perspectives.

Each of the four major perspectives above mention suggest a specific approach to the analysis of educational policy transfer, and ways of dealing with issues of convergence/divergence and agency/structure. For instances, Perry and Tor (2008) indicate that a neo-institutionalist approach to the study of educational transfer (see Meyer & Ramirez, 2003) follows a "macro social analysis" that assumes (following "World polity theory") a certain degree of "determinism of micro relations and process," basically larger macro cultural structures, such as "common world education culture," are determinant factors of micro interactions. On the other hand, phenomenological/ culturalist perspectives seek to understand transfer through "micro level analysis," giving emphasis to interpretative accounts of a situation, where "subjective meaning of events" is socially constructed. This perspective generally follows the tenets of Jürgen Schriewer's (1998) "externalization thesis," and is commonly identified with the "politics of educational borrowing and lending" approach to educational transfer as presented by Gita Steiner-Khamsi (2006), David Phillips (2004), and others (Perry & Tor, 2008, p. 514).

As I have already indicated, recent literature on policy transfer shows attempts at constructing multilevel theoretical and multidisciplinary frameworks, integrating perspectives of agency and structure in the study of global policy transfer (Evans, 2004; Ladi, 2002). Similarly, in educational literature, we observe the appearance of diverse interpretative frameworks of analysis of educational transfer processes (e.g. Phillips & Ochs, 2003). A basic point in common seems to be the overall idea that transfer is largely rational. According to Evans, apart from the potential of external coercive influence

transfer "remains largely a rational process in the sense that such states still need to engage in lesson drawing from successful exemplars in order to engineer effective national development or reconstruction planning and programming" (Evans, 2004, p. 3). However, Steiner-Khamsi (2003, p. 165), referring to national educational systems, indicates this is not always the case and "[t]here is sufficient evidence to make the point that there is, in fact, little to learn from other systems."

As I have already suggested, in the case of the politics of educational borrowing and lending, the study of policy transfer is organized under a similar set of normative questions, as presented by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000). As Phillips and Ochs (2003, p. 459) suggest, "we investigate what is happening in other systems of education in order to learn by means of example, to make some judgments, and to explore the possibilities for reform 'at home.'" Basically, there seems to be a recurrent interest in answering the question "What can we learn from other education systems?"

Yet, Gita Steiner-Khamsi (2003) and others have suggested some changes to these normative questions, in order to provide a more descriptive account of policy transfer in education. She argues that:

> I propose turning the normative practice-oriented question "what can be learned?" into the descriptive, research-oriented question "what has been learned?" Similarly, I suggest that we ask: "what has been transferred?" rather than "what can be transferred?" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2003, p. 165)

Steiner-Khansi's questions are part of a larger call to examine three major areas of inquiry in the educational transfer literature: system learning, system transfer, and system equity (Steiner-Khamsi, 2003). In the case of system learning, for example, Steiner-Khamsi indicates that:

I am making the point here that we should dismiss educational transfer as a form of system learning, and instead examine how educational borrowing serves as a powerful means to displace contested educational reforms. . . . In other words, reference to successful national educational reforms of other countries gives policy analysts leverage in pushing through a particular policy option. (Steiner-Khamsi, 2003, p. 170)

In recent developments in public policy, it has been through system learning that global networks affect national higher education policies. For instance, in Latin America, international sites have become places of communication of knowledge and policy advice, where educational policies seem to follow global models of educational change promoted by the World Bank (WB) and other IGOs. These international agencies also provide strategic structures to help generate and communicate diagnostics and prescriptions about needed policy change at the national level. This initial assumption is supported by a rich literature on policy transfer, translation, flows, circulation, borrowing, and lending among others. Yet, many of these terms do not always reveal different aspects of the complex system of interactions and relationships across transnational, regional, national and local spaces.

This implies a need for integrating various considerations of space and scale in thinking about transfer processes. Rappleye and Paulson (2007, p. 253) suggest as much when they argue for an increasing effort to seek and "understand the ways in which globalization, the international community and best-practice discourse inform and transform understandings of educational borrowing practices." What this implies is the need to theorize the implications of globalization and regionalization as contextual factors for national policy making. Here the role of international actors [both IGOs and NGOs] in the promotion of policy ideas needs to be considered.

Role of IGOs and NGOs in Educational Policy Transfer

As suggested in the previous section, the ways in which similar policies have become part of the educational agendas of countries across the planet has underlined the importance of understanding how educational reform is interpreted, negotiated and takes place in the current era of globalization. Stephen Ball (1998) points on the necessity of exploring this basic problem in contemporary educational policy analysis: how do international policies influence national and local educational policies?

Ball argues that contemporary global policy ideas on education have become a new orthodoxy that links education to the concerns related to the economic wealth of nations. Thus, this discursive formation of education seems to have become colonized by the supposed imperatives of the global economy (Ball, 1998, p. 122). This "vision of the future" has spread globally, in a diversity of complex ways. The most significant among these are the activities of multilateral agencies in promoting a particular set of educational policy ideas.

Ball (1998) points out, however, that these policy ideas are never translated in the same way. Nor can the resistance and negotiation to the pressures of multilateral agencies be explained in universal terms. Policy ideas, he maintains, are subjected to processes of re-contextualization. A basic weakness in Ball's argument, however, seems to be his silence over the possibility that multilateral agencies are becoming not merely instruments of institutional diffusion of educational policy ideas but also places where competing re-contextualization of these ideas take place.

International institutions seems to have become institutional structures built by states to deal with many policy issues—a sort of shared management, centers of limited autonomy, rather than global policy actors. These institutions do not assume a plurality of power representations, and explicitly denote, as Felix Stalder (2006, pp. 70-71) notes, the emergence of a "regulatory framework" in the global economy, and I would add education. In educational policy, many questions arise in regards to the nature and influence "of global power relations and influence" (Jones, 2007, p. 329) across participants in the programming of attempts to create emerging orders of education for an interconnected world. For instance, as Jones (2007) indicates, there is a construction of an "order of education" for the world which is the result of a multifaceted system of global influence. This system includes "multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, the professions and scientific communities" (Jones, 2007, p. 330). Through these agencies, influence and power are exercised in dynamic ways, while global hierarchies of knowledge associated with the emergence of "epistemic communities in education" (see Haas, 1992) promote an increasing institutionalization and standardization of reform agendas in education.

Michael Omolewa (2007) offers a view of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a communication network generating consent in international spaces. Omolewa's argument is that UNESCO activities provide a platform for the creation and promotion of epistemic communities, and professional networks, while fostering spaces of policy communication of ideas about educational development for state and non-state policy agents. For instance, conferences and

meetings promoted by UNESCO constitute spaces of consensus formation, through already-manufactured types of communication within specific communication networks.

I am not implying here that other IGOs share the same agenda as UNESCO. There are differences and divergences, as well as convergences of objectives, across organizations. Nor is it my intention to say that these organizations are becoming the main architects of national policies. Instead, I am arguing that they exercise influence as organizers of global educational spaces, "steering" different aspects of national public policies on education. They represent spaces where ideas are communicated and negotiated, but often in ways that are asymmetrical.

In this way, IGOs and INGOs promote international policy communication of ideas through complex processes of framing, steering and re-contextualization of policy problems and policy solutions. Their discourses, linking ideas of education to economic development, contain diverse arrays of narratives about globalization, the relevance of world market economy, the knowledge economy, the crisis of education, democracy, and social inclusion, among others.

An example of the contemporary importance of processes of cross-national transfer of policy initiatives in education and the role played by IGOs in the adoption of public educational policy in Asia is offered by Steiner-Khamsi (2006). She explores the ways in which the policy reform of outcome-based education (OBE) was adopted by Central Asia education systems. The basic argument in her analysis is that the study of policy diffusion in countries that are late adopters of policies that went global, such as OBE, offers the opportunity to exanimate the dynamics and economics of globalization in

policy transfer. In other words, OBE reforms were already disseminated and deterritorialized when "borrowed" by late adopters. This, she contends, makes difficult traditional forms of study of policy borrowing and the mapping of policy transfer. Late adopters borrow policy reforms in the "burnout stage" of their global diffusion. Hence, the question to address is why they become late adopters of those global reform ideas.

For Steiner-Khamsi, the study of late reform adopters highlights the temporal nature of policy borrowing that reveals new dimensions and types of policy transfer outside the traditional conceptual scope of policy borrowing studies. She indicates that the legacy of this research has been concerned with policy transfers mostly within advanced industrial nation-states in the West (Europe and USA; Steiner-Khamsi, 2006, p. 666). However, the study of late adopters, which are low income countries, points out to a complex array of transfers that go outside of state-centric approaches (for example, "regional transfer" and "south–south transfer"). More importantly, the study of late adopters signals a crucial limitation in traditional studies of policy borrowing: the scarce recognition of "the economics of policy borrowing."

Steiner-Khamsi (2006, p. 671) explains that the politics of policy borrowing in most education systems "depend on external assistance or aid." Thus, it is sometimes very difficult to distinguish between the coercive and voluntary elements of policy transfer. For instance, late adopters in Central Asia countries (for example, Mongolia and Kyrgyz Republic) implemented OBE reforms once they were given various grants or loans.

Steiner-Khamsi (2006, p. 674) thus points to the important link between reform "in low income countries" and international funding, "earmarked for specific sector strategies and projects." Hence, the time for adopting an idea of a particular type reform becomes dependent on international and regional financial institutions as well as bilateral aid agencies strategies. The study of the logic of the donor or lender becomes crucial in understanding the "choices" and some of the reasons of low-income countries in borrowing specific reforms at a specific given time.

Steiner-Khamsi's analysis may help to answer the question of why in Latin America certain process of education reform was implemented in 1990s. Among the exogenous factors, it could be argued, was that the timing, for the reforms were established by the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB), with the consensus of other IGOs, rather than by the Latin American countries themselves. In other words, the agendas of those organizations determined when "time has come for an idea" (Kingdon, 2003, p. 1, cited in Steiner Khamsi, 2006, p. 674).

Today, in developing countries in particular, national policies on education are increasingly made with the participation of IGOs at the global, regional and national level, while the global agenda of public education is articulated through these institutions. Multilateral agencies have promoted a particular set of education policies associated with neo-liberalism that merges education within programs of national economic development. Since the 1980s and 1990s, market and profit-oriented ideologies have informed the activities of intergovernmental financial organizations, affecting public policies of reform

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in education. According to Weiner (2003, pp. 23-24), these ideologies have included the following economic principles:

> (a) an uncritical acceptance of the market to determine both private and public needs; (b) a concentration of wealth and power; (c) "deregulation" and corporate welfare policies; (d) privatization; and (e) an emphasis on individual accountability at the expense of social responsibility (i.e., individualism).

These ideas contain prescriptions about policy solutions that underline the need to view education in terms of human capital and resource formation.

Basically, this prescription may be stated in the following terms "the world is intensely competitive economically, and students—as future workers—must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively" (Apple, 2000, p. 60). In this way education is "to be reduced to an economic production function" (Peters & Olsen, 2005). Educational policy solutions are prescribed in order to maximize outputs, financial profit, and efficiency, measured by performance indicators; and "the money spent on schools that is not directly related to these economic goals is suspect." Therefore: "schools and other public services as they are currently organized and controlled waste economic resources that should go into private enterprises" (Apple, 2000, p. 61). And it is within this framework for policy reform that the specific modalities of decentralization and privatization of public services are also advocated.

Jones (2007) has argued that INGOs have become equally caught up in these neo-liberal discourses, through the calls for an inclusion of civil society in transnational spaces of educational policy debate. Yet this seems to be a merely rhetorical strategy of incorporation. Jones (2007) argues multilateral agency strategies, pursuing neoliberal lines of reform, have been to encourage a coalition with non governmental organizations

(NGOs), for strategic convenience. Since the common pattern for those agencies has been to avoid a "partnership with civil society," collaboration with INGOs has been made by numerous concessions. In the case of UNESCO, its institutional directives and structure have made it impossible for it to avoid "kinds of partnerships envisaged in its constitution" with civil society. Meanwhile, for the World Bank it has been a matter of propaganda that sells an image of participation, which does not really correspond with reality.

Jones (2007) concludes that the notion of civil society participation in policy construction is the result of strategic decisions by individual states. States in most countries are still the main mediators for the "allocation of values" in education while it is possible to recognize the existence of attempts to generate hegemony through financial coercion (for example, World Bank loans), discourses of educational policy and expert knowledge trying to influence public policies. The resources and expertise that those organizations can muster gives them an important voice in the telling of global stories about education, and in the constitution of mechanisms that help to organize the communication of those stories (see Jones & Coleman, 2005; Kellaghan, & Greaney, 2001). In short, they have potential capacity to foster interpretations on those narratives in ways that allows them to justify their actions and legitimize their public policy recommendations.

Convergence and Divergence

It is often the case that policy transfer refers to the adoption of a common policy language (ideas or priorities of policy change) rather than to the development of concrete programs or models (Radaelli, 2004). This discursive convergence occurs through policy networks, bringing "together representatives from international organisations and state agencies with politicians, the media, business groups, trade unions and sometimes grass-roots associations" (Stone, 2001, p. 14), constituted around specific parameters, knowledge resources, information, and issues. These are often related to projects of educational change involving "harmonization," a political modality of transfer. Figure 1 presents an account of these modalities relating to the convergence of policy, implemented to create common patterns of regional and global policy change.

Emulation	Convergence: "involves borrowing ideas and adapting policy approaches, tools or structures to local conditions" (Stone, 2001, p. 7).
Harmonization	Convergence: "as a consequence of political recognition of interdependence and awareness of the costs of divergence" (Ibid, p. 7).
Elite networking and policy communities	Convergence: "in this sense results from the existence of shared ideas amongst a relatively coherent and enduring network of elites engaging in regular interaction at the transnational level" (Bennett, 1991, p. 224).
Penetration	Convergence: "involves the clear use of power and is coercive entailing a compulsion to conform" (Stone, 2001, p. 7).

Figure 1. Modalities of Transfer relating to policy convergence.

Policy convergence, however, is not the only outcome of global policy transfer. Various modalities of transfer are also leading to a divergence in policy outcomes. For example, while there may be considerable convergence of discourses, it is also often the case that the mobility of policy ideas generates different types of adoptions and interpretations, which are very difficult to define due to the specific types of context and institutional frameworks. Schriewer (2003) has emphasized this characteristic in reference to the phenomenon of traveling reforms in education at specific local settings. The incorporation of an international rhetoric may also speak of instances of symbolic policy transfer, where policy debates, texts and proposals merely "adopt the labels, rhetoric, and superficial forms of this policy but use these to capture the policy agenda and maintain power, to undermine substantive change, and/or to achieve seemingly different ends to those articulated" (Goldfinch, 2006, p. 587). For example, the use of notions such as globalization, internationalization, and knowledge economy in policy reports could be a matter of policy expedience in order to accommodate international requirements. However, this does not necessarily imply the explicit recognition of the role played by "international knowledge," or necessarily provide evidence of policy transfer generated by the proposals of international agencies.

Despite these observations relating to divergent outcomes, it is hard to deny that the view relating to the international convergence of education policy centered on neoliberal assumptions has become globally dominant in policy transfer literature. This literature has suggested how transfer has resulted in similar ways of allocating educational value in policy through discursive practices and programs across countries

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with widely differing economic, political and cultural traditions. This dominant view of policy transfer emphasizes perspectives directed to the study of common rationally-driven patterns of policy change, rather than contingency, divergence or hybridization.

Hulme (2005) points out that most accounts of global policy transfer in educational policy seem to suggest a notion of "policy change in education as the product of the interaction or confluence of three inter-dependent determinants: policy-oriented learning on the part of significant actors in the educational state, which in turn leads to refinement of the ideological basis of policy platforms and to changes in the systemic determinants of policy, such as movements in the global economy" (p. 421). He challenges this dominant view, pointing to the need of using broader perspectives on structural change, related to diffusion patterns and also to ideology. In other words, to challenge notions of rational-technocratic linear transfer processes and addresses the study of transfer by including evolutionary and contingent perspectives of change in education.

Similarly, Ball (1998) and others have pointed out the need to recognize that policy movement is not just rational, but it is also about discursive and ideological strategies for attaining specific purposes of policy change, which may sometimes imply non-rational or impractical choices for policy adoption. Hence, a crucial point is to recognize how goals about policy change are defined and negotiated across different countries by understanding first what those goals are, and where they are generated.

Yet, the dominant perspective on transfer at the analysis of contemporary policy transfer literature, for the most part, still considers that policy making processes are

preeminently rational (driven by rationality or bounded rationality) processes that can be analyzed by identifying the content of the transfer and the contextual or environmental variables for its adoption. The emphasis is on the study of the discursive elements of policy, and the mechanism for its spread, without taking into account political agencies of particular policy actors located within a specific historical site.

Evans (2004) argues that it is very difficult to assess if transfer is in fact occurring, or if transfer itself has not become just another symbolic term for policy-making process. Florian Waldow (2009) points out, from his Swedish case study, that "education policy change that may appear to have an exclusively domestic frame of reference in many instances possesses an international dimension" (p. 478). He suggest that it may be a certain isomorphism between local and international discourse on policy making that indicates that policy transfer is taking place. The concept of isomorphism was initially developed in organization sociology, to address emergence of similar patterns of organization, where it is defined as "a process of homogenization that 'forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions'" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 66, as cited in Knill, 2005, p. 768).

Waldow (2009) also points out this isomorphism is only plausible when the dominant accounts of policy transfer accord an excessive emphasis on exogenous factors, and on the international dimension in the explanation of policy change, while local policy actors are rendered silent. The "international origin of problem definitions, concepts and proposed solutions" (Waldow, 2009, p. 486) are highlighted, while local endogenous issues are subordinated to exogenous factors.

These conceptual debates suggest that policy transfer itself may be under-theorized (Ladi, 2002), or lacking of consistent conceptual clarity. But, although, a diverse variety of conceptual frameworks of transfer are presented to explain policy movement, what appears missing is a grounded empirical account from which to assess various conceptual claims canvassed in this literature review. Part of the problem may lie in the fact that international transfer as a relevant phenomenon of analysis for explaining policy change seems useful only when connected to large narratives of social change, as is the case with the large narratives of globalization. Without an adequate empirical grounding, the dominant policy transfer framework imports a number of conflicting theories of policy borrowing and diffusion of ideas, practices and knowledge.

This indicates that the phenomenon of policy transfer is often stated at a very abstract ideational level, as was the case with the historic theme of transfer studied by the comparativists in the past. The renewed interest in the issue of transfer is now associated to the study of specific process of regional integration and globalization, and the emergence of international actors and global dimensions of policy change. At the same time, there appears to be a persistent assumption that given certain conditions, adaptation of global policy content will inevitably follow; that the transfer of public policy generally occurs as part of an intentional, rational, deliberative and fairly linear, communicative and additive activity.

The Empirical Case

In this chapter, I have discussed a number of different views relating to the idea of policy transfer. I have argued that the idea itself is not new, but is historically inherited from earlier comparative research designed to enable systems of education to learn from other "successful" examples. More recent views of policy transfer are more complex, affected by the contemporary processes of globalization, and the growing role that IGOs and INGOs now play in the promotion of a particular set of educational priorities. There has thus been a certain ideological convergence not only about educational purposes but also about the ways in which educational governance ought to be organized. The idea of policy transfer is located within these discursive formations.

I have argued that while there is considerable diversity of perspectives about issues relating to policy transfer, a dominant approach appears to have persisted. I have described this dominant approach, and have also discussed some of the key criticisms leveled against its main claims. However, I have also argued that these criticisms are often stated at a fairly abstract conceptual level, and that a more nuanced analysis of the idea of global policy transfer needs a more grounded empirical treatment. It needs to be tested against an empirical case in order to assess the various claims that are made and assumed in its support. The empirical case with which I explore this dominant view of policy transfer in this dissertation relates to recent developments in Paraguayan higher education.

I ask if international priorities of policy change are convergent through the ongoing processes of policy transfer, albeit constantly modified by the conditions in

which particular narratives of public policy are interpreted and negotiated by local actors. How does this process express itself in Paraguay? How have global flows of ideas and forms of organizations, knowledge and educational methods affected policy debates about higher education in Paraguay? How have these flows contributed to the construction of and recent shifts in the Paraguayan higher education system? In particular, how have the processes of planning and policy development in Paraguayan higher education accommodated external—both global and regional—policy pressures?

This empirical case study will enable me to address some of the broader theoretical questions about the extent to which the dominant conceptual framework for policy transfer is useful for explaining shifts in higher education policy at the national level. If by policy we refer to texts and discourses that partially define given events and practices with certain expectations of legitimacy (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997), then to what extent does this framework help us to understand how exogenous elements affect specific public policy priorities? Does it help us to more precisely elucidate the role of intergovernmental organizations in processes of public policy transformations? How is this elucidation useful to the study of policy analysis of transfer in terms of power, legitimacy and influence at the local context? Does it help us to understand how local actors and context constitute the meaning of what is transferred, and how it is transferred?

Before turning my attention to the empirical case of Paraguay, and the ways in which international pressures are reshaping its system of higher education, I want to discuss, in the next chapter, a range of methodological issues pertaining to the manner in

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which I approached the task of understanding various relational patterns between the global, regional and national in recent shifts in higher education policies in Paraguay.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This dissertation seeks to comprehend the problems inherent in policy mobility across national boundaries in general, and the idea of global policy transfer in particular. I want to approach this by elucidating the complex processes associated with the contemporary phenomena of policy change in a national higher education system, using the empirical case study of Paraguay. In this way, the interpretive goal of this type of policy research I pursue invites the use of qualitative research (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997, p. 41).

In the previous chapter, I approached the discussion of policy transfer in critical and exploratory terms, but noted that a nuanced understanding of policy processes in the era of globalization requires an empirical case. It is only with data collected from a specific site that I believe it is possible to reflect theoretically on my key research questions relating the theme of transfer, while assuming an epistemological positioning that informs my understanding of notions of policy and policy analysis in a post-positivistic perspective (see Morçöl, 2002).

My "exploratory purposes" (Yin, 1981, p. 97) are inextricably linked to the critical goal of understanding an empirical case in light of analytical perspectives on global public policy mobility. I argue that the country case study allows me to critically discuss various perspectives on policy transfer canvassed in the previous chapter, while

offering for discussion alternative theoretical understandings. The exploration of the country case also provides a base for criticism of the literature centered on the capacity of the dominant transfer perspective to provide an adequate understanding of the interactions between international and national dimensions of policy development.

In this sense, my critical goal is to test the various dynamics of international policy mobility as presented in the dominant body of transfer literature, by contrasting its claims with the empirical case. In order to achieve this objective, it seems necessary to modify commonly used questions relating to the phenomenon of policy transfer. In this way, this study seeks to escape the limited set of normative questions on 'what' has been transferred. Thus, my intention is not limited to the description of *what* is transfer, but is linked to an alternative understanding of the complex and contingent meaning of transfer processes. In this way, I am interested in deeper descriptions of the transfer phenomenon in terms of institutional convergence of international models, the global processes of policy learning and the role of international agencies in policy transfer. I want to ask where policy ideas that inform the reform of higher education systems come from.

Instead of limiting the empirical case study to the application of the normative questions suggested by the literature of transfer, I started this project by asking a more basic question: How does international mobility of policy ideas of change in higher education operate at a national setting? This question offers a possibility for exploring the idea of policy transfer as an attempt to understand policy shifts, transformations and continuities that may be observed at a specific country context.

The idea of a national context is highly problematic. While it may be commonly imagined only in terms of a national territory—a particular place—it may also be partly interpreted in relation to a global deterritorialized space where contemporary patterns of transformation are organized. A global policy transfer perspective should therefore take into consideration how local and national contextual dimensions and consequences of public policy change are partly shaped by a policy environment conditioned by international settings, but also bounded in a territorially constituted manner.

Given these analytical complexities, how then might we study transfer and policy transfer from a global perspective? I suggested in the previous chapter that many of the assumptions associated to the phenomenon of transfer are largely nation-centric. This nation-centric approach to transfer cannot be entirely avoided, so the key methodological question becomes one of the ways in which a locality should be understood as globally constituted: what methodological perspective is appropriate for addressing the global and the local simultaneously as inextricably linked, in order to adequately capture relationalities, contingencies and complexities of the phenomenon of international mobility of policy? Keeping these issues in mind, this chapter presents the methodological framework adopted at this dissertation, the methods used to collect, produce and analyze data, and the theoretical considerations and positioning informing my understanding of the empirical case relating to recent shifts in higher education in Paraguay, and how they reveal aspects of global policy transfer.

Theoretical Assumptions

Following Rizvi and Lingard (2010), I approach policy analysis within the tradition of critical policy sociology. This sociological view involves asking a range of critical questions with respect to any given policy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 52) that relates to the context in which it was constructed, how policy was constructed textually, and how the implementation and outcome issues were addressed. In this sense, the critical and exploratory objectives of my study involve an analysis of contextual structuring of policy, and the way policy outcome issues relate to and affect Paraguay's broader policy environment. Because of this, I pay attention not only to the ways in which policy environments affect policy texts and outcomes, but also how such environments are developed, so that particular policy responses are viewed as appropriate and legitimate.

Following the tradition of critical policy sociology, I recognize that all attempts at policy research involve a number of explicit and implicit presumptions. First, among these is the idea that any set of theories used to study a particular complex context is subject to a number of specific assumptions and selections. These assumptions serve initially to frame meaning, and the meaning making purposes of research. They answer basic questions about the object of study and establish specific limits to our understanding of a problem to study. Basically, how we decide to explore reality is necessarily constructed and mediated through diverse layers of discourse and human activity. In this sense, our point of departure is never neutral. In other words, the theory I

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choose for any type of research carries specific conceptualizations allowing only a partial

understanding of the complexity that characterizes the context of exploration itself.

Thus, a theoretical and methodological point of departure for research relates to

the conceptualizations I initially decided to adopt. For this dissertation, I chose a

methodological perspective that recognizes the need to understand the framing of policy

discourses, "in terms of research purpose and research positionality" (Rizvi & Lingard,

2010. p. 51). This strategy makes explicit the dilemmas of the global relationalities rather

than simply solve them. The epistemological framework of this dissertation draws on

post-positivist criticisms of rationalist methodologies. In this way, the policy sociology

view I adopt points to the need to recognize the political struggle over ideas that takes

place at the heart of policy making processes. My own positionality impacts on the

research presented at this dissertation, among other aspects, by recognizing that the study

of policy requires addressing the complex paradox, contingencies, dilemmas and

contradictions in policy, but always from a particular point of view (Stone, 2002).

At the same time, my critical interest in the idea of global policy transfer informs

the type of questions I ask and pursue in this research. For instance, my skeptical

questioning of the literature on policy transfer already presupposes the need to ask: to

which extent does the dominant literature of policy transfer adequately address policy

dilemmas and contradictions? By critical, I mean determining the meaning of policy

transfer in relation to the empirical reality observed, both in terms of my own principles

but also in relation to the views of those I interviewed. This requires paying attention to

how different people understand the global perspectives on patterns of policy mobility

differently, and how their understandings should be negotiated and reconciled. At the same time, this requires recognizing that transfer is not merely describing the emergence of similar or divergent patterns of change at contemporary globalization, but the interplay between both (Robertson, 1995).

Recognition of alternative meanings of transfer, and how these are produced, represents a critique in a Foucauldian sense in that:

> A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest. . . . There is always a little thought even in the most stupid institutions; there is always thought even in silent habits. Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not self-evident as one believed, to see what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practicing criticism is a matter of making facile gestures difficult. (Foucault, 1988, pp. 154-5 cited in Campbell, 2007, p. 214)

A critique is thus enriched by empirical research. This type of research requires not only the systematic application of appropriate methods for the collection of data enabling an adequate theorization, but it also demands the constant practice of reflexivity, upon the values and attitudes that inform the research methods chosen. It is to make "facile gestures difficult" (Ibid., p. 155).

In an ethnographic tradition, this also implies recognition of the positionality of the researcher, in terms of the political, not only theoretical, stance that the researcher brings to the study of a phenomenon. In other words, following Altheide and Johnson (1998, p. 285) it is necessary to state that:

> [T]he scientific observer is part and parcel of the setting, context and culture he or she is trying to understand and represent . . . [it is important] to realize that the traditional problems of entrée or access to a setting, personal relations with the members in a setting, how field research data were conceived and recorded, and a

host of other pragmatic issues had important implications for what particular observer reported as finding.

In this case, then, as researcher, my personal relation to the case chosen needs to be acknowledged and presented in explicit terms. I have been a participant as a student at all levels of the Paraguayan education system since the 1980s. My fascination with the Paraguayan higher education system, however, did not start until my final years as an undergraduate student at Asuncion's Catholic University in 1998.

Two events changed my outlook and drove my interest towards higher education and the general topic of global mobility of ideas. First, the climate of political instability that followed the assassination of the vice-president and the political protests that followed led to my first involvement with the university movement and my subsequent interest in the study of higher education policy change in Paraguay; a topic that awoke my imagination (Mills, 1959) on the contextual issues of policy and research in higher education. Second, my experiences with a different higher education system while studying in the United States pushed me to reflect more about Paraguayan society and its higher education system. It became clear to me that developments taking place in American higher education were not entirely disconnected from those occurring in Paraguay. Consequently, this led to my search for answers to the questions of global interconnectivities.

Imagination and prior experiences have been important in informing this study. It was in 1998 that the dynamics of debate about higher education reform in Paraguay seemly change. A careful reading of this shift and my personal experiences informed my desire for a better understanding on how this local events and debates have an important

international dimension, and to recognize the ways in which these educational policies issues are often linked to other policy areas.

Research Setting and Hypotheses

This dissertation seeks to offer an account of policy transfer in higher education, by using Paraguay as a case study. In order to achieve this, I propose the use of the theoretical model, presented in Chapter 2, which attempts to address a series of hypotheses about the adequacy of the dominant perspective on policy transfer. These hypotheses are related with the propositions presented in Chapter 1. Those propositions include some presumptions on the significance of the role of IGOs for understanding policy mobility in education. Hence, the orientation of this empirical study is directed towards the following working hypotheses:

1. IGOs are playing a major role in the policy developments of higher education in Paraguay.

2. International 'policy narratives' are used as a strategy for communicating research (Stone, 2001) and as a reform ideology in Paraguay.

3. These narratives may have direct implications not only for the general strategies of public education but also in the overlapping debates and confusions observed since 1998 in Paraguay.

4. Certain generic assumptions are taken up in Paraguay in ways that may partially explain the lack of consensus and recurrent dilemmas creating a sense of specific crisis in the Paraguayan national higher education system.

5. The mere existence of confusion in policy debates may be an indication of an ongoing process of policy change affecting the Paraguayan higher education system.

It is important to indicate what public policy generally enables. Policy, as the outcome of allowing certain environments, enables specific actions that sometimes have unintended consequences. In this sense, the interaction between international and national dimensions that constitute the current policy environment of Paraguay's educational system may generate or change the meaning of educational policy within its higher education sector. Hence, it is necessary to understand the systemic effects of reform in the system for the current development of Paraguay's higher education sector. In other words, educational policy initiatives, narratives and research supported or distributed by IGOs and implemented since the 1990s may indirectly create, and continue to influence a set of policy dynamics, that partially explain the current policy environment alongside a situation of policy vacuum at the higher education sector. This context underlines the importance of one of the key questions guiding this research: Can we consider policy transfer following a rationalist approach as sufficient to explain the dynamics of change observed in the Paraguayan case?

I use the exemplar of Paraguay as an empirical case study of potential instances of policy transfer at higher education for two reasons; first, Paraguay is a developing country characterized by a relative recent expansion of state policy institutions and structures directly involved in the field of higher education, a case country largely unexplored by the literature on policy transfer. The recent expansion of the Paraguayan system of higher education and its diversification follows a radical process of private commercial expansion in a context of absence of state initiatives of public policy change. Second, the intensity of the debates on reform is fairly recent; it was only in 1998 that

policy actors began to discuss issues of higher education reform in a relatively systematic manner. This intensity is not only related to the role that higher education, and the university, has historically played in the country, but also seems to be the result of a set of global pressures and international consensus on educational policy; which until the 1990s, emphasized the education reform of the primary and secondary sector and largely overlooked higher education. Hence, I observed a national higher education context composed by diverse institutions and a very influential private sector, as well as the absence of state capacity to provide an oversight of the private sector of higher education.

As I mentioned before, the current debates on reform of higher education in Paraguay are for the most part very recent. In terms of the setting of research it is possible to identify five main characteristics of the Paraguayan case.

First, debates informing the current setting of study are related to discussions associated with a global wave of accountability reforms for higher education affecting countries across the region within which Paraguay is located. However, one of the main historical characteristics of university institutions in Paraguay is the little or nonexistent priority given to research and research communication.

Second, Paraguay lacks institutions that play a central role in the distribution and production of scholarly knowledge. Academic institutions produce publications which are made on a limited scale in comparison with other countries in the region. Furthermore, most of the publications in social research are linked to individual researchers and non-governmental organizations involved in limited academic publishing. At the same time, there is little access to information on issues facing the national higher education system

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itself. Public institutions are unable to collect or analyze systematic and comparative data on higher education system. For the same reasons, it is not clear if international publications and research findings about higher education promoted by IGOs have any relevant use in the local policy debates.

Third, local stories of crisis in the university system exist. Policy documents, newspaper articles, and public debates provide evidence of this fact. However, the priorities and justification for a change to the system are for the most part articulated in the local policy documents, often in relation to the perceptions of international demands.

Fourth, there is considerable financial and technical dependency in Paraguay on external aid to implement policy and program changes. For instance, one of the reasons for the absence of any state initiatives to organize the higher education sector in the country in the 1990s, according to local actors, is the need to align itself with the priorities set by international financial aid agencies. However, contrary to the reform of the basic and secondary educational sectors, international cooperation has for decades shown little interest in expensive financing of changes to the national system of higher education in Paraguay.

Finally, the higher education system, outside certain fields of study, seems to have been considered by the state and key political actors in Paraguay, as irrelevant, or at best of secondary importance to other more urgent projects of national development. Thus, the lack of attention to expanding the public system and creating incentives for system reform could also be linked with persistent political and institutional resistances to introduce innovations.

In the 1990s, the almost non-regulated private expansion of higher education institutions opened a number of commercial possibilities for educational entrepreneurs. Included among these was the possibility to cover the demand of a relatively lucrative market for higher education services in a constrained economic environment. At the same time, it is possible to observe an overlapping between public, private and political actors related to the higher education sector. In other words, the same political actors increasingly had links with private and/or public higher education institutions. Yet, this did not raise the profile of higher education institutions as state priority or produce significant changes in the thinking about higher education institutions outside their traditional role as professional training institutions.

These characteristics make the case for choosing Paraguay as an exemplar with which to understand the global dynamics of policy transfer particularly compelling. They also add to the observation made in the last chapter about how the study of policy transfer in the literature mostly concentrates its attention on policy mobilities taking place in advanced industrial societies. Yet, the diverse pathways of policy movement and their contingent developments require a better understanding on the differences observed in diverse regions and distinct policy environments to those expected to be encountered in advanced capitalist societies.

Research Procedures

For this dissertation, qualitative methods were deployed for the collection and analysis of data, driven by the primary research questions. Interviews and the collection of official public documents were used to generate a nuanced account of educational policy processes and debates on higher education in Paraguay.

The methods selected in data collection, in addition to following a qualitative framework, drew also from case study methodologies exemplified, for example, in the work of Yin (2003). Paraguay as an example of instances of policy transfer in public higher education was treated as a country case study. John Gerring (2004) suggests that: "for methodological purposes a case study is best defined as an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena" (Gerring, 2004, p. 341). Robert Yin (2003, p. 85) identifies six sources of evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts. This list refers to different approaches to collecting and analyzing empirical materials. The data I collected was largely textual, consisting of document reviews and interviews, subjected to my own perceptions and interpretation.

Before continuing, I want to indicate some dangers for the researcher in dealing with policy issues. There are inherent risks in doing any form of research dealing with human subjects. Social researchers are not autonomous thinkers. There is a historical, social, and political context that frames their craft. To ignore this is to fall prey to the

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fallacy that the social researcher can generate neutral knowledge without consequences for the material researched. Moreover, policy analysis of transfer, in this case related to gradual policy change, seems to require the understanding of complex process and power relations, now involving not only local but global structures. Hence, policy analysis cannot be "value-neutral." Policy involves not only the solution of problems or diagnosis of alternatives, but also confronts a number of human dilemmas related to "both decision-making and non-decision making in policy processes" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 52).

An additional source for the collection of data used for this dissertation was online research. In this case, online research methods presuppose the use of the Internet to collect data through various search engines. As the SAGE encyclopedia of social science research methods (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao, 2004, pp. 765-766) indicates, online research methods are an outcome of the emergence of the World Wide Web as a place for the use of interconnected information. In this sense, the Internet is basically a system of interconnected computers containing an overwhelming amount of information. Hence the use of Internet search engines is useful as a data collection strategy.

I use online research, documentary analysis and interviews to collect data in order to provide for data triangulation. Triangulation, as Yin (2003) indicates, implies the collecting of information from multiple sources. Triangulation of multiple sources of data also arises from the need to ensure the validity of the empirical study. By validity, I mean 'argumentative validity,' "the plausibility of the way evidence and conclusion are presented" (Payne & Payne, 2004, p. 236). Triangulation provides a way to secure that the instruments "capture the essence of what they are intended to represent" (p. 234).

Birgit Brock Utne (1996), points out that triangulation is a "conventional way of treating validity in qualitative research" (p. 615). These procedures informed the subsequent fieldwork in the main site of observation.

Research Implementation

The main site of the case study was the city of Asuncion, Paraguay, between July and August of 2009. The fieldwork observations and interviews at the site had an exploratory character, partially informed by theoretical issues encountered in the literature review, in ways that were relatively unplanned and open minded to the ideas that could emerge from the data collection itself. The preparation for the fieldwork in Paraguay required extensive contacts with research colleagues who served as gatekeepers for granting access to interviews with key policy and system actors involved with the debates on higher education in Paraguay. Interviews conducted with system actors of Paraguayan higher education generated an array of useful information for analysis. These interviews were semi-structured in order to provide a greater degree of flexibility for collecting insights about the actor's perspectives. As Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey (2005, p. 695) indicate, interviewing is "inextricably and unavoidably historically, politically, and contextually bound." Therefore, it is not a neutral tool. Rather, it is "a negotiated text" (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 716) constituted between the interviewer and respondent in a specific context. Each interview was used to identify additional policy actors and institutions considered relevant for the discussion of changes occurring in Paraguayan higher education.

Participants in the interviews were elected government employees and systems

actors involved in the process of educational policy production, scholarly research, public

debate and/or advocacy. The first step of the process was to contact the participants

directly either by mail or telephone. During this stage, the project was briefly described to

them. I stated to each participant the objectives and significance of the project and their

role as participants in an interview. I clarified that the participation was voluntary and

provided guarantees for withdrawal of their participation from the project. I also used a

"snowball" approach to recognize and recruit further participants for the study. I

maintained vigilant attention to protecting the confidentiality of the participants. I

minimized the risk to public employees by providing a guarantee of anonymity.

However, I identified the position of directors at public institutions and dedicated public

advocates due to the nature of their role, unless they specifically asked to remain

anonymous. To minimize risks, participation was always voluntary and confidential.

Interviews were generally face-to-face, carried out at interviewee's offices and in one

case in a coffee shop, all in Asuncion, with the exception of one phone interview that

became necessary due to time conflicts.

Interviews

Sixteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with system actors in the field

of higher education in Paraguay, as well as one distant telephone interview. Several of the

interviewees had been key actors in the process of policy reforms since the 1990s, and

major protagonists in current debates on higher education reform. Others have played

roles as analysts or critics of policies and proposals for reform. It is important to note that most of the interviewees have played different roles at different institutions, and in the case of one participant, different roles for two or more institutions at the same time. Half of the interviewees belong or are former members of the *Consejo Nacional de Educación y Cultura* [National Council of Education and Culture] (CONEC). Taken together, it could be argued that they belong to what can be characterized as a policy community (Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Rhodes & Marsh, 2006). Three of the interviewees are currently ascribed to the *Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología* [National Council of Science and Technology] (CONACYT) in advisory or executive roles. Half of the interviewees were women.

Moreover, a semi-structured group discussion was conducted with government employees from *Agencia Nacional* de Evaluación y *Acreditación* de la *Educación Superior* [National Agency for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education] (ANEAES). Two interviews were also conducted with former policy makers, a former legislator and a former minister of education. Three interviewees were or are participants of the activities of the *Comision Bicameral para el Estudio de la Reforma de la Educacion Superior* [Bicameral Commission for the study of the Education Reform] (CBERES) at the National Congress. One of the interviewees is a member of the Council of Universities (CU). Two interviews were conducted with *Ministerio de Educacion y Cultura* [Ministry of Education and Culture] (MEC) members, including the director of the *Dirección General de Educación Superior* [General Directorate for Higher Education] (DGES).

All of these interviews were in Spanish, the native language of both the interviewer and the interviewees. Interviewees' answers were made anonymous and for that reason a code was assigned to each of them. The codes include numbers. In the discussion that follows, the letters are used to identify them with the particular position that they play as system actors; a letter "A" to identify their advisory or advocacy role. Numbers are used to identify the date in which the interviews took place.

The interviews are used as sources of information for issues related to developments in higher education in Paraguay, the role of IGOs involved in the field of higher education in Paraguay, and proposals for change in higher education. Appendix B presents the basic set of questions used during these interviews.

These questions enabled an open-ended and semi-structured conversation. Berg (2007, p. 95) argues that "this type of interview involves the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics," in this case, questions relating to policy developments in higher education in Paraguay and the role of IGOs. Berg (2007, p. 95) adds that "these questions are typically asked of each interview in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answer to their prepared standardized questions."

These types of interviews allow for the possibility of adjustments in the language of the questions to facilitate the understanding of the scheduled and unscheduled questions by the interviewees. At the same time, the specific ordering of the interviews, and the adherence to the subject matter allows following a number of essential questions

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concerning "the central focus of the study", thus enable asking questions on the role of IGOs, the identification of research documents informing debates of higher education, potential agents of transfer and the situation and current developments of higher education in Paraguay. In the case of the telephone interview, I encountered potential disadvantages as those pointed by Berg, which relate to the inability of exchanging visual reactions between interviewee and interviewer. These interviews also allowed the identification of a number of key documents for further review and examination.

Documents Review

Document collection, review and analysis, was used as additional strategy of data collection. Documentation, following Yin's (2003) suggestion, is used to corroborate and augment evidence resulting from the interviews. Different sources were used, including articles written in newspapers, principally in the *Correo Semanal* of *Ultima Hora* between 1998 and 2000, reports published by the CONEC on higher education with the support of the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO/IESALC), and other materials mentioned during the interviews. This included documents related to two main proposals of reform discussed until 2006, formulated by the *Comision Nacional para la Reforma de la Educacion Superior* [National Commission for the Reform of Higher Education] (CNRES) and the Bicameral Commission for the study of the Education Reform at the National Congress (see CBERES & CNRES, 2005).

Since 1998, the majority of the documents on higher education in Paraguay have been published by the CONEC. In order to access copies of all relevant documents on higher education in existence, this institution became a major source. The totality of the studies published by CONEC on higher education since its constitution, were used to collect mute evidence in order to "triangulate" the data obtained from the interviews. Additionally, clues in the documentation and interviews revealed the existence of international documents produced by international agencies, relevant to an understanding of the current debates on higher education. In this case, secondary policy documents related to the agendas of reform for higher education for the region produced by the World Bank and UNESCO were also collected.

Secondary analysis of the literature of higher education reform in Latin America allows making explicit three key issues related to similar regional patterns of discussion promoted by those institutions: quality assurance (evaluation), institutional and legal innovations, and financing. Moreover, both interviews and documents pointed to the necessity of a historical reconstruction of the process that has taken place since the 1990s, creating the conditions for the current developments of higher education in Paraguay. In addition, I collected documentation indirectly related with higher education produced in the 1990s as part of the strategic planning of the education reform. Among these documents is the strategic document for the planning of education reform, *Paraguay 20/20* (MEC, CARE, & HIID, 1996b).

Internet Research

Extensive Internet research was used as an additional instrument of data collection. Internet data collection was centered on searches on main local institutional websites in Paraguay, among those, the Ministry of Education Website, The National Council of Sciences and Technology, and the National University. Also included in this search were the institutional websites of intergovernmental organizations mentioned by interviewees as involved in diverse degrees with educational issues in Paraguay. Moreover, Internet searches were used to explore the existence of other relevant research documents produced outside the country at regional INGOs.

This attention to Internet searches was a consequence of indications obtained during the interview process, and subsequent review of documents produced by intergovernmental organizations. They signaled that debates on higher education reform should also include an account of its relation to the planning processes and implementation issues in the education reform described on the Internet. The website of Educational Common Market of the South was extensively explored in the search for additional information on the regional protocols that documents and interviews suggested were relevant to an understanding of the international dimensions of current pressures for the adoption of changes in the higher education system.

Limits of Research

While my research was fairly exhaustive in search of all available sources of data, its limitations also became evident. Among these limitations was the realization that a

limited set of policy actors was chosen for the interviews. It would have been useful to interview the policy researchers employed by IGOs and INGOs. The limited availability of documentation on Paraguay's higher education system, both in printed form and on the Internet, also became evident.

The small number of interviews was due largely to limited resources and time limitations. But also, this was due to the difficulties in accessing legislators currently debating proposals for the new law of higher education. Moreover, representatives of IGOs in the country were reticent to participate in interviews that addressed questions relating to the current political context and debates on higher education reform in Paraguay. Furthermore, international consultants previously involved in education reform in Paraguay were not included as potential participants of the interviews, because many of them could not be located, while others did not agree to be interviewed.

The limited number of system actors interviewed was nonetheless representative of the diversity of local actors and institutions within the current local context. The majority of the interviewees were identified as a member or former member of the CONEC, or as workers or ex-workers of the Ministry of Education. This certainly provided adequate information on the perspectives at the Ministry of Education, but not from other institutional locations, such as the Ministry of Industry and Commerce whose activity clearly affected policy debates on higher education.

A second limitation was the difficulty of accessing statistical data on Paraguayan higher education. This is due to the lack of a unified database in Paraguay with information on the higher education sector. The national office of statistics (i.e. *Dirección*

General de Estadísticas, Encuestas y Censos [DGEEC]) and the Ministry of Education

relied on the voluntary data provided by public and private universities, and other tertiary

education institutions, with the exception of the system of Institutions of Professional

Teacher Formation, regulated by the Ministry of Education (MEC). A perfunctory search

of the available statistics databases shows that there is limited, and perhaps even

unreliable, information on the number of students at the two major universities—the

National University of Asuncion (UNA) and the Catholic University *Nuestra Señora de*

la Asunción (UCA). No information is available from other universities and institutions

included within the higher education sector.

Research documentation on higher education in Paraguay is also very limited. As

I have pointed out earlier, most of the local publications in the last decade were produce

by the CONEC, some in the form of policy documents or brief descriptive analysis on

different aspects of the higher education systems. Other available publications, produced

by individual universities, NGOs, professional associations, and the Bicameral

Commission for the study of the higher education reform, are limited in their scope, and

are often not based on research but related to individual presentations at seminars and

forums.[23]

This scarcity is especially noticeable for most of the 1990s, where an

overwhelming majority of policy documents and publications on education were

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[23] Vicente Sarubbi Zaldivar(1995), book *Un sistema de educación superior para el Paraguay democrático*, published by the CIDSEP, a research center associated to the Catholic University, contains a useful overview that mention previous and limited research published on the higher education system in Paraguay. Sarubbi was a former Minister of Education and founding member of the Advisory Council of Education Reform in Paraguay.

essentially related to the situation of the basic and secondary education sector and the processes of reform in those sectors only. It is only since 1998, that publications on the specific topic of higher education began to appear with increasing frequency, although, still limited in number. Moreover, it is important to mention that due to costs, there are only a limited numbers of volumes published for journals, and websites are often not updated in any regular fashion. UNESCO/IESALC has often promoted seminars on higher education and has also provided limited funding for those events and the publications that follow.

A final limit in this study is the difficulty associated with the scope of the study resulting from limited amount of information. It has not been possible to include all the relevant voices, just the ones of influential actors with resources to publish and participate in the debates on higher education reform. For example, a seminar on business practices promoted by Inter-American Development Bank (AIDB/IDB) for entrepreneurs later served as a key discussion of a national agenda for economic competitiveness that included a suggestion for a reform to improve the quality of the higher education system. Thus, business voices became more relevant.

These cautionary remarks should warn against any universalizing conclusions reaching this research. A study that begins with a problem often emerges from the interpellation of a segment of the reality, which I choose to observe, through theory. In this way, through this research, I attempt to provide a partial understanding of the role that IGOs and local actors play in the configuration and adoption of specific global narratives about the need for policy change, and the development of a national system of

higher education. The example of Paraguay is used to understand a set of broader issues about the nature, scope and consequences of global policy transfer in higher education. To present the case study, in the following chapter, I provide an overview of Paraguay and its system of higher education, and in particular an overview of how the Paraguayan national context is affected by and negotiates global pressures for change.

Chapter 4

Higher Education in Paraguay

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I introduced the idea of using an empirical case for the exploration of the transfer of global policy mobility in higher education. In order to achieve this objective, in this chapter, I intend to provide a contextual background to my empirical case: Paraguay. I have noted that while issues of context are relevant to the study of public policy and educational transfer, any coherent account of the context, when articulated in terms of a nation-state, has become very difficult, especially in view of the increasingly porous boundaries of the state in the era of globalization. The complicated networked relations across international and local dimensions have made it difficult to identify the scope and nature of the historical, political, economical and institutional context.

With this cautionary note on the notion of context, in this chapter, I seek to provide an account of the various aspects of the political, social and economic dimensions, relevant to my case of Paraguay and its system of higher education. However, I keep in mind that Paraguay as a nation state is best viewed as a particular territorial assemblage, with local as well as global dimensions. Within the territorial boundaries of the nation state, I describe a number of cultural, social and economic dynamics in Paraguay within the framework of which its higher education policies are developed and implemented.

Higher education institutions within a territorial assemblage of the nation-state are embedded in a multitude of social, political and economic dynamics, while the role that they play in a society is always contingent on the position assigned to them by the authority of the nation-state. Thus, debates about shifts in higher education in Paraguay have long been associated to those assemblages of the nation-state. However, contemporary anxieties represented in these debates are now linked to a number of changes and pressures associated with globalization, in ways that provide new meanings to the nature and purposes of reform in higher education. In the context of Paraguay, these global changes provide its higher education system with a number of new challenges and opportunities.

Paraguay

The context of a country is usually described in relation to a bounded territory organized by the nation-state. In this sense, Paraguay is a small landlocked country (see Figure 2) in South America possessing a territorial extension of 406.752 km^2 with a population of 6.12 millions (see Table 1), as of 2002, 2.6 millions living in below globally defined poverty levels (Fazio, 2005, p. 7).

Figure 2. Political Map of Paraguay (1998). Map from "Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection" produced by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved January 2010, from http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/paraguay_pol98.jpg

Table 1

Paraguayan Population Growth and Percentage of Population Living in Urban Areas (1960-2007)

Indicator	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2007
Population, total (millions)	1907042	2484739	3198837	4249734	5350235	6126643
Population growth (annual%))	2.627447	2.537292	2.780130	2.633598	2.076116	1.832744
Population in the largest city (% of urban population)	45. 45718	49.05047	50.32389	44.82469	49.257642	51.08269
Population in urban agglomerations of more than 1 million (% of total population)	16.18276	18.19773	20.98506	21.82963	27.23948	30.49637

Note. Adapted from World Bank (2010). *World Bank Development Indicators Database: Paraguay, 2010* [Data File]. Available from World Bank Website, http://data.worldbank.org/country/paraguay

Paraguay's economy is characterized by a large informal sector, with a GDP of 14.668 billion US dollars in 2009 (International Monetary Fund, 2010). In contrast with other countries in its region, a large percentage of Paraguayans still live in rural areas, where many are dedicated to subsistence agriculture. Paraguay is still a fundamentally agricultural and cattle raising production economy (see Borda, 2007), "with over 40 percent of the population living in rural areas" (International Monetary Fund, 2009, p. 16); while most of its urban population live now in areas that are in a close proximity to the capital city of Asuncion**.** Paraguayan society and economy has been greatly

affected by the process of rapid urbanization (see Table 1) and social change since the 1970s.

Paraguay has been a "dependent" economy (see Abente, 1989; Baer & Birch, 1984; Richards, 1992) for the most part of the twentieth century. After a devastating war in the 1860s, also known as the "Triple Alianza," and military occupation in the nineteenth century, the country introduced a number of institutions, including a university model and liberal legislative constitutional frameworks inspired by similar ones implemented by its former occupiers, Brazil and Argentina. However, Paraguay did not recover from some consequences of the conflict, among those a climate of recurrent political instability. For the first part of the twentieth century, authoritarian regimes of different types, a major war with Bolivia, and a short but violent civil war fomented instability in its political developments. The latest of these authoritarian regimes set the framework for a rapid process of modernization in the 1970s, partially driven by a treaty with Brazil for a mega-project of construction of one of the world largest hydroelectric dams, followed by an ambitious plan of agricultural modernization. This provided the catalysis for a number of changes in the economy and public sector. The growing affluence created a new wealthy class, associated with the engineering project, as well as a growing middle class, with particular demands, among them, access to university education.

The processes of modernization generated an enhanced effort by Paraguay's two universities at the time, *Universidad Católica Nuestra Señora de la Asunción* (UCA)[24] and *Universidad Nacional de Asunción* (UNA), in improving the quality of professional education in fields associated with the engineering project. However, there was little in the way of initiatives for university reform by the state during this period. As noted earlier, it was only in the 1960s that the word "system" was used in relation to higher education, informed in part by the spread of an international wave of educational reforms throughout Latin America. Regional rhetoric was applied to Paraguayan institutions, but never in ways that were explicitly formal. Higher education institutions, thought under some surveillance by the Paraguayan regime, which attempt to suppress political dissidence, had a certain degree of autonomy about their internal organization and institutional policy.

The self-governing university system was outside the control of any specific Ministry or state institution. The Ministry of Education was only in charge of basic and secondary education, and only one higher education institution which provided professional teaching formation the *Instituto Superior de Educación* (ISE), an institution created by the Paraguayan state in 1968 under the sponsorship of UNESCO. It is pertinent to note that the introduction of most of the educational innovations and institutions in Paraguay have, for the most part, been promoted through international

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[24]The Catholic University, confessional university created in the 1960s, was the only private university institution until the 1990s. This was part of a systematic governmental policy by the dictatorial regime of 'regulating' the growth of university centers. This policy was part of the strategies of social intervention implemented to control the student movements. It is precise to note that those movements often played and oppositional role to the regime (Rivarola, 2008, p. 558).

cooperation. For example, in the case of ISE, according to its Institutional website, the technical assistance provided by UNESCO through the advice of international experts from Europe and other countries is Latin America was "fundamental" to the idea and creation of an advanced pedagogical center (ISE, 2009).

Similarly, other ideas relating to educational transformation in Paraguay have resulted from international inspiration or emulation. For instance, as Ulrich Teichler (2007) indicates, the formalization of the idea of a higher education system was the result of a series of debates about the processes of expansion and discourses of diversification of higher education institutions in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s which later spread globally, affecting regional reforms movements, including those in Lain America. According to Teichler (2007, pp. 254-5), this agenda of transformation was adapted in different ways across many countries and regions. He indicates two "hidden agendas" of reform resulting from the debates that first took place in the United States:

1. "The emergence of an understanding according to which universities are embedded into a *system,*" rather than considering the universities as singular institutions.

2. "*Extension* of the range of the system from a *university* system to a higher education system and eventually to a *tertiary* education system."

In Paraguay, these debates had some, though marginal, impact, as debates about university policy reform, as a public policy reform priority, are relatively recent.

In the 1980s, the rapid rate of economic growth in Paraguay came to a slow stop. The subsequent economic crisis, characterized by national and international observers as a crisis of the economic model that the regime implemented in the 1970s, led to considerable political and social instability. It became clear that the success of Paraguay's

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economic model for modernization was based largely on foreign direct investment

associated with the hydroelectric project. At the same time, the rapid process of

agricultural modernization and the displacement of agricultural labor created an

increasingly large pool of rural unemployed, who began to migrate to the cities in search

of jobs that were not longer available. It should be noted that Paraguay was not

committed, as other countries in the region, to any serious program of industrialization.

At the same time, the changing political landscape among its neighbours began to assert

demands for the democratization of the country, for, by the late 1980s, Paraguay was the

only dictatorial regime left in South America.

The subsequent fall of the dictatorial regime in 1989 began a long process of

transition, in which ideas to replace and institute a new political order met with resistance

and social instability. Thus, there were a number of continuities observed with the

practices of the dictatorial past. This reveals some crucial characteristics of the

Paraguayan policy system. Among other things, the ideological and material effects of its

recent dictatorial past could be observed not only in the recurrence of political instability

in the 1990s, but in the extreme costs of policy reform proposed and carried out by policy

makers. In a paper on the evolution of Paraguay's policymaking processes over the last

50 years, Molinas, Pérez-Liñán,, Saiegh and Montero (2006, p. 41) argue that one of the

most salient characteristics of the current context in Paraguay is the difficulty in any

major modification to national public policies, in that "many areas of reform identified as

crucial by key stakeholders have been stalled."

Finally, it is important to note that in the complex and highly politicized context of Paraguay, the introduction of new laws does not necessarily imply their effective implementation. Among others, a crucial problem persists in relation to the uneven and arbitrary allocation of financial and human resources for public reform. Local resources often are insufficient to make viable the introduction of new institutional frameworks. Past experiences of policy reform, for example, have been characterized by inefficiency, inhibiting any project of transformation of the university system in Paraguay. There is also much policy resistance by main stakeholders, who are able to exploit the lack of clarity and the contradictory positions about the responsibilities of the state in the provision and access to public education for their gain.

It is necessary to note that, in Paraguay, extremely uneven, even disappointing, outcomes have resulted from the investment in the provision of universal access to formal schooling, which was a part of the educational reforms introduced in the country in the 1990s. The outcomes of these reforms, designed to provide universal access to general basic education, have been characterized, by critics of the reform, as of low achievement, with grade repetition and high number of dropouts of students in urban marginal and rural areas. As OECD (2002, pp. 220-21) has observed although about 96.5% of the seven year olds were enrolled in 2000, and although 90% of the students remained enrolled in primary for at least 6 years, only 60% of each population cohort entered first year of secondary education.

In Paraguay, schooling is mandatory until the ninth grade. Nonetheless, primary education is followed by six years of secondary education. However, as Schiefelbein

(2005, p. 10) notes, among those reaching the sixth grade of basic schooling, only 40%

"have the basic reading skills to continue secondary education." Part of the problem

seems to be related to the lack of human resources to implement educational reform. The

MEC and the Advisory Council for the Education Reform (CARE) have not had an

effective strategy to solve the problem of the increasing demand for more teachers, while

at the same time ensuring their quality. In Paraguay, teacher training is a tertiary

professional degree, provided mostly by non-university institutions. Most of those

institutions are private institutions and under the largely tentative oversight of the MEC.

In other words, privatization is used as a strategy to increase the number of Institutes of

Professional Teacher Formation, but insufficient effort was initially made to assure and

develop the quality of these institutions.

Moreover, as in many other countries in Latin America, the access to schools does

not guarantee learning. A large portion of Paraguayan students have a low degree of basic

reading. This hinders their capacity to access secondary education, thus creating a vicious

cycle of social inequality. As Schiefelbein (2005) argues:

> the schooling system in Paraguay is a sorting mechanism set in a hierarchical
> pyramid structure. Sorting depends mainly in reading ability, resulting in an
> unequal secondary school system. Within-school practices still exhibit
> egalitarian values that favour equality between students (e.g., dress codes,
> subject matter, study, assigned duties, events, material activities). Entrance to
> the next level is based on examination scores. Screening is ostensibly an
> objective and equitable means to determine school entrance, but results in a
> structurally unequal system. (p. 13)

Moreover, there is a high degree of functional illiteracy by a great proportion of the

young adult population in urban areas. Also noted are high rates of student attrition and

limited access to upper levels of education. Basically, studies both by the *Sistema*

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Nacional de Evaluación del Proceso Educativo [National Evaluation System for the Education Process] (SNEPE) and UNESCO seem to point out a "low achievement in primary education" (Schiefelbein, 2005, p. 2).

The increasingly uneven social and economic conditions in Paraguay are part of the wider context of an expansion at all levels of education, but in which the quality of education is at best uneven. In the case of university education, general expectations of access to labor markets through tertiary education, and the institutional weakness of the state and the university system generates a bleak picture in relations to both access to higher education opportunities and its social and economic outcomes.

History of Paraguayan Higher Education

The origins of the university in Paraguay lie in various regional transfers and local adaptations of a European organizational framework of the university, translated or emulated by newly independent countries in Latin America at the beginning of the 19th century. The collapse of the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires in South America gave birth to a number of independent nation-states, including Paraguay. These states sought to build their own institutional *capacities* to train their national bureaucracies. Therefore, trained local bureaucrats were required for the building and running of the independent national administrative structures. Not surprisingly, Latin American nation-states borrowed heavily from various European institutional models of university organization, interpreting the idea of the university in their own particular ways.

Marcela Mollis (2006, p. 505), mentioning Luis Scherz's work, indicates that the Latin American model of the university is characterized by "a predominantly secular, pragmatic, and state-oriented conception in the professional university, which has the mission of shaping, citizens, professionals, and public administrators." This framework of institutional organization is inspired to a certain extent, by a Napoleonic or French model of the university (Schwartzman, 1999). As Guy Neave (1998, p. 21) has noted:

> [This model] is one of the earliest examples of the state harnessing the university to the modernization of society. It did this by maintaining close control over financing, over academic appointments and the use of legal instruments to ensure that national provision was similar across the national territory.

The first Paraguayan university, the National University of Asuncion, was created very late in the 19th century, much later than in other countries in the region, and largely followed the French model. The university was created as a national center of general professional education, and knowledge distribution deemed useful to the modernization of the state.

As Seraffini, LaFuente, and Rivelli (1988, p. 34, my translation) indicate, its founders viewed the main purposes of the National University of Asuncion as "transmitting knowledge within a political liberal framework inherited after the war of 1870, thus seeking to consolidate a life style, and a political system based on parliamentary principles." The political system and life style that the founders of the University had in mind was informed by a sense of the need to overcome the consequences of the war. After Paraguay's independence in 1811, the country experimented with an autonomous model of economic development (Centeno, 1997;

Pastore, 1994), while effectively opposing neocolonial efforts. As Richard Allan White

(1979, p. 7) point out:

> [T]he Paraguayans dismantled their former dependent class society, denying the
> entire upper class—both Spanish and Creole—their social, political, positions of
> dominance. Together with establishing a strong central government that
> represented the interests of the vast majority of its citizens, these measures formed
> the basis of the nation's unified resistance to Argentine and European
> imperialism.

This experiment of economic development was utterly destroyed during the Paraguayan

War also known as the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870). The outcome of the war

set in place a precedent that is essential for understanding Paraguay's pattern of regional

dependence.

As mentioned before, after the end of the war, Paraguay established the institution

of the university by emulating a European institutional model, which first appeared in

France, and was already a generic model of university emulated or mimicked by most of

his neighboring countries. As in many countries of Latin America, the academic model at

the University of Paris was used to created university institutions in the region during the

nineteenth century. This model of tertiary education involved a focus, almost exclusively,

on professional training. This orientation towards professional formation is still a

persistent feature of Paraguay's university system. At the same time, knowledge

production is a minor, almost irrelevant endeavor, of university activities. According to

Mollis (2006, p. 505),

> [In this model] the curricula are organized by professional programs, the
> universities have strong linkages with the state and (despite academic autonomy)
> the state provides the funds and has indirect control over the institutions. For this
> reason, these institutions met the demands of the ruling social class (mainly, their

political and cultural demands). Professional training has thus been seen as the central task to be accomplished . . . from the 19th century to the present.

Yet, the idea of the university in Paraguay was also historically influenced by the policy transfer of the educational ideologies of successive waves of regional reforms (Rama, 2006), even if the introduction of reforms in terms of substantial changes in the higher education system has been, for the most part of the twentieth century, limited.

It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that the phrase "University Reform" was used in Paraguay, though it was not used in today's sense. In Latin America, the use of this expression, as Simon Schwartzman (2001) indicates, started with the Cordoba Manifest,[25] and the first wave of regionally located reforms affecting Latin American countries. The demands of students at Cordoba University in Argentina, led to a wave of regional reforms, which transformed the university systems in the region by establishing "a peculiar type of university autonomy" (Schwartzman, 2001, ¶ 11). Basically, the notion was that "governments have to pay for the maintenance of the universities, but have little say in the way universities are managed." The social imaginary of a specific type of institutional autonomy as a desirable feature of university governance still resonates in current debates about the transformation of Paraguay's higher education.

However, the most important element to understand the historical trajectory of Paraguay's higher education developments in the twentieth century is the prevalence of a policy environment adverse to the idea of public policy change in higher education. The

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[25] The manifesto published by students at Cordoba University in Argentina in 1918.

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political instability of the first part of the twentieth century, including a short but violent civil war, and the policies of dictatorial regimes, favored an approach resistant to any substantial change in the governance structures of Paraguay's higher education institutions.

The crisis of Paraguay's liberal model of the nation-state in the 1930s, and a long period of political instability, presented conditions that encouraged politicization of the National University of Asuncion, in particular. In the 1940s the military government acquired control of the University and by 1954, under the Stroessner regime, the Colorado party assumed a key role in subordinating tertiary institutions to authoritarian rule. For the next 35 years, the possibilities of graduates securing employment in state bureaucracies became linked to an affiliation with the Colorado party, the political arm of the regime.

In the 1960s, the regime allowed a very limited and highly controlled expansion of the system, with the creation of the UCA (Law 663, September 1960). The main feature of the UCA was to mimic the institutional and academic model of the National University of Asuncion (see Universidad Católica, 2000, p. 20). A radical expansion and diversification of the system was discouraged, and was only possible after the end of the dictatorial regime in 1989. The regimes lacked any interest in the provision of social services at all levels, with a very low level of investment in education. It should be noted that "the stable level of investment in education by the authoritarian regime was, for a quarter of century, around 1% of the GDP, well below the Latin American average of investment in education" (CONEC, 2005, p. 22, my translation).

It is clear that the Paraguayan state for most of the second half of the twentieth century was militarily strong but socially weak. As a result, it failed to build both institutional capacities to evaluate and expand its educational system. As Andrew Nickson and Peter Lambert (2002) contend, quoting the former director of a European Union-funded State Modernization Project in Paraguay: "the state had been extremely weak throughout most of this period and social provision was minimal. Here there was no 'over-developed state' and no 'crisis of the welfare state' to contend with" (p. 163).

After 1989, Paraguay, as a transition state, sought to expand social services and the capacities of the country, but could only do so with international assistance and expertise. This made it into a state highly dependent on international aid agencies. Thus, even after 1989, Paraguay, as a transitional society, remained extremely vulnerable to a process of coercive, voluntary coercive, or even "inappropriate forms of policy transfer" (Ivanova & Evans, 2004, p. 98). Thus, it came under tremendous amount of local and regional pressures to introduce changes in its higher education system. However, the country now experienced these pressures within a global context in which external actors, with their own agendas of transformation, provided resources, expertise and guidelines that informed policy priorities for educational reform, sometimes ignoring the local historical trajectories and traditions. For example, the pressure from financial IGOs, such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, overlooked some local demands in setting policy priorities for change in the 1990s.

In the case of the development of the higher education system, a mixture of local, regional and global pressures generated calls for unprecedented level of expansion

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through autonomous, and mostly for profit, oriented institutions. These new institutions, for the most part, mimicked the traditional model of the university, exemplified in Paraguay by the UNA.[26] It is precise to note, that at the start of this process of expansion, financial IGOs were not prepared to recommend funding reforms for the higher education sector while local authorities were unable to generate a consensus on relation to the university system.

Shifts and Continuities in Paraguayan Higher Education

In Paraguay's higher education sector, policy initiatives, narratives and research supported and promoted by IGOs and implemented by the state in the 1990s indirectly created and continued to influence a set of policy dynamics that at least partially explain the current policy environment. I have used the exemplar of Paraguay for two main reasons. First, as a developing country characterized by relative recent expansion of institutions and structures relating to higher education, Paraguay represents an interesting case of the ways in which international agencies seek to influence national policy developments. And second, in the Paraguayan system of higher education, diversification has been accompanied by a radical process of private commercial expansion, especially in the context of an absence of strong state initiatives of policy change for the sector. In this way, privatization represents a radical departure from the role that higher education has historically played in the country. I have argued that as a result of global pressures and an international consensus in the 1990s, a greater emphasis was placed in Paraguay

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[26] Moreover, according to critics of this expansion, many of those institutions are profit oriented, and presently ignore their public roles as education institutions.

for the reform of the primary and secondary sector, leaving the field of tertiary education

vacant for private entrepreneurs.

As an interviewed former member of the *Consejo Asesor de la Reforma*

Educativa [Advisory Council for the Education Reform] (CARE)[27] suggested, the lack of

attention on higher education [as public policy], especially in the university, is a result of

several local factors, but it is also related to the agendas of international agencies. In a

newspaper article entitled "*Quien pagara por los platos rotos?*" Domingo Rivarola

argued that the current state of the higher education sector in Paraguay is a direct

outcome of the lack of attention paid to it in the 1990s when higher education was

excluded from the agenda for public policy reform, largely due to external pressures. He

added that the negotiations on education reform with "international cooperation"

involved a complete alignment with the policy priorities of international financial

institutions (Rivarola, 2000, p. 11), which were designed to leave higher education to the

mercy of private operators.

> Rivarola (2000) explains this in the following terms,
>
> In light of the expressed [in this article], the exposing two positions on the
> relevance of the theme of higher education reveals the high degree of
> vulnerability that Paraguay has to external [international] influences. A
> bothersome reminder of this weakness [of Paraguay] to confront the imposition of
> policy are two elements that should have allowed a better position in the
> negotiations [with IGOs]: the fact of having a right position [to try to place higher
> education in the education reforms], regardless of the reason to assuming such
> position, and, that [negotiators] allowed the imposition of [such] conditions in the
> loans [for education reform], loans that the country was obligate to reimburse. To
> say this is in an ironic way is like borrowing money, to do things that other people
> says us to do. The theme of the abandonment of higher education [reform], and

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[27]The CARE was the advisory council in charge of the strategic planning of the
education reform process during the 1990s. It was later replaced by the CONEC.

especially university education, answers to several local factors, but also the international cooperation guards an important degree of responsibility [for this development]. (Rivarola, 2000, p. 11, my translation)

A la luz de lo expuesto anteriormente, que deliberadamente se ha dedicado a exponer dos opiniones de relevancia sobre el tema de la educación superior devela el alto grado de vulnerabilidad que presenta Paraguay a las influencias externas. Una molesta constatación de la debilidad de permitir la imposición de políticas considerando dos elementos que deberían habernos dado una mayor fuerza de negociación y de firmeza: uno, el estar en la posición correcta, cualquiera haya sido el fundamento de origen de la posición asumida y, otro, el dejarse imponer tratándose en definitiva de préstamos que el país tiene la obligación de retornar. Dicho de una manera irónica, es como prestar dinero para hacer cosas que otros nos dicen que hagamos. El tema del abandono de la educación superior en especial de la universitaria responde a varios factores determinantes de orden interno, pero también le corresponde a la cooperación internacional un importante margen de responsabilidad. (Rivarola, 2000, p. 11)

It is important to recognize, however, that the capacity of IGOs in steering policy change

is limited. The transfer of policy advice and material resources is always contingent on

the intentions of local policy actors, as well as with the existence of appropriate state

structures that enable a relationship of receptivity of international policy advice. So what

was the nature of the relationship between IGOs and the Paraguayan state with respect to

proposals for reform of the Paraguayan educational system at the beginning of the 1990s?

It is certainly true that the Paraguayan state representatives participated fully in various

world educational forums for the emerging global agenda for education reforms related to

their needs and conditions. At the same time, however, as a developing country, the

financing of such reforms was always dependent on the line of credit provide by financial

IGOs.

More importantly, in the 1990s, the local promoters of reform used a diverse array

of global narratives to justify and generate a consensus around education reforms that

they argued, were essential for the modernization and democratization of Paraguayan

society after the fall of a long dictatorial regime. In other words, they used international

discourses on the purposes of education as a way to legitimize a particular set of changes

that were aligned to the expectations generated around the process of political and

economic transition. In this way, international discourses about Paraguay's participation

in the global economy became inextricably tied to the local discourses about democratic

transition.

Examples of this rhetorical interplay can still be observed in all official policy

documents, including a recent policy proposal for higher education reform produced by

the CNRES. For example, they argued that:

> Since the beginning of the so-called democratic transition in 1989, educational
> reform is one of the more firmly shared aspirations of the Paraguayan society.
> This is attributed in large degree to the very simple reflection that only
> educational improvement of the population is capable of guaranteeing the future
> solidity of a democratic order. It is the only road for the construction of a
> fraternal (solidarity) and equal society. (CNRES, 2006, p. 19, my translation)

> Desde el comienzo de la denominada transición democrática en 1989, la reforma
> de la educación se constituyo en una de las aspiraciones más firmemente
> compartida por la sociedad paraguaya, lo que se atribuyo, en gran medida, al
> resultado de una reflexión muy simple: solo el mejoramiento educativo de la
> población es capaz de garantizar la solidez futura de un ordenamiento
> democrático que, a su vez, representa el único camino para la construcción de una
> sociedad más solidaria y equitativa. (CNRES, 2006, p. 19)

This local narrative is aligned to a web of interrelated discourses embraced and promoted

by various international agencies, such as the agendas of educational change

recommended at the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) at Jomtien,

Thailand in March 1990 that eventually became transmogrified into the Millennium

Goals by the United Nations. The international legitimacy that such narratives provide do

not only serve local policy actors to secure line of credits for the project of reform, but also imply the transfer of discourses and stories of educational reform linked to specific agendas for economic development.

The Jomtien declaration, as Reimers (1995), Buchert (1995), and others have pointed out, contains a number of recommendations that have informed key changes in the policy priorities in Latin America. As Reimers notes, the Jomtien declaration involved a general consensus among the major IGOs involved in the education sector to increase international support for basic education, with the goal of entitling every child in the world to primary education by 2015.[28] Basically, this opened the possibility of international support for major reforms in basic education systems throughout the region. As Lene Buchert (1995, p. 546) notes, after Jomtien

> many national and multinational donor organizations have showed renewed concern for the Basic Education level. This is expressed in the focus on Basic Education in numerous policy documents, whether they are individual sub-sector documents, part of education sector documents, or integrated in broader development strategy documents.

International conferences around this agenda played a crucial role in the process of transfer of ideas about educational change. Narratives presented at these conferences were later used by local policy players to convey a specific rhetoric, even a sense of urgency for action. In this sense, the stories framed a particular logic to justify local priorities, in the name of international cooperation.

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[28]Riemers (1995, p. 36) quoted a UNICEF executive director stating at the final sessions of Jomtien that, "UNICEF, the World Bank, Unesco, and the UNDP are in agreement that a special effort should be made to ensure that by the year 2000 virtually all children are achieving a common early level of achievement, in literacy, numeracy and basic life skills."

However, the role that these international stories of reform play in the implementation of policy actions is more complex. On the one hand, they serve to justify the international support for policy initiatives put forward by national actors, and on the other, they become a legitimizing factor in creating local consensus that justifies the need for change. However, this does not imply that individual countries follow a homogenous pattern of international reform. Even as all countries and institutions appear to use a pool of international stories and common rhetoric to justify the need for change, they do so in ways that are different according to different national context and policies. For instance, this is observed while reading different country reports addressing the notion of quality, during the current regional wave initiatives to ensure quality assurance mechanism in higher education. Norberto Fernandez Lamarra (2009) indicates that the mere notion of "quality" is contentious,

> One common point that arises from the reading of different national reports is that although many and different definitions exist for quality they concur in respect to one common element: relativity. . . . That is, the concept of quality must be considered from its *multidimensional* structure and its *relativity* in so much as it depends on the mission, objectives, and protagonists in each university system. (Lamarra, 2009, p. 488)

Stories rather than official discourses are more important in articulating a particular logic about the "social purposes" of transformation, and their possible consequences. It is in these stories that education became central to economic policies implemented in developing countries in the 1990s. At the same time, these policies were aligned to a body of research that carried out a pervasive logic about the nature of human beings as subordinated to a global pattern of economic development. More importantly, policy priorities become aligned with particular assumptions about development, education and

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the role of the state in a global context.[29] These assumptions were further supported by

the research produced by international organizations, which often articulated a general set

of priorities for educational change, and paid little attention to the specificities of the

local context in developing countries.

These generalized principles, as I have already argued, largely ignored the tertiary

sector creating conditions that led to the private unregulated expansion of Paraguay's

higher education system. It is in the context of a policy vacuum that the state in a sense

allowed the expansion of private initiatives. Therefore, a symbolic policy promoted by

IGOs towards the privatization and deregulation of higher education became effectively

translated in Paraguay into an ad hoc expansion of the tertiary system, albeit in ways in

which quality and the public good were largely sacrificed.

This analysis suggests that recent changes in higher education in Paraguay are in

effect the hybrid outcome of the continuation of past policy trajectories and ideas and

newer policy suggestions emanating from IGOs. Current debates and proposals on the

reform of higher education in Paraguay, thus, tend to follow some familiar historical

patterns, but have now become aligned to newer global discourses. There is an apparent

difficulty in establishing a distinctive national space in Paraguay that might enable it to

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[29] For instance, in the case of financial IGOs, they started supporting the idea of
the necessity of educational reform following a narrative that as Adrian Leftwich (1993)
points out, was the result of a "new orthodoxy" dominating "official Western aid policy
and development thinking." In other words, this was a paradigm of development thinking
that "at its core" has the "confident assertion that 'good governance' and democracy are
not simply desirable but essential conditions for development in all societies" (p. 605).
However, it is also important to note that the ambiguity of the term democracy, as used
by local actors, and non-financial IGOs indicates the existence of diverse understandings
to those defined by the international discourse of financial IGOs and other bilateral
agencies.

define its own processes of policy change. Clearly policy transfer is ever present in the narratives of change, now justified by notions such as globalization, knowledge economy and knowledge society. Yet the absence of state institutions able to coordinate, take up, and create a consensus around those international narratives is also clear. This is partially explained by the lack of state and international capacities to assess the current situation of the national higher education system, but also the constant emulation of local institutional models from the past. In this way, the policy environment in Paraguay is characterized by much policy confusion that is seemingly a consequence of both global and local trajectories.

Pressures and Processes of Policy Reform

Current policy debates in Paraguayan higher education are clearly related to various globalization processes and pressures, both in their content and rhetoric. Most evidently, these pressures have led to a massive expansion of a private sector in higher education, even if the organizational model of the higher education system has not changed. In this way, Paraguay shows similar changes to those occurring in other countries in the region, where it is also possible to witness the emergence of a diverse and extremely uneven provision of higher education.

In Paraguay, private expansion has increased the number or tertiary institutions but has created a very complex and scarcely regulated university system; a system that has now, according to local policy commentators, lost any semblance of norms. There is a common perception of a chaotic Paraguayan higher education system. For some

commentators, this may be an indication of local conditions responding to the processes

of policy transfer of various ideological neoliberal discourses about privatization, and

treating universities as corporate entities. However, as Jesus Montero Tirado, a Jesuit

priest member of CONEC indicates in a recent article:

> Whatsoever the notion of the concept of autonomy, common sense indicates universities cannot be sovereign entities, or a state within a state. They are fundamental pieces of society and thus they should be accountable to society through the state institutions. It is necessary and urgent to reform universities, or at least institutionalize them within a body of laws ordering their identity, responsibilities and functions in relation to the state. (Tirado, M. J., 2008, ¶ 7-8, my translation)

> Sea cual fuere el contenido que se cargue en el concepto de autonomía, el sentido común nos dice que las universidades no pueden ser soberanas, ni un estado dentro de otro estado y que en cualquier caso son piezas fundamentales de la sociedad y por tanto deben dar cuentas a la sociedad por medio de sus organizaciones institucionalizadas, es decir, por medio del Estado. Es necesario, muy urgente, apremiante que las universidades se reformen, y ya que no se ve movimiento en esta dirección, al menos que se actualicen y se institucionalicen en el marco de un cuerpo de leyes que ordenen seriamente su identidad, sus responsabilidades y funciones dentro de nuestro Estado Social de derecho.(Tirado, M. J., 2008, ¶ 7-8)

Some of the main issues about reforms needed in higher education in Paraguay have

appeared in the publications of CONEC (Galeano, 2006). These issues include:

1. The definition of the limits for university 'autonomy.' Hence, clarity about the relationship between the state and university institutions.

2. The definition of the role of the market in the provision of university education.

3. The urgent problems of an unregulated university system and the necessity to ensure quality in the provision of university education in Paraguay.

4. The meaning of transformation in Paraguayan higher education, especially in relation to developments in the nation's economy and society.

The CONEC is the main advisory institution for public policy to the Ministry of Education that succeeded CARE after 1998. It is composed of a dozen members appointed by the Minster of Education, who often plays an advocacy role for policy reform in education in general. The institution itself is a potential local agent of policy transfer, though as an advocate, its policies must be aligned with the interests of the MEC.

Of the issues recognized by CONEC, the need to redefine the role of the state and its agencies in relation to both private and public higher education institutions has become fundamental. In its discussions, the word "crisis" is often used, and the causes of the crisis in Paraguayan higher education are considered to be twofold. First, crisis is assumed to be derived from current socio-economic and political constraints of the Paraguayan context. Second, crisis is thought to originate from the implementation of various contentious elements of an international agenda of higher education, superimposed upon past structures, creating a hybridized system with little clarity about purpose and design.

According to Crista Weise (2007), the key elements common to the regional agendas of transformation of higher education supported by IGOs (World Bank, IADB, and UNESCO) in the 1990s were:

> (a) Reduction of state financial investment in higher education or diversification of sources of financing; (b) Linking of universities to the market and the productive system; (c) Selectivity in the access; (d) Control, regulation and evaluation by state, transparency (accountability by universities, and (e) Institutional reform linked to standards of productivity, efficiency and efficacy as elements of institutional quality." (Weise, 2007, p. 122, my translation)

Paraguay seems to have adopted most of the elements of this regional agenda. However, this has been done within a policy environment characterized by a weak state without the capacities or institutions to organize or monitor the university system as a whole. The outcome of this changing agenda has been to enable local entrepreneurs to establish their own institutions. This has meant rapid expansion, but also diversification and stratification of Paraguay's university system around autonomous commercially-oriented institutions. In other words, the system has become "self- regulated," but lacks any coherent national purpose, or any significant measure of coordination.

In the 1990s, innovations introduced to expand the university system responded to the increasing local demand for tertiary education, as well as regional pressures generated in the form of an agenda of regional integration expressed through the idea of a Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR). A year after the promulgation of the new national constitution (1992), in line with the regional agenda, Paraguay introduced a law for universities (law 136/93) which formalized a minimalist role for the state in the governance of its National University, the "flagship" institution of the system.

However, it is important to reiterate that the MEC never really had any influence on the university system in any way. The 1992 legislation did not introduce substantial positive changes but instead remove any past restrictions for the creation of new university (private) institutions. The state effectively withdrew initiatives to govern the national system of higher education. The only regulatory measure left in the creation of new universities was the creation of a Council of Universities,[30] whose members, as it

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[30] Established by law 828.

turned out, include the rectors[31] (and often the owners) of the new universities themselves.

The CU was an autonomous organization, chartered by the Paraguay state to take charge of the corporate governance of the university sector. Among its functions were the coordination and formulation of a national university policy, and the evaluation of university institutions. In 2004, a new law, 2529/04, modified this charter and further diminished its functions. Moreover, CU was established with scarce technical and financial resources. Mostly, it involved a place where rectors met to consider the approval of new universities, and did so with minimal requirements set for the definition of a university, as articulated in CU's constitution, and contained in an internal document entitled *Guía de Elaboración del Proyecto Educativo para la Creación de Universidades y/o habilitación de Carreras* (Martin, 2007).

Between 1989 and 1999, 17 new institutions were recognized as universities, 14 of them private (Rivarola, 2004, p. 47). In 1998, the New General Law of Education created CONEC. This became the main public advisory body in charge of all reform efforts at all levels of education policy. Universities—both old and new—now became nominally integrated into an education system, over which CONEC was given oversight. Yet, this legal reform only tangentially addressed some of the more pressing issues facing higher education institutions. Nevertheless, the creation of CONEC did indicate a shift in policy that suggested the need for an increased attention to change.

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[31] Rector is used here as the equivalent position, to chief executive officer, this can be translate according to US colleges academic titles as "President."

This attention, however, cannot merely be explained by endogenous factors. A number of externalities affecting Paraguay's policy development must be considered. These include increased pressures for the harmonization of Paraguay higher education with a set of minimal requirements on educational quality and student mobility agreed at MERCOSUR forums as well as the implicit adoption of a regional discourse on the need of higher education reform around those issues. This new discourse was most evident at regional and international forums in the late 1990s, in which MEC representatives participated. Basically, these forums articulated a set of common challenges for the region generated by the conjuncture of the processes of massification and diversification in higher education; there are now 38 private universities in Paraguay (see Table 2), but more broadly by the structural economic reforms initiated during 1980s and 1990s. The response to these challenges came in the form of repeated calls for privatization of higher education.

Table 2

Number of Higher Education Institutions in Paraguay by Institutional Type and Sector (2009)

Type of institution[32]	Private	Public	Number of institutions
Universities	38	7	45
Institutes of Higher Education	23	7	30
Teacher Training Colleges/ Institutes of Professional Teacher Formation	59	41	100
Institutes of Technical Education	228	20	248

Note. Adapted from DGES (2010) *Cantidad de Instituciones de Educación Superior, por Tipo y Sector*. Available from, DGES Web site, http://educacionsuperior.mec.gov.py/v4/index.php/instituciones.html

According to a blueprint for education reform, "Paraguay: Universidad 2020," published by MEC, most of the student enrollments in Paraguay are at private universities. In 2000, according to Rivarola (2004, pp. 101-102) the number of students enrolled at higher education accounted for a total of 59,836 50.3% of them women. Of these 32,462 enrolled in private universities. Rivarola notes that this expansion has occurred in a context of decreasing investment in higher education by the state. Indeed, even at public universities, 50% of its revenues come from tuitions and fees a considerable proportion considering the scarce private investment and lack of alternative sources of financing outside the state (CNRES, 2006, p. 85).

Concerns about the reduction of financial support for public institutions underwrite debates in Paraguay on the role of the market in the provision of public

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[32] Universidades, Institutos de Educación Superior, Institutos de Formación Docente, Institutos Técnico Superiores

services. These are, of course, also international debates, but in Paraguay over the last decade higher education has become an extremely profitable business, due largely to increased demand. The increasing participation of women in higher education may offer a partial explanation for this increase. Within the Paraguayan context, the persistent inadequacy of secondary education and deficiencies in the basic education level directly linked with the growing number of people unable to fulfill the minimal academic requirements to be admitted in university institutions has been widely noted. However, in many cases private universities do not appear constrained to admit even the most unqualified of applicants --meeting the demand but not the requirements of quality.

The quality of professional degrees offered by the unregulated market institutions is now perhaps one of the most urgent issues in public debates in Paraguay. In 2006, the national congress introduced law 2529/06. This legislation diluted the minimal requirements demanded by the Law Universities, by removing even the minimal criteria for the authorization of new universities. Pedro Gerardo González, the Rector of the National University has observed that the national congress can approve the opening of new institutions without the input of the Council of Universities, while universities are free to open faculties, campuses, and new professional schools without constraints (Caballero, 2007).

In Paraguay, the state usually meets political demands about the university system through legislative reforms. However, attempts to create a regulatory framework for university education have been paralyzed due to the lack of consensus on several points. Among these is the disagreement over issues of autonomy, and the demands of

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accountability. This is a crucial point of contention for the owners of the newly created private universities in particular, who fear their profit margins evaporating.

Moreover, as mentioned before, an effect of its recent dictatorial past, Paraguay, as a transition state has experienced recurrent cycles of political instability, generating a sense of extreme uncertainty among policy makers—thus, a reluctance to act decisively and impartially. The implementation of the regional agenda of educational development in Latin America in the 1990s, for example, created problems for policy makers, in having to juggle local and regional demands. In the current context, new global and regional discourses of reform are thus, useful to Paraguay's policy makers. To solve a local problem they can always point to the need to borrow IGOs ideas and pursue regional agreements in relation to priorities for reforming the educational system.

In recent years, these reforms have included the adoption of quality assurance mechanisms. These quality assurance reforms in higher education are clearly related to a global agenda. They are generated in response to the assumed imperative of the global economy that is said to require common standards for the different national educational system in Latin America, and perhaps other regions. This agenda of quality assurance reforms has been promoted by agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank since the 1990s. The role of the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and IESALC UNESCO in promoting the introduction of quality assurance reforms in Latin America is particularly significant. This promotion may be observed in the work of regional university networks, in which Paraguayan representatives have begun to take part.

The introduction of assurance models represents a global pattern of innovations, which first appeared in the United States and later spread to Europe in the 1990s. Gary Rhoades and Barbara Sporn's (2002) article, "Quality Assurance in Europe and the U.S.: Professional and Political Economic Framing of Higher Education Policy," indicates that this global expansion of a common language for the need of normative mechanism across countries in Europe was disseminated through multiple channels, among them professional associations.[33] Those are professional processes that act in advance industrial societies as mechanisms of dissemination. According to Rhoades and Sporn's (2002) professional processes enable the dissemination of "state of the art practices . . . through professional associations, conferences, and journals, and through the circulation of professionals through associations, formal education, and career mobility" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, as cited in Rhoades & Sporn, 2002, p. 356).

In the case of the European countries, this agenda was not only institutionalized through professional networks, but also with the support of state instrumentalities providing international communication to local scholars, as well as exchanges across national boundaries. This can be understood as a strategy of transfer by the European Union (EU), which views it as part of a set of generic strategies of global competition. More interestingly, the various models of quality assurance, while they are influenced by the work of US companies, operate differently in Europe (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002, p. 357). The different adoptions are clearly understandable given the differences of institutional structures between European countries and the U.S. An example of a move

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[33] Rhoades and Sporn believe that these mechanisms of dissemination "are different for developed than for developing countries" (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002, p. 384).

towards quality assurance in Europe may be observed in the Bologna declaration (De Wit, 2000). Yet, in the United States, Bologna would not work, given the autonomy that universities there enjoy. Similarly, it has not been possible in Paraguay to systematically implement quality assurance practices and strategies.

In the 1990s, discussions on regional accountability became a central theme of reform in Latin America. The Common Market of the South through a number of common agreements sought to play a similar role to the one played by the EU. These included the introduction of an experimental regional system of evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions. We can see this as an example of institutional isomorphism and convergence of practices across regions as well as across countries.

However, the shape that these innovations acquire across countries and regions diverged in a number of significant ways. The adoption of accreditation mechanism in Paraguay does not seem to imply yet, as in Europe, the adoption of international private sector practices or management models from business to higher education. Those ideas seem to provide a vision of change or debate in the direction that might follow, but so far the pace in the formalization of public policy adoptions has been, at best, slow. Another way to characterize this situation is of a policy environment highly resistant to the adoption of public policy innovations in higher education.

Symbolic adoption of global policy agendas make it difficult to assure the extent of policy transfer. For example, while the logic of expansion of mass higher education shows patterns of change very similar to other countries in the region, the change has

occurred in a noticeably different manner. The country's ideology of educational change

and the priorities of transformation are clearly influenced by a diversity of global

pressures and regional debates, including international diagnostics and prescriptions

circulated by IGOs. However, their take up has been affected by residual elements

relating to the autonomy enjoyed by universities in Paraguay.

The implementation has been greater when international prescriptions have been

accompanied by the imposition of conditions or offer of aid and grants. For instance, the

World Bank, 'productive agent' (Goldman, 2006), has helped to finance Paraguay's

reform of basic education since the1990s, but as in Brazil, in ways that are consistent

"with the neoliberal and economic reforms of the Washington consensus" (Kemper &

Jurema, 2002). Paraguay has embraced the recommendations of the World Bank and

given priority to reforming basic education, part of the Bank's social policy strategies of

poverty alleviation. Since Paraguay has scarce public resources and technical capacities,

it is highly dependent on foreign aid and expertise provided by external actors. With no

external financial support for higher education, Paraguay's universities have been able to

resist change, or adopt them in ways that are mostly symbolic.

In this way, IGOs have been more successful in shifting the terms of the debates

about reform by fostering global policy transfer networks helping to distribute a belief

system about policy change, values, and goals aligned with their agendas. IGOs such as

UNESCO, through their regional[34] units, cultivate epistemic communities that help to

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[34] The Regional Education Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
(OREALC) and the International Institute of UNESCO for Higher Education in Latin
America and the Caribbean (IIESALC)

distribute educational ideologies of policy change at University institutions. Thus, they play a crucial role in building the central nodes of knowledge communication networks.[35] Through their sponsorship of these networks, they have the ability to distribute common narratives that give sense to educational change. At the same time, some IGOs have the capacity to distribute technical policy instruments and expertise that shape policy debates and responses (Rodríguez-Gómez & Alcántara, 2001).

As Maldonado-Maldonado (2004) points out, IIESALC-UNESCO, as knowledge producer of higher education policies, is active in the creation of different types of professional networks connecting local epistemic communities throughout the region. It has used international conferences to network policy actors of different countries, thus, creating spaces to steer a common message about higher education. In the case of the World Bank conferences, IESALC has created forums for steering or "pressing national governments and organizations of all sorts to modify their behavior in accord with that message" (Maldonado-Maldonado, 2004, p. 119).

Finally, like EU, MERCOSUR has developed similar strategies to those of the EU, steering policy change in higher education through negotiations and emulation. Its regional agreement for integration initially established between Paraguay, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, includes a number of declarations of intention between the various ministries of education, requiring a number of some demonstrable changes from

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[35] Of course, I recognize that there are non-institutional policy actors who are also involved in policy networks. However, for the purpose of brevity, and for the purposes of this paper, I am not going to look at that particular problem.

each system of education, while 'steering' harmonization across the signatory countries

of the treaty.

Table 3 lists some of the agreements relating to higher education at MERCOSUR.

Table 3

Selected Regional Agreements Relating to Higher Education

MERCOSUR treaties	Educational agreements signed by Ministers of Education of MERCOSUR
Treaty of Asuncion (1991)	Nº 8/96, Fortaleza, 1996[36]
Protocolo of Ouro Preto (1994)	N° 5/99, Asuncion, 1999[37]
	N°17/08, Tucuman, 2008[38]

Note. Adapted from MERCOSUR Educativo Website,
http://www.sic.inep.gov.br/index.php?Itemid=1&lang=es&option=com_frontpage

The role of IGOs in the current context appears to be linked to the organization of

regional and global educational spaces rather than actively engaging in local forums of

debate. They are also strictly prescriptive. These organizations play an important role in

the processes of global and regional institutionalization by mostly spreading certain

discourses about the appropriate role of higher education in the economic development

and modernization in the contexts of globalization. They thus, steer definitions and

priorities of educational change.

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[36] Protocol of educational integration to follow graduate studies in universities at the countries members of the MERCOSUR.
[37] Agreement on the admission of university degrees for the exercise of academic activities in the member States of the MERCOSUR, the Republic of Bolivia and the Republic of Chile.
[38] Agreement on the creation and implementation of a system of accreditation of university careers for the regional recognition of the academic quality of university degrees in the MERCOSUR and associated states.

Challenges and Opportunities

What is clear then is that international and local networks have affected various discourses of higher education in Paraguay around such issues as private expansion, poor quality and, most crucially, privatization. These discourses have expressed a range of opportunities and expectations of higher education within the broader narrative of globalization. Basically, higher education is seen as an important ingredient in national economic development within a competitive global economy. These economic perceptions have generated demands for the transformation of higher education in Paraguay, which has been characterized both as a challenge as well as an opportunity.

However, all this is not entirely new. Such challenges have always existed for higher education. Since higher education institutions in Paraguay have historically been dependent on international cooperation, they have had to take external pressures into account. What is new now is the systematic way in which global and regional influences are not articulated in an attempt to shape the vision of the changes to follow. At the same time, local state characteristics and policy environment mediate the borrowing and implementations of agendas of change. In Paraguay, the lack of substantial changes in higher education during the long dictatorial regime (1954-1989) resulted, for the most part, in the absence of policy change and the exclusion of Paraguay from the regional reforms in higher education. However, since the 1990s, the process of transformation has begun, with Paraguay's higher education system seemingly ready to follow a common regional and global pattern of change characterized by rapid massification, institutional differentiation, growth of the private sector, emergence of new providers, institutional

and legal innovations, as well as regional integration and internationalization (Larrechea & Chiancone Castro, 2009).

Yet, change so far has been largely cosmetic, trapped within the historical patterns of inertia, and resistance by elite interests to a well-structured and coordinated system of higher education. Changes are occurring, but with a virtual absence of an articulate and coherent set of policy initiatives by state institutions, absence of reforms in the institutional model of university, and the slow development of state capacities for the coordination of the system. In the chapter that follows, I provide an analysis of the data collected in relation to the complex politics of the processes of reform. This is offered within the broader context of a discussion about how Paraguay has interpreted, negotiated, and responded to the challenges and opportunities offered by globalization. This account is viewed as an empirical case for understanding the nature, scope and complexities of global policy transfer in higher education.

Chapter 5

Dilemmas of Policy and Education Reform

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described the broader context of higher education in

Paraguay indicating some of the ways in which international dimensions are relevant to

an understanding of recent developments in higher education in Paraguay. Against an

historical background, I argued that recent debates within the Paraguayan system of

higher education are often framed in terms of global challenges, as well as local

opportunities. However, I also pointed out that while the intensity of debates about

reform embrace an emerging international rhetoric about educational change; global

pressures do not necessarily generate uniform expectations or understanding about the

nature and scope of change that are both possible and desirable in Paraguayan higher

education. Hence, shifts at the level of public policy seem to express fuzzy and

contradictory dynamics that are only partially explicable in terms of the role played by

IGOs in steering policy makers in Paraguay towards a certain ideological direction. In

other words, international agencies and structures affect the processes of transformation

in Paraguayan higher education, but they do so in ways that are indirect and often

uncertain.

In this chapter, I want to use the interviews and documents collected during

fieldwork in the city of Asuncion, Paraguay between July and August of 2009 to discuss

further some of the issues relating to the extent to and the manner in which international

policy discourses are shaping policy debates about higher education in Paraguay. I want to discuss the pressures and challenges for public policy change through a range of local perspectives. In addition, I want to suggest that while local policy actors understand the policy pressures in a number of different ways that are located within the specificities of Paraguay, policy advocates who have had an opportunity to circulate in international arenas often use a common narrative of global demands derived from IGOs. Their arguments highlight a narrative of global integration and the need to link higher education reforms to the general processes of transformation affecting Paraguayan economy and society since 1989.

These arguments reflect a sense of growing concern about policy inertia, and the slow pace of reform, that characterizes the higher education system the Paraguay. While debates about the ways in which it might be possible to modify and transform the system are needed, many consider the challenge of defining the kind of change that is desirable in Paraguay's higher education institutions more important. In other words, transformations at all levels of Paraguayan society are leading people both within and outside higher education institutions to consider not only the type of legislative responses that should be implemented, but also how to define the role of the higher education system in relation to Paraguayan society and state. Policy debates about higher education, therefore, are located within a wider framework of public policy.

In these debates, there is a whole range of contradictory and often highly contested interests, across various stakeholders in the system who have acquired prominence since the 1990s. These stakeholders include Paraguay's elite, many of whom

regard higher education as a business and source of future income. For others, the key question is how to organize appropriate legislative responses to a complex situation in which both private and public interests, and historically constituted practices and contemporary policy demands, often collide. Those responses to pressures and narratives of change are thus associated with competing visions of change.

We should not understand pressures steering the definition of policy priorities as a mere set of problems, but in terms of a range of profound dilemmas facing Paraguayan society. Issues facing higher education in Paraguay should not only be expressed in relation to university institutions and contradictory positions taken in relation to the strategies for reform, but should also be considered in relation to the role higher education must play in the transformation of Paraguayan society. The discourse of global challenges and pressures facing the Paraguayan university system are often stated in terms of the organizational matters of access, governance, and outcomes. But clearly, more important than that, are dilemmas concerning the purpose of higher education institutions.

These are not simple questions or problems awaiting solutions. They require a more complex treatment of issues than what is provided by IGOs, and cannot be expressed in legislative responses to local pressures and global challenges. In this chapter, I examine recent policy framing and legislative initiatives for the development of a complex and diverse system of higher education in Paraguay. I seek to understand how these responses, since the early 1990s, negotiate and incorporate a definition of the

objectives of public policy reform in Paraguay higher education, and how they propose to ensure their implementation.

I also describe some of the changes that have been introduced in Paraguay, as well as the difficulties and dilemmas the introduction of public policy innovations have faced during the processes of implementation. I refer to two specific institutional examples: first, ANEAES, a process designed to implement quality assurance mechanism in higher education, following similar institutional models within the region; and second, the work of CONACYT, an institution created during the 1990s through international and regional inspiration and pressure, to coordinate policies and programs of technological innovation and research. Finally, I will discuss the manner in which content of reform proposals are derived from international sources and presented to a local audience in order to develop a sense of local relevance and legitimacy.

Policy Challenges

A direct translation of the term "challenges" in the Spanish language is *desafios*. An understanding of the term can itself convey the idea of a number of pressures and dilemmas confronting policy makers. In the case of educational policy, this has connotations of both risks and opportunities. Aware of this sense, the word *desafios* was inserted in the title of an important policy report during the initial planning period of the Paraguayan educational reform of the 1990s*: El desafio Educativo* [The Educational Challenge].

The document was written with the advice and support of the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID) in 1995, and is important for an understanding of the way in which challenges and educational opportunities were initially framed by local policy actors, following the profound transformations that affected Paraguayan society after 1989. The proposals of reform in this document were not merely linked to the theme of reform at the basic and secondary sectors, but were viewed as part of the political process of democratic transition. It also mentioned suggestions for changes to the higher education system. These suggestions responded to a set of external demands associated with an accelerated process of transformation of the Paraguayan society, which include the desire, among a group of policy actors, for a planned integration of Paraguayan higher education into the work the state needed to do in strategic planning for the future.

HIID had been in Paraguay since 1992, involved previously in a technical analysis to establish a set of guidelines for educational reform. The research project results from an initiative of Domingo Rivarola, a member of CARE, who was at that time advisor on international affairs for the Ministry. The research was conducted in collaboration with a local NGO, the Paraguayan Center of Sociological studies (CPES), and with members linked to the CARE, and financed by the USAID, as part of the Advancing Basic Education and Literacy (ABEL) project (HIID & CPES, 1993, p. 10). It is important to point out that the HIID's vision for education, as presented in *El Desafio educativo*, and later in a planning document, shares a similar set of assumptions about the challenges confronted by Paraguay's educational system with those presented in a diagnostic document of the Paraguayan educational system elaborated by HIID and

CPES,[39] published in 1993 with the title, *Analysis of the Educational System in Paraguay: Suggestions of Policy and Strategy for its Reform.*[40]

Each of these documents contains a combination of descriptions of Paraguayan education and a set of prescriptions that are driven by an implicit international ideology of education that I will outline later in the chapter. The first pages of the document on strategic planning, for example, state that the key challenges in Paraguay were to consolidate its democracy, increase productivity, and reduce poverty, while preserving a sense of national identity within the framework of the process of regional and global integration, in order to enable a path towards sustainable development (MEC-CARE-HIID, 1996b).

These appear to be a clear set of principles in relation to the role of educational institutions. Yet it is unclear how these objectives could be achieved through a focus on primary and secondary education alone. Most interviewees in my own research indicated that the processes of educational reforms that started in the 1990s were characterized by the absence of initiatives centered in higher education. As a policy actor closely associated with the processes of reform indicates:

> [The educational reform] was focused on the basic and secondary levels of education. University education, higher education, was excluded of this educational reform. (interview A0060 21:00, my translation)

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[39] A basic difference between recommendations in the first document with that presented at the strategic document of discussion of reform is that the former directly recommends an increase in public funding destined to higher education, while the latter suggests the need of discussing the reduction of public investment to the sector.

[40] Análisis del Sistema Educativo en el Paraguay. Sugerencias de Políticas y Estrategia para su Reforma. Asunción: HIID/CPES.

se centro fundamentalmente en la educación básica y media. La educación universitaria, la educación superior, quedo al margen de esa reforma educativa. (interview A0060 21:00)

Yet, in reading policy documents relating to the diagnosis and planning of the educational reform in Paraguay, produced by HIID, it is hard to see how the recommended objectives of education and its strategies of reform were not in fact more suited to the introduction of changes at the level of higher education.

The report, *El desafio educativo* argues[41] that a serious difficulty confronted by Paraguayan society is the way in which the nation's political tradition reconciles with an increasing emphasis on its integration into international contexts. The key question remains as to how to develop a consensus among a diverse group of stakeholders around traditions and the need for change. The approach so far appears to be to not begin with a national consensus on any specific program, but with a broad vision of policy change that can easily be shared by an important segment of key stakeholders in the educational system who recognize readily that the legacy of the dictatorial regime needed transformation, a legacy that left education unable to confront the social and international challenges confronting the country.

To express the challenges in international terms implies that the role of local stakeholders who were in fact a part of the dictatorial system have not been revisited in a fuller description of what needs changing. The language of international challenges was also considered appropriate in relation to the entrance of Paraguay into MERCOSUR, which defined a new reality for the nation, without revisiting its past. In Paraguay, the

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[41] In similar fashion to another document for planning the educational reform, *Paraguay 20/20*.

project of regional integration has had profound, though indirect, implications for policy planning in education by creating a forum of regional cooperation that has proposed the harmonization of the educational systems among its members. The protocols and agreements signed at MERCOSUR have thus become an important element of educational planning in Paraguay.

The MERCOSUR's proposals for change have been defined in terms of global economic competition and have to compare Paraguay with other countries in the region. *El desafio educativo* has indicated, for example, that the Paraguayan higher education system is weak in comparison with other systems in the region, and this has major implications for its economic competitiveness. Essentially, the document suggests three basic problems: (a) low quality; (b) low relevance of programs; and, (c) low number of graduates needed to meet the labor demands of the country. This report provides data of low coverage of the system, low percentage of high school graduates seeking access to higher education, and low levels of university retention. Against such a bleak description, ironically, most of the educational reforms proposed in the report relate to the basic and secondary levels of education, with only minor attention paid to the higher education sector.

El desafio educativo (MEC, CARE & HIID , 1996a, p. 91) proposed four key structural changes in relation to higher education system: (i) Establish a working group to provide more extensive data on higher education; (ii) Establish greater opportunities for full time faculty and for researchers at universities; (iii) Change the financial system at universities, by changing the distribution of state resources directed to the university in

order to establish scholarship programs and research funding, thus shifting the financial

responsibilities of higher education to students; and finally, (iv) Create an institutional

system of curricular accreditation, in order to assure the quality of the professional

degrees and education provide by the system. (MEC-CARE-HIID, 1996a, p. 91)

> Establecer un grupo de trabajo para analizar la situación in perspectivas de la educación superior. De el deben participar representantes de colegios profesionales, asociaciones de profesores, centros de estudiante, académicos destacados, miembros del Congreso, directivos de universidades, instituciones productivas, colegios secundarios, padres de alumnos universitarios, Presidencia, los ministerios (Hacienda, Educación, Planificación) y otros organismos. Entre los temas centrales a tratar en este grupo se encuentra lograr más integración entre la educación superior y otros niveles, reducir el gasto público en la educación superior, mejorar la calidad y la pertinencia de la oferta educativa; ii. Estudiar la disponibilidad de docentes en términos de equivalentes de tiempo completo. Establecer oportunidades de formación de docentes investigadores a tiempo completo. Incentivar el desarrollo de la investigación a nivel universitario. iii. Cambio en el sistema de financiamiento, iii.1. Utilizar los actuales recursos que el Estado destina a la universidad para establecer un fondo de becas para alumnos con potencial que no puedan pagar sus estudios y para crear un fondo para la Educación Superior, la Ciencia y la Tecnología para financiar investigaciones, iii.2. Lograr que los alumnos participen en la financiación de acuerdo con sus posibilidades, iv) Crear un Sistema Institucionalizado de Acreditación Curricular de Profesiones APRA expedirse sobre la calidad de las profesiones ofrecidas en el conjunto del sistema. Estimular también la formación de órganos de autoevaluación institucional. (MEC-CARE-HIID, 1996a, p. 91)

In their book, *Informed Dialogue: Using Research to Shape Education Policy around the*

World, Fernando Reimers and Noel McGinn[42] (1997), the main Harvard advisers in

charge of the technical mission to Paraguay, begin by providing a description of their

mission and the ways in which international experts could help to develop the general

vision of reform for higher education in Paraguay. They maintain, however, that:

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[42] McGinn, Donald Warwick and other Harvard consultants were participant of previous study in 1977, in collaboration with the MEC, in relation to the organization of the Ministry of Education, based on interviews to its main authorities (HIID & CPES, 1993, p. 33).

Harvard advisors resisted the demands of the ministry to produce a strategic plan and a series of studies. Instead they focused on developing institutional capacity to produce that plan and to generate research-based knowledge. They proposed four key units for Paraguay's Ministry of Education: a strategic dialogue group, a policy analysis unit, a planning unit, and a research unit. (Reimers & McGinn, 1997, p. 168)

It is important to note that the local group, headed by the Harvard experts, was composed of twenty policy actors, including Paraguay's Minister of Education, some senior members of the ministry, and members of the Advisory Council for the Education Reform. In other words, the process of review was captured and managed largely by the Ministry of Education itself.

A characteristic of the Paraguayan educational system, as observed by some interviewers, is its dual nature:

The Paraguayan educational system has been historically divided in two major sectors, with well defined roles and boundaries. A basic and media [secondary] education, under the responsibility of the state, . . . the Ministry of Education, and the university. (Interview A0060 3:50, my translation)

El sistema educativo Paraguayo históricamente siempre escindida en dos grandes sectores con direcciones y fronteras bien delimitadas. Una la educación media y básica, que fue y sigue siendo responsabilidad del estado, . . . del ministerio de educación, y la universidad. (Interview A0060 3:50)

In short, as a dual system, educational policies in Paraguay are formulated by two distinct bodies: the Ministry of Education and the Universities. There is very little in the way of policy coordination across two sectors. In its policy documents, CNERS describes this arrangement as fragmented. It has stated that:

A characteristic of the educational system is it segmentation into two sectors which are functionally disconnected. On one hand, university higher education is constitutionally autonomous [from states control] and self governed. On the other hand, secondary education is organized under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Both sectors lack institutional mechanisms to ensure a

functional articulation between them. In these circumstances, there is no unity of purpose between those two levels, such as their respective policies might operate in an integrated manner to define, at least in theory, a national education system. (CNRES, 2006, p. 33, my translation)

A característica histórica del sistema educativo nacional es su segmentación en dos ámbitos funcionalmente desconectados uno del otro. Por un lado, la educación superior universitaria definida constitucionalmente como autónoma con sus propios órganos de gobierno y por otro, la enseñanza media que funciona bajo la administración del Ministerio de Educación y Cultura. Ambas instancias carecen de mecanismos institucionales que aseguren una articulación funcional entre las mismas. En tales condiciones, no existe una unidad de criterios entre estos niveles de tal forma que las políticas respectivas actúen con la consecuencia al carácter integrado, que define, al menos en teoría, al sistema educativo nacional. (CNRES, 2006, p. 33)

Thus in the introduction of educational reforms in Paraguay, universities were excluded, among other reasons, because of the argument that they were autonomous. In the 1990s, the universities were excluded from the process of reorganization of the Paraguayan education as a whole:

The universities were excluded, with the argument that they were autonomous and needed to determine their own reforms, through their own authorities. (Interview A0060 4:50, my translation)

la universidad se excluye argumentando que la universidad es autónoma y . . . determinaría sus propias reformas, a través de sus propias autoridades. (Interview A0060 4:50)

Only teacher education institutes, which were in charge of the professional formation of teachers, were not excluded because they operated under the control of the Ministry of Education. As a result, university institutions, as many interviewees indicated, became isolated from the reform process (as if no connection existed between secondary and tertiary education).

Thus, the terms of educational challenges facing Paraguay thus became framed by the need to prioritize basic education, consistent with a global vision of the educational reform articulated by major IGOs. So even as the document, *Paraguay 20/20 enfrentemos juntos el desafio educativo: Plan Estrategico de la Reforma Educativa* (MEC-CARE-HIID, 1996b), stated that programs of reform needed to take place at the four levels of human resource formation—secondary education, technical education, professional formation and higher education—little was said about how these levels worked with each other, and how the proposals for reform constituted an "articulated" national system. The strategies elaborated in the report suggested that "the global program of reform for the four system of human resources formation of Paraguay were to advance gradually and by stages.[43]" (MEC-CARE-HIID, 1996b, p. 13, my translation). In these instances, basic education was to take precedence over other educational sectors.

Similarly, the HIID technical advisors had argued, even before the arrival of the mission that, "while the idea of a reform seemed to receive much lip service by internal and external stakeholders, few, including member of the advisory reform commission and the senior managers for the ministry, could formulate a vision of the reform" (Reimers & McGinn, 1997, p. 168). For them the objective of the mission was "to help to create a common language and a shared vision of the education system about the goals of reform, and about specific projects which could be implemented to support it." Yet this language was largely a global language that focused on basic education at the expense of other sectors of education.

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[43] "En este sentido el programa global de reforma de los cuatro sistemas de formación de recursos humanos en el Paraguay avanzara gradualmente y por etapas."

It is important to understand that educational challenges are defined in the documents of educational reform in terms of serious deficiencies in human resource formation in Paraguay. Basically, the descriptions provided by the HIID and MEC stressed that the national education system was unable to offer adequate skilled workers for initiating a process of industrial development and economic transformation. In a context in which rapid changes in the global economy were affecting Paraguay's own relationships with the region and the world. After 1989, Paraguay became part of the Common Market of the South, a regional process of economic integration that generates a series of external pressures for transforming the educational system.

This presented a number of challenges for the country, but also opportunities in the sense of the emergence of a policy environment favorable to the introduction of educational reforms in the country. Thus, it not only ensured the process of democratic transition, but also proposed a process of economic modernization for the country. At the same time, the low level of public investment according to international parameters, and the absence of available international financing for expanding the public system, leaves few options but private expansion.

According to critics of this reform, such as Melchiades Alonso, the process of elaboration of the planning and implementation of reforms was strongly dependent on the frame established by the international organizations, such as the World Bank. In his article, *La propuesta educativa del Banco Mundial*, Alonso (2000) points out that the priority of the reform in the 1990s towards basic and general basic education left the rest of the sectors of the system without any operative changes. In those terms,

Secondary education, technical education, university education, and even adult education are absent from the project of reform and are operating in the same manner established by the educational innovations—elaborated in the 1970s- or through initiatives organize by "sectores empresariales" [business sectors]. (Alonso, 2000, ¶ 2,my translation)

La educación secundaria, la educación técnica, la universitaria, e incluso, la de adultos, no forman parte de un proyecto renovado y se guían en la práctica por lo que fueron las Innovaciones Educacionales -elaboradas en la década del 70-, o por iniciativas muchas veces originadas en sectores empresariale*s*. (Alonso, 2000, ¶. 2)

Basically, educational policies elaborated in the 1970s are sustained with little modification in the 1990s due to the absence of policy innovations. According to Alonzo, the World Bank and Interamerican Development Bank proposals were highly influential during the initial period of planning and subsequent implementation of the educational reform. He also points out that in the same manner the HIID project, that the elaboration of the strategic planning was financed by international cooperation. The project of reform that the World Bank supported for implementation in the country was basically, according to Alonso one of,

increased coverage of the basic education until the 9th grade, improvements on the efficiency of the system in terms of cost-benefits, and the privatization of university and secondary education. (Alonso, 2000, ¶ 6, my translation)

Si de manera rápida debiera definirse el proyecto alentado por el BM, éste sería el de ampliación de la cobertura de la educación escolar básica hasta el noveno grado, mejorando el rendimiento del sistema oficial en términos de costo-beneficio, y la privatización de los niveles superiores de educación: secundaria y universitaria. (Alonso, 2000, ¶ 6)

In other words, a proposal of educational reform that saw as priority the formation of human capital, following the criteria of cost-benefits analysis, and economic projects of

development. This implied in practical terms, that the priorities of the loans available for reforms in the 1990s for Paraguay were mainly destined for basic education.

The subsequent massification of the university system and the effects of the educational reform favored the emergence of a complex and very diverse system of higher education in which the boundaries of the university system and higher education in general become less clear that in the past. This is observed in the ambiguity in the position and precise place that teacher formation now has. According to the general law of education, those teacher training centers are situated within the higher education system, but it seems that institutes of teacher formation, though at the tertiary level of education, are still closely associated with the idea of secondary education rather than university education, as an interviewer indicates in relation to current debates of reform,

> there is an idea to incorporate institutes of teacher formation within the university system, hence its disappearance from the secondary education. [Interview A0060 20:03, my translation]

> Incluso hay una tesis que se quiere incorporar los institutos de formación docente al sistema universitario y su desaparición de la enseñanza media. (Interview A0060 20:03)

Additionally, it is important to note that the educational reform required a dramatic expansion in the number of teachers—an expansion that was achieved through the exponential growth of institutes of teacher formation, and other institutions, including universities that began to provide professional teacher education degrees.

The challenges of providing better access to educational opportunities in Paraguay were articulated in the 1990s in a context of the rapid expansion in the educational system at all levels. In the case of the higher education system, and prominently in the

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case of its university system, this occurs in the absence of clear normative or explicit

policy actions by the Paraguayan state.

The subsequent development of the system creates a number of dilemmas, ones

no longer related with the need to expand the educational system, but addressing the

overall problems that this unregulated expansion of the higher education system creates.

Now, as an interviewer indicates,

> the current [higher education system] is highly degraded, even academically.
> [Professional] Degrees are sold, institutional academic requirements are reduced
> . . . and aside from four [or] five universities, that maintain an acceptable
> academic degree [of quality] . . . the rest of the system operates in precarious
> academic conditions and are highly commercialize even with high degrees of
> corruption, . . . because there has been a very chaotic expansion to the "interior"
> [rural and urban areas outside the capital city of Asuncion] of the country. There
> are nearly 350 "sedes" [campus] of universities placed through at the "interior"
> [of the country] (Interview A0060 40:03, my translation)

> el sistema actual está muy degradado, incluso académicamente con mucho
> deterioro. Se venden títulos, se ha bajado los requerimientos académicos a nivel
> institucional . . . y aparte de cuatro, cinco universidades, más o menos que
> mantienen un nivel académico aceptable . . . el resto del sistema opera en
> condiciones académicas sumamente precarias y muy comercializadas incluso con
> mucha corrupción, . . . porque ha habido una modificación muy fuerte de la
> universidad . . . ha habido una expansión muy caótica al interior . . . del país. Hay
> casi 350 sedes de estas mismas universidades en el interior. Hay cerca de 11
> facultades de medicina, algunas incluso sin hospitales escuelas. . . . Frente a eso
> ha habido una reacción, a nivel político como a nivel de algunos sectores
> académicos y fundamentalmente de universitarios que están relacionados con
> instituciones privadas de investigación. Y a nivel político, se reactivo . . . la
> comisión de educación y cultura formo un consejo asesor para la reforma de la ley
> universitaria que está ahora trabajando actualmente. (Interview A0060 40:03)

In the previous pages, I mentioned some arguments related to local resistance to the

introduction of the university system (higher education) as an explicit object of

educational reform. At the same time, I mentioned that local stakeholders had a very

ambiguous vision of reform, one that later became part of a concrete strategy in the

planning process carried out by the Ministry of Education. They are formulated in terms that exclude, for several reasons, the implementation of actions of public policy change at higher levels of education. Among these are an assemblage of endogenous dynamics at the higher education system, and the type of support available for the implementation of concrete planning for reforms in the country. This does not mean that change was not observed. In fact, I will demonstrate that changes were occurring, as interviewers indicate, at a dramatic pace. But at the level of public policy, this is translated in a slow process of introduction of specific public policy innovations affecting higher education. At the same time, specific legislative responses were generated under contradictory positions of interests by different local stakeholders in the system.

Legislative Responses

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a law of education was introduced in 1993 (Ley N°136/93 de Universidades**)** that creates, with subsequent modifications in the law by 2004, the frame in which transformations now operate, in terms of expansion of in the university system structure, and by extension higher education institutions offering university degrees.

Those legislations, with the exception of the National Constitution, introduce a number of changes in the way in which policies related to higher education are organized by law. However, those legislative changes did not change the substantially the institutional organization of the university system.

Most interviewees indicate that changes in the political system since 1989 do not translate into dramatic changes in the institutional system that were put into place during the dictatorial regime, while great resistance for substantial change is still observed at the higher education sector. Political changes have not ensured transformations in the institutions of country. In other words, as one interviewer said, after the fall of the dictatorial regime,

> There were few changes in the institutionality . . . though individual exceptions are observed; there was not a different institutionality [in Paraguay], especially at the University. At the University changes are introduced in quantities . . . the [political] transition opens the possibility of opening all sorts of university institutions, but without any type of control. (Interview A0047 7:37, my translation)

> Cambio muy poco la institucionalidad . . . hay individualidad, pero no hay una institucionalidad diferente, sobre todo en la universidad. La universidad se produjo un cambio en el sentido cuantitativo . . . , con la transición se abrió la libertad que se creen toda la universidad del mundo, pero sin ningún tipo de control. (Interview A0047 7:37).

The first institution explicitly in charge of the organization of the university system was the Council of Universities. This group was in charge of providing certain framework for the opening of new institutions. But as observed in declarations at public forums of debate on higher education reform, financial and technical resources allocated to that purpose were scarce.

As mentioned before, in the 1990s innovations were introduced to expand the university system in response to the increasing local demand for tertiary education and regional pressures generated by demands of regional integration related to MERCOSUR. A year after the promulgation of the new national constitution (1992), Paraguay introduced a law of universities (law 136/93) which basically removes the presence of the

state in the government of the National University, the "flagship" institution of the system. It is important to clarify that the MEC never had any influence or role at the university system. This legislation did not introduce substantial changes aside from removing past restrictions for the creation of new university institutions. The only regulatory instances left for the opening of new universities and faculties was the Council of Universities,[44] whose members are rectors[45] (and owners) of university institutions. The CU was an autonomous organization, chartered by the state of Paraguay to take charge of the corporate governance of the University sector. Among the functions ascribed by law were the coordination and formulation of national university policy and evaluation of university institutions.

The implementation of the operation of the CU share similar characteristics observed at the moment of the CONACYT in 1995. The idea of this institution appears first as a suggestion to complement the function of the CU, in the document of diagnosis and suggestions of reform elaborated by HIID in 1992, and later in the document discussing education reform, *Desafio educativo,* in 1995. The origin of the suggestion of the creation of this Council was attributed at the 1993 document of diagnostic, as a *suggestion* of the Interamerican Development Bank. In the same manner as the CU, this council is implemented with scarce resources for its effective operation, a situation recently modified through the availability of international sources of financing. The same case, though in least degree, is observed in the case of the ANEAES. The creation of this

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[44] Established by law 828.
[45] Rector is use here as the equivalent position, to chief executive officer, this can be translate according US colleges academic titles as "President."

institution, now a part of the structure of the Ministry of Education, was initially scarcely financed by the state, and externally dependent on the possibility of available external financial aid and technical expertise for its implementation.

In 2004, the law 2529/04 modified the charter of the council and diminished their functions. Most interviewers point out that the modification in legislation was the result of advocacy of a political actor linked to the private university sector.

However, it is important to remember that the Council of Universities (CU) was established with scarce technical and financial resources, mostly as a meeting of rectors for the approval of new universities and careers, according to minimal requirements set by the definition of university at the constitution and the law of universities, contained in an internal document elaborating on that purpose entitled, *Guía de Elaboración del Projecto Educativo para la Creación de Universidades y/o habilitación de Carreras* (Martin, 2007).

It is also important to indicate that these legislative innovations were the direct result of a set of international conventions related to the Common Market of the South. As indicated in previous chapters, among the agreements of what is now denominated MERCOSUR EDUCATIVO (Educational Common Market of the South), Paraguay's MEC agreed to create a National Agency of Evaluation and Accreditation.[46] At the same time, IGOs such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNESCO promote and offer technical expertise to create and experimental regional evaluation systems measuring common norms of quality in higher education.

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[46] ANEAES was created in 2003.

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A close observation of the historical sequence of events in the process of policy

change shows the swift changes occurring in the system since 1989. In the lapse of one

decade, a number of institutional innovations were introduced, but according to policy

actors, with little substantial change, and rather a complex growth of the system.

Issues of Implementation

As described in previous chapters, one of the main characteristics of the

Paraguayan higher education system is its resistance to the introduction of changes or

substantial public policy reforms. Most interviewees indicate this common characteristic

when referring to the Paraguayan university system. As a senior policy analyst describes,

> The university systems as such have not changed at all. Basically, [universities]
> follow traditional schemes and norms, only introducing improvements in these
> old forms at specific academic fields connected to specific process of
> development. For instance, Itaipú [a hydroelectric dam project] generates
> important advances at hydroelectric engineering in the country, but only in the
> field of engineering. In the same manner, agricultural sciences have an important
> technological evolution [at the national university] in function of the development
> of livestock productive sector, agricultural industrialization, etc. In another
> instance, the colleges of environmental science and ecology have developed in
> function of the many [international sponsored] programs that are currently
> articulated in relation to the environment. In other words, the university has
> continued to follow its function as a professional training institution according to
> the demands generated by the processes of change within the country and the
> region . . . However; there are not processes of change, of university reform. . . .
> In other words, there are not global processes of transformation at the University.
> (Interview A0063 30:37, my translation)

> Pero el sistema universitario como tal no ha tenido ningún cambio. Ha sido más y
> mejor de lo viejo y de lo de norma, y en áreas y en puntos que tienen que ver con
> procesos específicos de desarrollo. O sea Itaipú genero un avance importante de la
> ingeniería hidroeléctrica, porque por Itaipú y ciencias agrarias ha tenido una
> evolución tecnológica muy importante en función al desarrollo de la ganadería y
> de la agricultura empresarial, etc., en el país. Entonces, la facultad del medio
> ambiente y ecología esta teniendo un desarrollo en función a una enorme cantidad

de programas que hoy en día se derrama en torno al medio ambiente, etc. O sea la Universidad esta siguiendo de alguna manera la formación de una demanda profesional que esta surgiendo del proceso de cambio mismo del país y del desarrollo del país y de la región. . . . Pero no hay un proceso de cambio, de reforma de la Universidad. . . . O sea [no hay] un proceso global de transformación de la Universidad. (Interview A0063 30:37)

In the same manner, policy documents and proposals of reform reasserted the need to introduce changes in the higher education system. As a policy maker indicated in 2005 at the prologue of a collection of reports on the diagnostic and proposals of reform of Paraguayan higher education:

the unanimity as point of departure seems an auspicious data, which becomes diluted when confronted with the lack of changes at the University. (CBERES & CNRES, 2005, my translation)

La unanimidad como punto de partida, parece ser un dato auspicioso, que se diluye cuando observamos que la Universidad se mantiene incólume al cambio. (CBERES & CNRES, 2005)

In both cases, the assertion is made in reference to the institution of the University in Paraguay as well as the university system. However, the last phrase does not indicate unanimity of perspectives on the nature or viability of changes to be introduced at higher education.

As Riart (2006, p. 17-18) points out, there are six basic overlapping local perspectives or narratives used in the current discussion and proposals of university reform, (and I will add higher education reform in general) in Paraguay: (a) Analysis based in the study of possible changes in the legal framework. The underlying idea of the advocates defending this approach is that changes in the current laws will produce a transformation of the system. (b) Analysis and proposal based in the idea of a more

assertive and direct role of the state and Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) in the regulation of the university system, which are align with the narrative of regional higher education reform. (c) Perspectives working with ideal "models" of university, basically criticizing or asserting proposals using the three classic ideal models of university (French, German and Anglo/American) as parameters of discussion. (d) Perspectives that discuss ideas of reform of higher education institutions as a commercial enterprise. Basically, in this perspective universities are mainly business providing services. (e) Perspectives proposing a radical institutional change. And finally, (f) perspectives that mock the intentions of any proposal of change.

These reform system perspectives indicate contradictory positions in reference to the type of changes to be introduced in a system that, until the 1990s, was composed of only two universities, but as previous chapters indicated, grew to become extremely complex and diverse.

Each perspective provides a different rationale of change, as well as the absence or presence of international dimensions. Therefore, interviews with corporate leaders that characterize the systems of higher education and their institutions as commercial enterprises define changes and problems of the system in different terms than those advocating changes in the law more closely aligned with international visions and inspirations related to international organizations advocacy.

There are three relevant elements common to most interviews in relation to the current challenges confronting Paraguayan higher education system. First, change is described often in terms of the international dimensions of challenges and pressures

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informing even punctual modifications in the academic model at university institutions.

Second, there has been little transformation in the university systems and the university

institution in Paraguay in terms of its function and organization.

Finally, the complexity and diversity of institutions in the higher education system

is generally not addressed in the discussions of higher education reform, which almost

exclusively relates to university institutions. This later point could be linked with the

massive expansion that occurs in terms of quantity of higher education institutions

leading to a contested definition of the boundaries of the higher education system.

Interactions Across Endogenous and External Factors

As most interviewees indicate, changes in the political system since 1989 do not

translate in dramatic changes in the institutional system in place during the dictatorial

regime, while great resistance for substantial change is still observed in the higher

education sector. In other words, as one interviewer said after the fall of the dictatorial

regime,

> There were few changes in the institutionality . . . though individual exceptions
> are observed; there was not a different institutionality [in Paraguay], especially at
> the University. At the University, changes are introduced in quantities . . . the
> [political] transition opens the possibility of opening all sorts of university
> institutions, but without any type of control. (Interview_A0047 7:37, my
> translation)

> Cambio muy poco la institucionalidad . . . hay individualidad, pero no hay una
> institucionalidad diferente, sobre todo en la universidad. La universidad se
> produjo un cambio en el sentido cuantitativo . . ., con la transición se abrió la
> libertad que se creen toda la universidad del mundo, pero sin ningún tipo de
> control. (Interview_A0047 7:37)

As explained before, during the dictatorial regime the university system was constrained

to only two university institutions—the Catholic University and the National

University—and a very small tertiary sector. This also followed a pattern of public

investment implemented by the dictatorial regime, assigning small priority to all

educational sectors. At this point, the political transition opened the possibility of

expanding and diversifying the higher education system as a way to respond to local

pressures for accessing tertiary levels of education. Hence, the number of university

institutions and other types of higher education institutions suffer, according to many

interviewers and all policy documents, a dramatic expansion. At the same time, this

begins to occur without control or measures of quality. This seems related, not only to the

inability of state capacities to regulate an expanded system, but also to the strategies that

the Paraguayan state tacitly adopted in the 1990s in relation to the expansion of the

higher education system during the transition: a policy which, as many interviewers

indicate, was partially informed by international recommendations. Therefore, there has

been a consistent posture by the Paraguayan state in relation to the university sector, and

most of the higher education system,

> a consistent policy,[47] if policy is the proper word, a policy similar to
> neoliberalism in the economy. In the sense of deregulation, deregulate everything
> . . . it is a policy of not having policy. The idea is to delegate, deregulating and
> delegating [responsibilities] in a manner in which the state decided to avoid any
> active posture. At the same time, in the 1980s there was a policy by international banks
> that said that the state [investments] have to focus on primary and secondary education,
> especially primary education. (Interview A0047 9:37, my translation)
> hay una política consistente, si vos queres llamarle política, parecida a lo que es el
> neoliberalismo en la economía, en el sentido de desregulación, desregular todo lo que el
> estado regule. Si queres llamarle política a eso si, pero es una política de no tener política.

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[47] Policy and politics are translated from the Spanish without distinction.

> Pensando que delegar, es como una desregulación y una delegación el estado se decide a en no hacer nada activamente. Pero hubo en ese tiempo, en la década del 80 una política de la banca internacional también diciendo de que el estado tendría que hacer era educación primaria y secundaria, sobre todo primaria. (Interview A0047 9:37)

Openness to transformations in the higher education and tertiary sector in Paraguay after 1989 began during a specific period of globalization in which an international vision of social policies and global ideology of education was established, at international encounters such as the WCEFA. It also occurred at a period of international primacy of policy recommendations of the Washington consensus. In those instances, the Paraguayan government began to adopt a number of economic policy responses, informed by a neoliberal economic agenda. At the same, it starts a series of social policy reforms in education, supported by international financing and cooperation.

A close observation of those educational agendas in policy documents in the 1990s shows the low priority assigned to public investment in higher education, as well as a consistent policy of system privatization prevalent during the first part of the 1990s, as observed in two major reports and policy documents of intergovernmental organizations, such as the World Bank and UNESCO [see Table 4], which express the regional agenda for higher education followed by those institutions[48]. In other words, it is very difficult to not take into consideration the activity of those organizations in education with past and current policy pressures and challenges for reform of the higher education system.

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[48] See also the relevant work of the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL) in the early 1990s (e,g, CEPAL, 1992).

Table 4

Positions Between World Bank and UNESCO in Relation to Higher Education in the mid 1990s

International institution	Title	Year	Type of document	Assumption	Diagnostic	Objectives
World Bank	Higher education: The lesson of experiences	1994	Research report	Crisis of higher education Economic value of higher education	Basic problems: Quality inefficiency equity Funding of higher education as public financial burden	Poverty alleviation under conditions of economic adjustment Linking higher education with economic development
UNESCO	Policy paper for change and development in higher education	1995	Policy document	Crisis of higher education Multidimensional nature of the value of higher education	Basic trends: Quantitative expansion, diversification, constrained financial enviroment Funding of higher education as long term investment. Limits for cost-sharing with students.	Sustainable Development Linking higher education with economic development

Note. Adapted from Kent, R. (1995). *Two positions in the international debate about higher education: The World Bank and UNESCO* Paper presented at the meeting of the Latin American Studies Association. Washington, DC (see UNESCO, 1995; World Bank, 1994).

However, international agendas of change are not static, but rather refer to extended periods of times. In the second half of the nineties, according to some interviewees, there was a policy shift in the international agenda of education reform in relation to the higher education sector. Rodríguez-Gómez and Alcántara (2001) provide a description of those divergences of policy priorities within different intergovernmental organization for the region in the article "*Multilateral agencies and higher education reform in Latin America*," which coincides with accounts of past interventions in Paraguay indicated in interviews. The financial support given in the 1970s for process of institutional reform and infrastructure building by the AIDB suffers a shift during the 1980s and 1990s towards supporting propositions of low public investment and privatization of the higher education system suggested by the World Bank and most IGOs, to finally putting increased attention towards deregulation of the system and the building of national innovation systems by the end of the 1990s.[49]

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the World Bank and UNESCO were establishing a new common regional agenda for higher education. Rodríguez-Gómez and Alcántara (2001) describe this agenda in the following terms:

> an attitude more favorable to the strengthening of the higher education, science and technology systems of developing countries would be expected providing projects 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. (p. 519)

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[49] This shift is perceived by some interviewees as related to the exemplars of process of economic development of some Asiatic countries.

Hence, the World Bank, and other financial IGOs have decided to change the priorities about higher education and knowledge production investment[50] in terms of national innovation initiatives in science and technology. In the same manner, other relevant IGOs identified as relevant for the development of contemporary educational debates in Paraguay, such as the *Organization de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educacion* (OEI), also include, in their publications a similar emphasis on technological innovation and collaboration for the region linking education, scientific research, and development.

It is interesting to note that one of the most recent policy documents of discussion for the Paraguayan reform starts its introduction with a description of the global context, which signals to the European Union, United States, Canada and Korea as illustrative cases of higher levels of economic development linked to the improvement of educational capacities and investment in research at development.

At the same time, the current context constituted by the unregulated expansion of Paraguayan higher education is generating increasing local uncertainness. However, it is also generating an acute sense on the need of introducing some change in response to the poor state of the higher education systems in comparison with other countries in the region.

These initiatives for reform since 2006 are increasingly linked with discussions on the constitution of a national agenda of economic development and competiveness for the country, with some degree of support provided by the AIDB and other international

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[50] The change occurs after publication of influential report "Peril and Promises" produced by the Task Force on Higher Education and Society (TFHES; 2000) is the study by the World Bank and UNESCO that follows the agreements reached at the World Conference of Higher Education (UNESCO, 1998).

organizations. In those terms, the idea of education, and higher education, are described in terms of fundamental aspects for a national project of economic development, as indicated by interviews with some corporate leaders. However, at the same time, higher education is still described by interviewees as an object of low priority in terms of international cooperation, public investment, and object of study.

The year of 1998 saw a renewed interest and the expression of an increasing criticism and dissatisfaction for the situation of higher education institutions. The confluence of the promulgation of the new law of education, and renewed criticism on the state of the national university and traditional institutions are seemingly dissociated events with the phenomenon of international transfer. A closer look provides a different perspective. As a result of my involvement with the Student Center in the Philosophy Department, I began to attend some of the increasing forums of discussion on university reform and state reform that started to be organized. Those encounters provided a different set of interest and declamations on the transformations that should take place. In encounters organized by professional associations as the one at the Paraguayan Circle of Physicians in 2000, discussions were focused on the need to reform the University Institution Paraguay in order to increase the quality of professional education and empower the research functions of national institutions that were described as a disadvantage to changes observed at neighboring countries.

In others encounters, notions such as human capital, decentralization, and integration in relation to the global economy used in the education reform were now used as part of the argument to change the participation of the state in the higher education system. Three common denominators that were encountered were the recurrence of a

very small number of expositors on the topic of reform, the reiterated reference to international examples of reform at different countries in the region, and, in the case of members of CONEC and authorities of the ministry of education, the adoption of the rhetoric and conclusions on the role of the university as instrument of development similar to that concluded at the International Forum for the Higher Education Reform in Paris in 1998.

In this chapter, I began with an analysis of the changing context within which higher education developments in Paraguay have taken place since 1989, while giving an account of the complex environment of social, political, and economic factors that account for the expansion of its higher education system.

As mentioned in the previous section, higher education was affected by a set of changes that took place on an array of public policies in the 1990s. Those changes can be linked with the social policies associated with the educational reform.

The expansion of the small higher education sector seems to follow a set of international prescriptions, related to a set of financial funding practices in education, and also, linked to the stated educational ideological priorities initially established at the WCEFA. Accordingly, the dramatic expansion in the number of students in higher education was achieved through private institutions, while the burden of public funding was to be shifted to the expansion of basic and secondary education.

However, Domingo Rivarola (2008) explains that the policy of educational reform was not the main cause of the explosive demand for higher education. The demand for university education is related to a larger set of socio-economic changes and pressures that, since the 1970s, are transforming Paraguayan society. Nevertheless, the

educational reform policy emphasizing the expansion of educational coverage at the level of basic and secondary education indirectly affected the growing demand for higher education. It is important to remember that, according to Rivarola, by the end of the 1980s, the coverage of secondary education (enseñanza media) did not reach 20% of the student-age population in the country. The quantitative outcomes of the reform allowed the doubling of the coverage to nearly 50% of the student-age population by 2005 (Rivarola, 2008). However, Rivarola does not state what percentage of those secondary sector graduates were qualified and able to access university education.

Again, it is necessary to understand the extremely uneven results of the reforms and investment in the provision of universal access to basic formal schooling in Paraguay. This universal access has been characterized by low achievement, grade repetition, and a high number of dropout students in urban, marginal and rural areas. Furthermore, the costs of pursuing higher degrees of formal education are perceived to be a real limitation.

In a sense, the expansion of the system of higher education does not have a causal relation with policy prescriptions of IGOs. Yet, on other hand, the expansion through privatization and subsequent absence of policy perspective on higher education may be outcomes of a set of educational strategies supported by IGOs.

Before continuing, I must qualify this assertion. According to the interviewees, one of the main characteristic of the Paraguayan higher education system in the last two decades has been the prevalence of a process of expansion through private commercial institutions adapting, in the words of one interviewee, 'an American model' of commercially oriented universities. This development of growth through private

expansion is characteristic of the Latin American region since the 1980s, although guarding differences from country to country according to different institutional trajectories. In the case of Paraguay, these processes take place in a later period than other countries in the region and in an environment of policy vacuum in relation to the private university sector, also linked to low public priority, financing, and perceived relevance of higher education.

This is equally related to the historical and institutional context in which proposals of reform are debated and implemented. As Jose Joaquin Brunner (2009, p. 2) points out, (though different institutional patterns), the historical trajectory of common responses applied by Latin American governments towards higher education had been of increasingly limiting their ability "to finance their systems while they leave coordination to the free play of institutional and corporate interests, the forces of supply and demand, and the negotiation of bureaucratic rules between universities and public authorities". In other words, according to Brunner, Latin American governments, for the most part, have been unable to exercise control over their higher education systems.

This historical trajectory is common to systems that organically share the common characteristic of reliance on Western European institutional imports, in the form of symbolic borrowing of frameworks of institutional organizations (Brunner, 2009). To external observers this may lead to confusion and misunderstanding in relation to the different type of institutions, which, although sharing the same denomination, were constituted in Latin American countries. In other words, it is important to note, that "the profound social and cultural differences could not but lead to serious misunderstandings and problems of both transfer and translation" (Ibid, p. 3). Paraguay's higher education

system and institutions are not an isolated phenomenon, but the result of long processes of policy borrowing and lending.

The outcomes of international-inspired educational policies and ideologies during the 1990s and their subsequent strategic planning and implementation in the country have a number of unintended consequences for the development of the Paraguayan higher education system. First, it is important to understand that Paraguayan policy documents, albeit, referring to the process and motives of the reform mainly as locally inspired, tend to share a similar international ideology on the outcomes expected from those changes. Second, it is important to note that the discourse and planning of reform, recommending the shift of attention towards basic education have, in the Paraguayan case, a similar effect to the one observed in other countries like India in the 1990s. In the sense of, as Jandhyala B Tilak (2004) indicates the diversion of public attention away of higher education in the planning of education. Though, in the documents of CARE and latter CONEC, higher education was considered part of a national educational system; the debates and policy issues of higher education were ignored for most of the decade. A strategy of gradual reform of the educational system was put in place, which was apparently oblivious to the systemic interdependency of the different levels of education.

At this point it is important to notice the role that IGOs played in the Paraguayan reform and its subsequent planning. As a national bureaucrat claims "educational policies [in Paraguay] are established by International Organizations." However, the relationship between policy change and IGOs is seemingly more complex than that; it is an intricate relationship rather than a relation based on coercive impositions. However, as a Paraguayan academic and policy advisor for a governmental institution indicates, the fact

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remains that to introduce any public policy change at any level of the educational system requires, to certain extent, the financial support, and technical advice of international organizations.

As an example, we can observe that during the initial years of the educational reform the confluence between international policy prescriptions over higher education and the strategic planning of the education reform. This process as later described in government policy documents points strongly towards the influence of external prescriptions, but also, their silent adoption by local policy actors. Moreover, though the regularity of the emergence of policy solutions to higher education expansion and problems across nations seem to indicate the activity of IGOs, the role of international discourse and rhetoric on education in public policy developments and debates is not necessarily perceived as linked to IGOs.

The outcomes of these processes of private expansion have followed a similar regional pattern constituting a now complex national system of higher education, characterized by its disjuncture and fragmentation.

It was part of my initial assumption, reasserted during the analysis of the data collected during the field study that globalization and the diverse array of international pressures seem to drive, to a certain extent, processes of change at the local level. However, this is also part of a very convoluted local space and environment in which public policy implementation and the imagined relationship of the local/global are taken from international policy ideas about higher education by local actors.

Chapter 6

Rethinking Policy Transfer

Introduction

  In the previous three chapters, I have presented the specific empirical case of Paraguayan higher education, with the intent to explore the dynamics of global policy mobility in higher education, and to examine more specifically the notion of policy transfer. In this case, I have observed how the processes of policy development in respect to higher education in Paraguay are characterized by a high degree of inertia, resistance, and confusion. This, I believe, is relevant to an understanding of global policy mobility, and to the theme of policy transfer. In this chapter, my intention is to analyze the information collected in order to understand the extent to which the idea of policy transfer, as presented in the literature, might represent a useful perspective with which to explain current transformations in higher education in Paraguay, and the ways in which the Paraguayan case serves to theoretically illuminate the notion of policy transfer itself. Thus, I want to question the potential of the concept of policy transfer, on the one hand, and its limitations, on the other.

  In this dissertation, I provide an account of the way in which policy actors in higher education in Paraguay interpret the tasks of reform while using resources from outside the country, often provided by international organizations, to shape their thinking. However, in this chapter, I will argue that the amount of transfer that has taken place in higher education policy in Paraguay is fairly limited, calling into questions aspects of the existing literature on policy transfer, and especially its dominant view. I contend that

complexities relating to policy processes make it difficult to apply some of the key ideas in the literature. Finally, I will suggest an alternative way to thinking about global policy mobility that takes into account context specificities and the policy traditions that apply to a particular site.

As I mentioned before, the amount of policy transfer is not as extensive as many examples in the literature led me to assume. Local factors still shape the take up and it is questionable if policy ideas are even taken up. In the case of Paraguay, the higher education policy context is characterized by considerable inertia, and hence, policy input from outside the country is either resisted or reframed to suit local interests, giving the appearance of change symbolically, while little change actually takes place.

What then are the complexities affecting policy transfer in Paraguay? There are at least three potential examples of transfer, relevant to the description of the processes of education reform and institutional innovations in Paraguayan higher education: (a) institutions; (b) legislations; and (c) forums of debate. In Paraguay, each of these examples of policy transfer is linked, to a certain extent and among other externalities, to the activity of international organizations. It is often suggested that international organizations have sought to steer in various ways, the debates, legislations, and institutions of Paraguay's higher education system towards policy priorities informed by the principles of neoliberalism.

In those instances neoliberal ideas and discourses are transferred in an array of complicated ways. However, in this dissertation, I am not making an argument about the relationship between neoliberalism and educational policy. My intention is not to analyze neoliberal policy principles, or how policy formulations affecting transformations at

Paraguayan higher education are inspired by these principles, though they clearly are. Neoliberal rhetoric and ideologies have inspired the emergence of privatization processes in the country, as well as policy reform initiatives transforming the role of the state in public policy. This thesis observation on the privatization dynamics helps to demonstrate some ways neoliberal influences and pressures are affecting Paraguay's higher education system without doing an overview of neoliberalism.

However, the use of the term *neoliberal*, in reference to an international framework of policy transformation directly related with overall changes observed at Paraguay's higher education system and society, is less satisfactory. Neoliberalism is clearly now used in an overreaching manner, but I do not consider it as a useful explanatory concept to explain all aspects of the current study of the phenomenon of policy transfer, which focuses on the emerging global architecture of mobilities of various kinds. Though, to a certain extent, the study of policy transfer is oriented to understand how those neoliberal ideas are generating policy convergence across different countries and regions in the planet.

In this dissertation, I am using the term "neoliberal" in a very generic manner, as related to a set of market-driven, for-profit ideologies. In this sense, my analysis is not specifically informed by a neoliberal framework, even though some of the ideas that are objects of policy transfer are clearly affected by this framework. Thus, I am not exploring its specific meaning within the local case. Rather, I intend to recognize how extensive externalities, including neoliberal ideas, have affected policy debates and shifts in higher education in Paraguay. I am interested in shifts in governance practices, together with the recognition of their international inspiration. To what extent, following Foucault's notion

of biopower, has there been a slow implementation of learning strategies associated with bio-power at local settings. In other words, how have a set of strategies for programming contemporary governance through public policy been incorporated in Paraguay?

While, in practice, through relentless privatization of higher education in Paraguay, the ideas associated with neoliberal ideologies have clearly become evident, in this chapter, I want to show that the extent to which international policy ideas have affected the body of public policy debates in Paraguay is, nonetheless, limited. I will argue that even privatization practices in Paraguay are not necessarily an outcome of global policy transfer, strictly affected by a rational policy-making process as presented in the dominant literature of policy transfer. The contingencies associated with policy dynamics in Paraguay point to limitations of normative framework of transfer. My data has shown that it is not easy to determine, what in fact has been transferred—how and over what time period—and what has emerged through more organic local processes of change. The dominant view of policy transfer, and the analysis of transfer, seems to operate in a specifically bounded timeframe rather than with the ongoing complexity of dialectic processes of transformation that are often incomplete and diffuse.

Moreover, the way in which power/knowledge is constructed in the literature of policy transfer, rules out certain questions. It often steers the conversation of transfer towards a top down analysis, in ways that often ignore competing voices including those of students and other stakeholders participating in the transfer processes.

The demands and resistances that those stakeholders generate is a defining element of the context, time period, ways and limitation of process of policy transfer and policy change. The excessive attention on main agents of transfer and policy makers in

the policy transfer process often silence the important role that those stakeholders play, especially students, in generating demands and alternative understandings of what is transferred.

The complexity of global policy mobility in education, also, makes it very difficult to ignore the possibility that policy shifts might themselves be the result of a variety of mobilities at local settings steering local policy in a direct manner, with little input from outside sources. The continuity, or transfer from the past, of policy practices may play a more direct role in the shaping of current developments in the organization of the system, and their public policies, than international prescriptions, rhetoric, recommendations, or programs. The local specificities might indeed generate a situation of policy inertia, or slow adoption of substantial policy change over a longer period.

Recent literature on policy transfer points to the possibility of an explanation of the ways in which globalization affects policy transformations. Based on the empirical case of higher education policy shifts in Paraguay, there are two basic limitations with this view: (a) the assumption that rationally driven and intentional processes of transfer should be the focus of analysis of policy transfer, and (b) the idea that policy transfer can be used to analyze, and give a precise description of, transfer processes. I contend that the copying, emulation, or borrowing of programs, prescriptions, and rhetoric, although occurring in diverse manners, arise in such a way that any precise account of the interactions involved in the process, linear or circular, remain extremely elusive. Indeed any organization of a coherent framework to provide an analysis and meaning of global policy mobilities may provide a false impression about the fuzziness of the processes of policy take, renewal or resistance.

In my view, the notion of assemblages, as used in recent writings of Sassen (2007), Olds (2007), Ong and Collier (2005), and others may provide a more adequate framework with which to describe the processes of policy shifts in the global era, which cannot be defined merely in terms of structure or agency, but arguably both. More concretely, I will suggest that policy transfer should be considered as an assemblage of both globally and locally generated policy ideas, synthesized and hybridized to perform particular locally meaningful purposes. In this way, the theme of transfer in policy should be viewed as a study of interactions between the past and present policies, in which boundaries, as those of a rapidly expanding system of higher education, are porous, diffused, and complex.

Limitations of Policy Transfer

In a politically charged field of public policy debate such as higher education, policy transfer is both "rational and an ideological strategy to deal with changing circumstance" (Hulme, 2005, p. 421). This suggests that it is important to recognize and understand non-rational and highly political elements in policy circulation. My use of the term policy "circulation"—instead of policy transfer or diffusion—here is deliberate. As a more generic term, it is designed to highlight all forms of policy mobilities between spaces that are characterized by asymmetries of power. This allows, in developing countries in particular, for the voluntary, politically negotiated, or coercive aspects of circulation to be identified. This also allows for instances of non-rational policy making, rather than bounded rationality, leading to non transfers, policy failure, or policy divergence.

My research has shown that most analytical frameworks of transfer in the literature have very limited capacity for explaining policy change by themselves, and that therefore, they often rely on theories and concepts that for the most part assume the existence of rational policy choices in instances of transfer. As Stone (2004, p. 3) indicates: "policy transfer literature has tended to assume that transfer results from a rational process by decision-makers of imitation, copying and modification." However, is the notion of choice even useful in instances of uneven policy adoption, and when issues of differing level of resources are involved? As Evans (2004, p. 22) and others point out, in relation to the shortcomings of rational policy making decision models: "the proposition that decision makers can control the environment in which policy formulation and implementation takes place is clearly difficult to square empirically."

In the case of the borrowing or lending of policy in developing societies, it is possible to observe situations that coincide with accounts found in the literature of policy transfer in terms of the dynamics and intensity of policy transformation resulting from policy transfer mediated by international organizations. However, at the same time this description, as in the case of Paraguay, does not seem entirely adequate in relation to the higher education sector. Lesson-drawing or voluntary learning carried out by public institutions in transition societies, in terms of engaging "rational policy learning," clearly does take place in some cases. But, at the same time, there are also many instances that indicate that the desire to learn lessons from abroad by policy makers and endogenous pressures for changing public policies generate the opposite effect of political resistance and the realization that the context of attempted transfer is simply inappropriate.

In relation to their case study of Ukraine, Ivanova, and Evans (2004, p. 98) have observed a number of constraints to policy transfer. These include: unstable socio-economic environment, technical and resource constraints, the absence of cultural and ideological assimilation, conventional implementation gaps, transfer/transferee asymmetry, and nostalgic inertia. These constraints apply equally to the case of Paraguay in relation to public policy reforms to its higher education system. For example, in Paraguay, a negotiated transfer took place in public policies related to educational reform in the 1990s, but in ways that excluded discussion of assertive interventions in public policy. The Paraguayan state focused on basic education, sidelining higher education reforms. Like other developing countries defined as countries with low levels of material well being when contrasted to advanced industrialized nations, Paraguay relies heavily on international aid to implement public policy innovations. Because of the lack of material resources or expertise, policy transfer in Paraguay is inevitably limited.

In policy sociology, the work of Ball (1998) and others have pointed to the need to recognize that policy mobility is not just rational, but it is also about discursive and ideological strategies of attaining specific purposes of policy change. This may imply non-rational or not pragmatic choices for policy adoption. Hence, a crucial point is to recognize how goals about policy change are defined and negotiated across different countries by first understanding what those goals are, and where they are generated.

In the case of Paraguay, we have observed the slow slippage through loss of understanding and commitment to specific public policy initiatives of reform in education. It is possible to observe the slowing down of intensity in attempts to introduce policy change, from those initially observed, characterized by few minor symbolic

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changes at the higher education sector. Partly, this may be explained as resulting from dominant global policy agendas in education in the 1990s not prioritizing the support for reform at the higher education sector. But as explained in Chapter 4, this was also the result, among other factors, of a local policy trajectory of lack of state intervention in higher education.

The introduction of educational reforms is always contingent on specific demands and pressures on the system, sometime expressed in popular terms but sometimes articulated by power societal interests. For example, when reforms increase the enrollment of students in the education system, it not only has potential consequences for the further demand for access to postsecondary education, but also requires a dramatic increase in the numbers of trained teachers, achievable mostly through the expansion in the number of teacher training colleges.

As I have pointed out already, international organizations stated the problem of education in Paraguay largely in terms of a specific priorities relating to investment in education by the Ministry of Education. In these conditions, informed decisions, in terms of "rational policy choice," based on existent international research in education, inspired the financial sector to become involved in specific programs of educational reform in Latin America. In this way, policy demands in one area, in this case education, had consequences affecting other sectors of public policy.

Therefore, the question of what is transferred in higher education requires an understanding that assumptions and consequences are always interrelated to a larger framework of educational change, rather than in terms of specific visible reforms. In the case of the spread of privatization of higher education in Paraguay, change in institutional

practices, in some instances, did not seem to involve an observable transfer of public

policy, but rather, the accommodation of a new set of practices within a framework of

continuity of traditional practices under a very different policy environment. However, as

it happened the continuity of practices did not contradict the emergence of a market in

higher education. Privatization practices did not emerge directly from global policy

transfer, but through the emergence of opportunities that the economic elite in Paraguay

were able to exploit. The fact that global reform agenda became aligned to local interest

was simply a matter of serendipity.

This point to a fundamental limitation of most policy transfer studies in the

literature. Those studies often describe the state as a homogenous entity. In other words,

they assume that global policy transfer takes place between international organizations

and the state, rather than those entities that lay under or within the state. In this sense,

policy transfer literature is often characterized by a homogenous state-centric vision of

transfer rather than providing an alternative perspective.

It is often argued that policy transfer can generate changes in values, often

responding to transformation in the contexts where policy ideas are directed. However, it

is not easy to capture the ways that this ideological circulation of policy ideas takes place.

Policy circulation is often associated with changes in the political and economic context

enabling particular instances of policy development. However, it is not easy to describe

or even understand these processes of change. Sometimes they result from the lack of

attention paid in addressing questions. In this way, non-decision making could be

considered an expression of policy transfer. As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) indicate:

"policy also can be expressed in silences either deliberate or unplanned" (p. 4). A crucial

question then is how do we identify and study the processes of "non-explicit policy transfer" in terms of public policies formulated by the state? Significantly, as Stone (2001, p. 19) argues, this may indicate a most serious problem in the terminology of policy transfer by limiting the "analytical gaze towards the state when it may be that ideas, interests, behaviours, perceptions and discourses are transported and adapted irrespective of state structures."

Paths of Global Policy Mobility

The previous discussion shows that it is difficult to establish a causal relation between the occurrence of policy movement and their consequences. This is true because it is possible for any process of communication to produce a whole variety of interactions, understandings, and outcomes. This may be observed in the diversity of geographical spaces and their links to a number of global policy circulation pathways. Evans (2004) points to at least "five levels of political spatiality . . . commonly referred to in political science: transnational, international, national, regional and local" (p. 27) where international policy transfer is possible across distinct organizations in at least twenty-five pathways. In their study of cross-national transfer of changes of welfare policies in the 1980s and 1990s between the United Kingdom and the United States, Dolowitz (1998) identified at least thirty pathways of cross-national policy transfer by recognizing the importance of temporal dimensions (see Evans, 2004, p. 27; Dolowitz, 1998, p. 23). These pathways represent different spaces of interactions for contemporary processes and outcomes of policy circulation.

The descriptive analysis of those interactions may not be sufficient to explain the ways that unintended outcomes are generated as a result of policy movement. In the case of public policies in Paraguay, those global and local interactions cannot be simply explained in terms of imposition or inspiration, voluntary or coercive transfer. The relationships that emerged with developments in the context of the higher education sector provide an account of public policy that shows that those pathways of interactions are interlinked in more than just a one way. In other words, interactions between global pressures and local constraints, generating inertia or a slow advance in the implementation of any form of substantial policy transformation, occur, at diverse degrees, in all pathways of policy circulation. Paraguay, it should be noted, is not just a national space but also an international actor, a territorial assemblage that operates in all dimensions and pathways of potential policy circulation.

The Paraguayan case shows the way in which educational policy at the beginning of the 1990s became embedded in a series of reform initiatives intended to change the educational system. The idea of rearticulating the educational system expressed in these reforms shared the general intention of modifying the system of basic education and, eventually, extend the process of reform to institutions at the higher education level. However, the ways in which international agendas, past policies and local resistances interacted at the initial stages of the educational reform ignored references to the higher education system. In this way, this omission seemed consistent with past policies in Paraguay, rather than a mere process of adaptation resulting from global pressures or the mere adoption of privatization strategies in education.

This also implied the adoption of symbolic policies in relation to the education system. A number of legislative innovations were introduced in Paraguay in the 1990s, some as a result of international inspiration, creating institutions (for example, ANEAES and CONACYT) and legislative responses to international agreements in education, as well as those related to attempts of global ordering of the educational system. The international inspiration of those innovations was partially associated with global strategies of reform suggested by intergovernmental organizations, as is apparent in the case of CONACYT.

In the creation of new institutions, policy mobility does not necessarily imply communication during the first instances of interaction. Movement can be relational, communicative, or informative. In the case of Paraguay, we see this in relation to a large array of movements in terms of policy innovations in education. But at the same time, we observe dissimilar types of interactions, at the beginnings of the 1990s, in term of provisions of financial resources and technical expertise to support implementation of policy innovations in the higher education system.

The design and implementation of the strategic plan of reform in the 1990s, and of the programs for the improvement of basic (AIDB) and secondary education, was centered on the development of policies seeking an enhancement of basic education through a curricular change, and developments in professional teacher formation, with the purpose of increasing the efficiency of the system with the final objective of widening the coverage of educational opportunities. The achievement of these objectives was nevertheless hampered by effective implementation of national policies and strategies.

At the level of implementation, the scope of the relationship between local and international spaces and the role played by Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) in policy change in higher education was highly contentious, especially in relation to the relationship between policy prescriptions produced in transnational spaces and the ways in which the changes were introduced at the local level. The ideological character of transfer of international advice, expressing neoliberal assumptions, many felt, did not correlate with the national debates about reform taking place in the country. In other words, aspects of the changing nature and scope of the policy relationship[51] between sites of transnational policy knowledge production and sites of their take-up did not exactly work in the way that the literature suggests. Specifically, this represented a gap in the literature, as indicated by Edward C. Page (2000, p. 9) as "the absence of a discussion of the relationship between the process and the outcome of transfer." Page's observation is particularly pertinent in view of the scarcity of studies on current processes of policy transformation in the literature on higher education policy in Latin America, including the relationship between international proposals and their outcomes.

The ways in which the policy work and agendas of Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) on higher education contributes to the framing of public policy

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[51] I am using the generic term *relationship* rather than policy circulation, transfer, etc, in order to encapsulate all possible dimensions of the totality of overlapping interactions and mechanisms that under different terms convey a process of policy communication. The understanding of current processes of policy communication requires the recognition of the contingent complexity of the reality observed in the sites where policy circulation takes place, but also a nuanced understanding of the ways in which the process of transfer continually modifies the policy environment, thus, affecting policy outcomes. Moreover, this also demands an understanding of "fundamental differences in structures of authority that affect the scope for borrowing" (Page, 2000, p. 10), and lending of those policies.

debates and initiatives of policy change at the national level is central to this discussion

of policy transfer. As Jorge Balan (2006), indicates:

> the contentious role of external agencies—banks, in particular the World Bank
> and the Inter-American Development Bank; bilateral government agencies, such
> as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); private American
> foundations; intergovernmental organizations, in particular the United Nations
> Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and more recently
> Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)—is
> frequently mentioned in the literature. However, there is precious little research
> on how these banks and IGOs operate and with what results. Much attention has
> been focused on policy proposals that originated in these organizations, but we
> know less about actual interventions through loans, technical assistance, or
> participation in reviews of systems and institutions, and the outcomes of these
> interventions (Balan, 2006, p. 238).

The study of unintended consequences for national higher education system of the

interplay between external pressures and endogenous dynamics in the process of adoption

of international views, as in the case of the "so called neoliberal view of education"

(Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 22), are crucial in understanding the complex processes of

transformation.

Investigations into the spread of policy seemingly demand *fuzzy* terms to

understand the multiple dimensions of policy lending and borrowing. In this sense, the

attempt to formulate a holistic approach to the study of the nature and scope of complex

systems of policy circulation requires the assumption of the existence of contingent,

overlapping, and, sometimes, uncertain trajectories of interactions between international

and national spaces.

Policy Circulation and Policy Change

The key question addressed in this dissertation relates to the adequacy of the

discourses of policy transfer to describe and understand processes of public policy change

in Paraguayan higher education. This question relates to my initial concern of understanding the ways that outcomes of processes of policy transfer transform the national public policy environment conditions. Therefore, the trajectory of shared narratives, research, and policy documents with IGOs may also have the unintended consequence of contributing to the emergence of contexts of policy uncertainty/confusion. This is sometimes observed in national policy environments where political debates about higher education reform take place. In these instances, the question should be: How might the language of transfer and diffusion provide an understanding of the emergence of a context of policy uncertainty in Paraguay's higher education?

Relationships of information and communication exchange should clearly become a focus of inquiry in terms of the ways in which the transfer, borrowing and lending, of policy may help to explain domestic policy developments and debates. Assuming that policy transfer is occurring, a number of additional questions emerge such as: What is the relationship between the international research production and documentation and the proposals of higher education reform in Paraguay? The convergence of international discourses of reform, supported through international research production, has an influence on the debates of policy reform in education everywhere. This was more noticeable in Paraguay during the educational reforms of the 1990s, when IGOs promoted changes through a common voice for the need of educational reform. Additionally, they provided substantial resources as incentives for the implementation of changes. Intellectual resources enabled the incorporation of research, and expertise, in the strategic planning of reform at the level of basic education in particular.

In contrast, the influence of IGOs during the current period is less clear.

UNESCO, through IESALC, has formulated and promotes a regional agenda of higher

education reform. In the same manner as others IGOs, such as OEI, IESALC provides a

forum for debates on higher education, mostly as a productive factor for the economy. In

Paraguay, the promotion of these debates on the planning of options for university reform

is not located in the Ministry of Education, but involves a plurality of competing

stakeholders within CONEC, with different visions of reform.

Yet, the advocacy of CONEC, through the promotion of policy briefs, policy

documents, and forums of debates, does not seem as effective in helping create a

consensus around policy changes that are needed as that of its predecessor, CARE. I will

speculate that one of the reasons for this is the historical irrelevance of the Ministry of

Education to the university sector. It is important to remember that CONEC and the

Comisión Nacional para la Reforma de la Educación Superior are associated to MEC.

The former is an advisory committee to the Minister of Education, while the latter is an

advisory committee created[52] in order to coordinate the efforts of CONEC, MEC, and the

Council of Universities and responsible for an important proposal for a new law of higher

education formulated in 2006.

The emerging assertive role of the Ministry of Education and its new focus on

higher education reform may be associated with shifting international structures. For

instance, the institution of ANEAES is a direct result of ministerial agreements at the

Educational Common Market of the South. This agency of accreditation is now

incorporated within the body of the Ministry of Education. At the same time, Paraguayan

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[52] The creation of this commission on August 18, 2004, by executive decree 3.029, is partially a response to the accelerated growth of the university system.

debates on reform are characterized by the emergence of multiple proposals but few

attempts at articulating substantial forms of policy change, relating to the transformation

of institutional and policy structures, organizational practices, and the allocation of value

in the higher education sector. As mentioned before, despite the urgency for changes,

there are few concrete results, in terms of policy in recent years. However, this does not

mean that ongoing processes of transformation are not occurring, or that immobilization

of projects of reform implies failure. I am only asserting than an emphasis on

understanding endogenous factors is useful to explain the resistance to the way that these

changes are occurring in Paraguay's university sector.

One of the key objects of interest in this dissertation involves an attempt to

understand aspects of the relationships between national and transnational spaces relating

to the circulation of higher education policy idea within a complex global system of

governance. The idea of a complex system does not imply a complicated or chaotic

reality. As Bob Jessop points out "complexity is complex" (Jessop, 2007, p. 225), it

rather implies a certain degree of uncertainty and contingency in the way that social

systems operate and diverse communities produce multiple meanings. If this is so, then

the question arises: What, and how, can we generalize from the Paraguayan case?

It is important to note that in Paraguay policy institutions are now created as part

of regional network of knowledge production and distribution. ANEAES, for example, is

part of a regional mechanism of accreditation for the Common Market of the South,

Mecanismo Experimental de Acreditacion del MERCOSUR (MEXA). It requires local

and national institutions to operate according to, at least minimally, the regional and

international standards agreed to by MEXA. In this way, the expertise and relevance that

CONACYT, for example, is able to assert relies on the way that it strategically positions itself as a recipient of both material and intellectual resources. This is noticeable in the development of CONACYT over the past decade. In 1997, when CONACYT was created by law, it had minimal financial support, just as the state investment on research funding at universities was almost nonexistent.

Although CONEC publishes a great amount of documents, it has received little international funding for research so far. Members of the council are often authors of documents or policy briefs, but the institutional technical capacities of CONEC, such as a technical secretariat, have not been developed in comparison with similar intuitions in the region (for example, the Chilean National Council of Education [CSE]). This is important for several reasons—mainly this refers to limits of its communication capacities, rather than just "research." In contrast, CONACYT has developed its technical capacities by tapping into international technical assistance. By doing this, it has been able to generate a research document using the international language of scientific indicators, in order to produce an argument to negotiate recent international loans for science and technology research projects with the InterAmerican Development Bank. This can be seen as part of global shifts in the promotion of national systems of innovation, but this also shows the long time required for the effective incorporation of new institutions or innovations.

Finally, this research indicates that national higher education systems are deeply embedded in the wider global and regional spaces. However, it also shows that the nature of this embedding is not fully captured by the idea of global policy transfer. To develop an alternative to the concept of transfer, the notion of assemblage might be useful. It suggests that national systems operate within the emerging intricate networked structures

of international policy communication. Local institutions are deeply affected by international consensus on changes in public policy, as well as local expectations on the perceived objectives of these changes. I want to suggest that it is the particular assemblage of the factors, within a given context, that might provide a more useful way of understanding and researching global policy mobility.

In local spaces, we are witnessing the institutionalization of global structures of governance transformed in central nodes for the constitution and translation of narratives, problems and expertise on higher education policy. This has resulted in a complex and contingent global/local space of interaction, as well as an imagined landscape created by the construction of a complex transnational system where politics and policy about educational issues are produced, legitimized, and become objects of international debate. IGOs play an important role in these processes, as structures and agents promoting policy change. At times, the work of these IGOs is directed at local environment, which is partly the result of past international intervention, which generated resistance to the introduction of particular policy ideas. The question arises then: Would a more consistent framework of policy ideas have helped in an understanding of the role of IGOs in the introduction of narratives of policy reforms in Paraguayan higher education?

The current context of debates about higher education reform in Paraguay is a product of the processes of voluntary, coercive, and negotiated transfer of educational policies during the 1990s. After 1989, the country became open to accelerated processes of policy change articulated in international agendas and produced through the processes of regional economic integration. In the case of educational policy initiatives, policy shifts became linked to the agendas of international donors and, to a lesser extent, to

negotiated priorities with other countries which were partners in the process of regional integration.

However, the ways in which higher education policy change was promoted and occurred, led to a situation of considerable policy confusion in higher education. While privatization was supported by IGOs, it was driven more by rhetoric rather than a substantive policy. The structure of Paraguayan universities has tended to remain, for the most part, unchanged.

That some policy transfer in education policy occurred in Paraguay over the 1990s cannot be doubted. But the sources of these largely symbolic shifts in policy were largely domestic antecedents. This kind of transfer can perhaps be referred to as *soft transfer* of rhetoric, ideas, concepts, but no necessarily substantive programs. This has been so because the degree of borrowing of ideas and programs of reform has been extremely uneven. For instance, regional programs of reform in higher education with harder regulations have tended to become marred by environmental obstacles. Some of these obstacles relate to technical constraints that were a direct result of the lack of state capabilities to carry out those programs. But there were major structural constraints as well, defined by the political and socio-economic context. Evans (2004, p. 39) refers to this as the "absence of a cohesive policy transfer network."

This aspect of environmental obstacles related to the unintended policy consequences of a range of organic developments. Among these was the rapid expansion of private for-profit institutions of higher education, which were not planned through policy, but generated a substantial transformation of the organizational patterns relevant to the system. Even as the private institutions tended to mimic the structure of the

traditional public universities, they reconstituted the national higher education system. In the 1990s, the private expansion of higher education institutions resulted from a number of commercial possibilities opening up for educational entrepreneurs. From the point of view of the state, this created the possibility of covering the demand for higher education, but it also forged a relatively lucrative market for higher education services in a relatively unconstrained economic environment.

At the same time, the common regional pattern of previous waves of "poorly conceived processes of policy transfer" (Evans, 2004, p. 3) affected the subsequent development state institutions and priorities. The previously negotiated and coercive processes of policy transfer had a negative impact on subsequent borrowing or lesson-drawing processes of transfer in both policy and organizational practice in higher education. It is important to recognize that while the rhetoric underlined the need to globalize public policies, embodied in global discourses and regional agendas of change; little change in Paraguay was driven specifically by these agendas. The regional agreements spoke of a framework of higher education following the knowledge society paradigm as a strategy of change, and little tangible implementation could be observed.

It is possible to start observing an overlap between public, private, and political actors related to the higher education sector. In other words, political actors increasingly start to relate with private or public higher education institutions, or both, under different roles. Yet, this did not raise the profile of higher education institutions as state priority or produce significant changes in the visualization of higher education institutions outside their traditional role as professional training institutions.

I tend to agree with Riart's (2006, pp. 17-18) assertion that local perspectives of university reform (see Chapter 5) are often based on very simplistic propositions of change referring to a very complex problem. Each perspective uses, to a certain degree, elements of international narratives, or rhetoric, to justify the need for change, rather than as a base for analysis.

Initial debates about the university reform at forums organized by professional organization in the late 1990s share similarities with the limitations and assumptions of higher education studies informed by liberal theories. In other words, much of the "policy debate" was turned toward "the antinomies of nation-states regulation and higher education institutional autonomy" (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002, p. 283). It is difficult to assert if the adoption of regional patterns of higher education change to "reduce subsidization of higher education, shift cost to 'the market' and consumers, demand accountability for performance, and emphasize higher education's role in the economy" (Marginson & Roades, 2002, p. 283) were partially adopted.

It is possible that the steering at a distance of educational policies in the 1990s was associated to a number of global, regional, and local agencies as mechanisms promoting the tacit introduction of a policy environment favorable to privatization in higher education. The outcome in Paraguay was an unregulated expansion of commercial higher education institutions. It could be asserted that a form of policy change was introduced tacitly without either the need to introduce major legal reforms in higher education or any discernable consensus on the purposes of the transformation taking place at the higher education system.

At this point, it is important to understand that international narratives operate often as empty signifiers of the local political discourse of change in higher education. For instance, a term such as globalization may be used as a "term whose specific content has been discarded and which functions in certain discourses to articulate a whole series of elements from pre-existing discourses" (Martin, 2002, p. 30).

Only by taking these contextual issues seriously within the framework of transfer/diffusion research is it possible to escape one of the main limitations observed at the literature of educational policy change. Among those, the limits of understanding the systemic and cumulative effects that the process of transfer or non-transfer may have. For instance, the lack of state capacities to negotiate the borrowing of ideas of policy reform could be linked to ongoing processes of policy circulation and local historical trajectories of institutional development. In other words, it is possible that a policy environment limiting the possibilities of transfer could be partially explainable as the unintended consequence of previous stage in the process of policy circulation.

At this point, it is critical to understand the importance of the relationship between state-centered forces and global institutions on the achievement of a consensus between agents of transfer and policy makers, over the program of policy change to follow. It is often assumed that a successful transfer is associated to policy learning. Governments and institutions are able to incorporate or draw lessons from abroad in order to introduce policy innovations. However, it often remains unclear when the drawing and specific lesson from abroad are necessarily a reasonable strategy.

Throughout this dissertation I have referred to contingencies in transfer processes. It is often assumed that a process of policy transfer is driven by rational goals. However,

it is not often the case. Goals, actions, and choices are at times rational and at other times non rational.

In other words, not all human purposes are instrumental or driven by instrumental rationality. In the case of politics or policy, irrational decisions are part of a highly contingent policy environment. As I indicated previously, debates of reform are not about problems but they are often human dilemmas that have contingent solutions. Policy research, or an idea of rational policy making, offers little understanding of the way this operates. As I mentioned in previous chapters, there was an assumption in the strategic planning of education reform that educational change was possible through a deliberative process of incremental changes in the educational system that would eventually include higher education. In a recent policy document, we can observe the current reasoning for the exclusion of the higher education sector from the education reform:

> We must remember that at the moment of staging, designing, and implement the education reform at the beginning of the 1990s, university education was excluded: one, the aforementioned self-exclusion of the university authorities in the process of reform, and the other the negative of the World Bank, as well as the IDB in re-orienting the loans that where given to the educational reform, albeit the interest of local authorities to incorporate the reform of the sector into the plan. Both organizations have changed their positions, but their actions have significant incident in the current situation of the Paraguayan higher education. (CNRES, 2006, p. 85, my translation)

> Debe recordarse que en circunstancias de plantear, diseñar y poner en marcha la reforma educativa a comienzos de la década del noventa, la educación universitaria quedo al margen por dos rezones: una ya la mencionada auto exclusión del estamento universitario del proceso de reforma; y la otra la negativa del Banco Mundial como del AIDB para orientar los prestamos que prodigaron para la reforma educativa a pesar del interés de las autoridades por incorporar dicho nivel en el plan de reforma educativa. Como es conocido una década después, ambas organizaciones internacionales variaron drásticamente su posición, lo que no evito que la omisión en que incurrieron, incidiera significativamente en ahondar el rezago de la educación superior paraguaya. (CNRES, 2006, p. 85)

Transfer implies a certain degree of exchange in the process of transfer between borrowers and lenders. This may be a mixture of specific forms of learning from past actions; also generating lessons on different strategies of implementation of a specific idea, but this often result in a paradox. The point of politics is that it is messy and the transfer of policy is an unpredictable process. In this process, ideas play a crucial role for discussion; ideas that may have international inspiration, such as ideas of pertinence, promoted by UNESCO, in the World Congress of Higher Education in Paris 1998, or ideas of quality.

However, those ideas generate diverse interpretations. At the moment of educational reform, ideas of equity and efficiency in public investment were interpreted differently by international and local policy actors, from policies directed at the basic education sector to those directed at the higher education sector.

Rethinking Policy Transfer

The diversity of overlapping approaches to the study of complex policy movement seems to require a consistent model of policy language addressing the complex scope of relationships between local and international sites of policy formulation alongside debates that take context specificities seriously. At this point the model of policy transfer/circulation in many instances of analysis is still: (a) very idealistic—i.e., ahistorical, atemporal, acultural; (b) very instrumentalist and technicist; (c) it professes a kind of neutrality; (d) it avoids the issue of power completely and of power/knowledge; and (e) it focuses on the circulation of policy (policy as object) rather than on a grounded analysis.

The specificities of local context where public policy develops through time seems a more fruitful approach to the theme of transfer. As Sandra Taylor (2004) points out, "social practices networked in a particular way constitute, and in turn are shaped by, the social order." For instance, practices can be shaped by a "particular local version of the global context" (p. 437). At the same time, this perspective of the global may affect the way that public education policy is implemented. The above-mentioned commonalities observed at most policy transfer literature indicate a model of policy study that seems in most cases a part of positivist policy discourse and analysis.

At this point, I will propose the introduction of a synthetic conceptual model built from a critique of policy transfer aimed at exploring the main concepts and limitation of the language of transfer indicated in the previous sections. Among those limitations is the issue of movement at transfer processes, rather than just communication, it is not necessarily about the spread of policy ideas in a purposeful and intentional manner. The constitution of policy is only purposeful while linked to power and influence.

This is a cornerstone of my concerns in relation to current theories of globalization and education, and globalization in general. Moreover, this has been an object of a recurrent critique of theories of globalization, such as Manuel Castell's Network Society Theory (Castells, 2000). Those theories, although recognizing the existence of power, do not provide a clear idea on how structures of power operate at contexts of increasing global complexity. In a similar fashion, theories of diffusion and transfer, when applied to the study of public policy and international studies, have attempted to explain the ways in which external ideas, practices and structures are used from one national, local or regional setting to another in a rational, intentional and

purposeful manner. These accounts of policy mobility often ignore constrains to introducing substantial changes at specific instances in the policy processes and in relation to specific policy areas and institutions. The basic problem they share is the same that Castells' globalization theory proposes: that they continue to offer a very vague idea of the institutional settings and constitutive practice of power and politics in an increasingly globalize economy and society. This dissertation, attempts to question the idea of most transfer and diffusion literature, with some exceptions, of assuming that policy movement is mainly a rational process. Moreover, this requires acknowledging that processes of policy circulation should also relate to understanding how visions and narratives of global education are constituted at local settings by local context shaping policy environments and their consequences.

In those instances, globalization, in terms of the diverse array of international pressures are driving, to certain extent, processes of change at the local level, but so far this has generated a very complex environment in which public policy and the local take up of international policy ideas about higher education by local actors remains unclear. It is important to understand that each instance of potential transfer is interrelated within the national context. Moreover, the same policy actors played different or similar roles at each of the instances mention above. Finally, the transfer of policy priorities related to higher education change is related to national agendas of transformation in education, and all previous instances of transfer mentioned above.

The data collected and analyzed shows a very complex policy environment and context, shaped by the pressures of globalization in education. It appears that transfer,

both results in and is the source of anxieties about change. Transfer also creates new venues for international communication.

I proposed in the previous sections to understand transfer as an assemblage and ideological strategy, instead of rational processes of policy making. The intensity of interactions between local and global policy actors on a specific policy field (for example, public policies related to higher education) can also be read in terms of the type of power strategies implemented at different instances of transfer, and the interaction of specific institutional settings that lead to those transformations.

As indicated in previous chapters, there are several reasons for international borrowing, mimicking, and emulation of a policy solution or priorities of changes. The causes of development of a specific policy-export, or recommendation of policy change, are usually linked to a vision of change. However, centers of reception for these policy recommendations, or ideas, are confronted with external and internal constrains to change in often different ways according to the content of the policy and the objective of the policy export.

One of the main differences in relation to the process of educational reform between the debates that took place in the 1990s and the higher education sector is that they are no longer exclusively centered or mainly driven by the Ministry of Education. At the same time, the causes of development that advocate for specific policy ideas of educational change are now informed by a different set of theories, programs of reform and agendas.

At this point, what Habermas calls "knowledge constitutive interests" and Foucault calls "power/knowledge" constantly operate at different instances of the process

of production and negotiation of policy movements and adoption at international and local settings. But, influence itself is not necessarily a function of exogenous factors.

At first glance, the activity of IGOs on public policy on higher education has been weak or nonexistent. Attempts to provide technical assistance, forums of discussion, or financial support, are still limited at the local level while debates occur at communities of discussion that, although use many of the same references and are constituted by a reduced number of the same policy actors and local referents, often do not communicate between each other. At the same time, processes of policy circulation and their up-take by states are always contingent on local realities. The international priorities of policy change are transformed through time, but the outcome of ongoing processes of transfer constantly modify the conditions in which changes in narratives and priorities of public policy are discussed by local actors.

In order to understand the need to consider non-rational aspects of policy circulation we need to recognize the uneven capacity of transition countries to negotiate with international demands. As indicated in the previous chapter, among the observable limits in most accounts in the literature of policy transfer are: (a) Difficult accounts of the complexity of transfer, (b) Scarce account on the influence of past policies and context, and (c) The lack of attention on the proximity of the political ideology of the actors involved and the technological structures of the borrower country. Governmental and non-governmental international policy actors' capacity to steer political outcomes, and degrees of policy circulation, are always linked with state and local agents' ability to engage with global discourses and ideas. Furthermore, the inability to translate viable proposals of change could not only hamper the bargain capacities of states, but also, the

type of policy relationships and interactions possible between local and national institutional actors and international organizations.

It is possible to assert that the current and contested mixtures of global/local policy environments are produced and reproduced by a diversity of actors and institutions. At the same time, these actors play an important role helping to legitimize the "imaginary" of policy change. International agencies are mediators and structures helping to crystallize universal narratives about educational problems alongside a diversity of networks, epistemic communities, experts, governments, and transnational corporations.

An example of these contemporary dynamics in Latin America is presented by Alma Maldonado-Maldonado (2004) in her dissertation, *An epistemic community and its intellectual networks: The field of higher education in Mexico*. This study shows the ways in which IGOs interacting with Mexican epistemic communities helped to steer, or coerce, the introduction of an agenda of higher education policy change in the 1990s through information exchange, learning opportunities, and instances of "voluntary conditional transfer."

Maldonado-Maldonado's (2004) work provides an insightful look at the way processes of policy networking, and network formation of policy expertise and agendas of research help to delineate subsequent processes of higher education policy change. Therefore the entire arrays of mechanism of transfer are examined. Among those, the establishment of domestic agendas of research in higher education that helped in the subsequent learning and translation of international narratives.

The importance of national agents in the process of transfer is twofold. They help to steer the framing of the debate and, more importantly, they help to translate global narratives and the outcomes of regional debates through research agendas, theorization, public policy and scholarly communication. At the same times, these agendas are an outcome of a process of policy circulation of an idea of change. It is important to understand that the framing of global pressures affecting different contexts is made in terms of problems and solutions that are constituted as research constructs at international forums. Thus, communicating a narrative also helps to constitute the problem to explore within the "imaginary" of global social policy.

These are global/local assemblages that are steering specific types of translation towards a common interpretation of policy change. However, this is an assemblage that is ever changing, never static, though its programming nature carries universalizing claims.

At the same time, these narratives and expertise in each space and territory, institution or social group, suffer their own contingent local interpretations and limits. The agents of transfer of global narratives and imaginaries of educational change are reproducing and interpreting them in divergent ways. Ideas presented in the agendas and narratives of change communicated globally by IOs are adopted by diverse reasons. As I mentioned, the point of departure of this work is the assumption that a myriad of contexts, with diverse demands, contingent political realities, historical trajectories, and interests, are also shaping ideas of policy change in higher education. In this case, within the nation-state context, local policy actors' interpretations, particularizations and uses of the global imaginary of policy change in higher education, in their different ways, are always contingent on the state *capacities* to take up those narratives.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Introduction

      This dissertation has been concerned with how the idea of global policy transfer has increasingly appeared in the literature, and has been used to understand recent educational policy transformations around the world. For the purpose of this investigation, I have conducted a case study of higher education in Paraguay that helped me to determine the uses and limitations of transfer literature in explaining policy developments in the Paraguayan higher education sector since 1989. As an exploratory study, this dissertation does not seek to provide specific recommendations in terms of specific programs, or policy reform. Instead, it explores the possibilities of using the notion of policy transfer, and the conceptual discussions that surround it, in understanding various policy shifts and continuities that take place in a specific national setting, stressing how this could potentially result from a diverse array of global networks and interactions.

      In Chapter 2, I provided an account of the various approaches to the study of policy mobility, with particular reference to the idea of global policy transfer. I argued that if the current globalizing processes are characterized by mobilities of various kinds, as theorists such as Appadurai (1996) have pointed out, then, the study of policy mobilities in education constitutes a relevant object of inquiry. In this chapter, I presented

the main features of policy transfer, and its commonalities with other perspectives

dealing with policy mobility, such as policy diffusion and circulation. This account is

linked to the idea of "traveling policies," and the ways in which international

organizations, both IGOs and INGOs have become major carriers of policy movement

across national boundaries, and how they represent certain structures that enable specific

movements.

According to the capacities of each organization, they often facilitate the

exchanges of information, through a diversity of means, among those, the creation of

networks. At the same time, I indicated that, in the case of public policy, policy transfer

literature presents the mobility of public policies in specific ways and following a number

of assumptions on the nature of those movements and the rationale for their adoption.

Among those the literature emphasizes that transfer results from common patterns of

policy change an emphasis, in the literature, that transfer is resulting on common patterns

of policy change.

I have suggested that the notion of policy transfer in literature of transfer seems to

point to a range of complex and contingent processes at play. More often than not, the

claims of policy transfer do not coincide with the assumption that the adoption and

exchanges involved in transfer processes will pre-eminently result in rational, purposeful,

and informed modes of policy making. This generalized, but dominant, view of policy

transfer, I maintain, does not pay sufficient attention to the contextual features that shape

the nature of policy influences, pressures, and steering. This raises a specific question that

lies at the heart of this dissertation: To what extent is this dominant view of policy

transfer useful in understanding public policy developments in Paraguayan higher

education?

In Chapter 3, I presented my methodological approach, focusing on the study of

Paraguay as my chosen exemplar with which to examine the nature of global policy

mobility and the ways in which it has steered policy developments in higher education. In

this way, this dissertation represents an exploratory and critical empirical study with

which to reflect on the theoretical notion of global policy transfer. To collect my data, I

have relied upon not only the insights found in the policy transfer literature but also

interviews, on-line research, and review of key policy documents that enabled me to

discern the potential instances of international transfer of higher education policies in

Paraguay. I collected most of my data during fieldwork in the capital city of Paraguay,

Asuncion. It involved, among other methods, semi-structured interviews with local

system actors. Several of them are key participants in policy debates on higher education

reform. These interviewees were able to point me towards relevant documents and

websites. Finally, I have made use of triangulation as a research strategy to ensure the

validity of the evidence and the conclusions I have drawn from it.

Much of my data and discussion are focused on the role of international

agencies—policy advisers, IGOs and regional networks and agreements among others—

in steering higher education policy in Paraguay. My reasons for choosing Paraguay are

quite specific. They do not only relate to my own biography and intellectual journey, but

also to the fact that there is a general lack of well-formed state structures and capacities in

the higher education sector here, something which its policy makers are seeking to

overcome. Given its character as a transitional society, Paraguay has given me an

opportunity to explore the ways in which international policy resources are being used. Therefore, it serves as a potential site of study of global policy transfer.

In Chapter 4 I provided an overview of the broader context in which developments in the higher education sector in Paraguay have taken place since 1989. I have tried to convey the complexities of this context with regard to its policy environment. Against a brief historical background of higher education in Paraguay, I have described some of the ways in which initiatives of policy reform in higher education were introduced in the country in the 1990s. Towards the end of the chapter, I focused on the role of regional networks and the activities of global agencies in seeking to steer policy transformations in Paraguayan higher education towards a set of neo-liberal priorities, expressed largely through support for the creation of private universities.

In Chapter 5, in order to illustrate the way that international agents and structures have affected these processes of transformation in higher education, I presented data from my interviews with key policy players in Paraguay and international policy advisers. I also provided an analysis of key policy reports and other documents. This data is then further analyzed in Chapter 6, establishing a dialogue between observations at the empirical level and the theoretical analysis of policy transfer found in literature. Through an interpellation between grounded observations and theories, it has been possible for me to generate a set of insights that show the relationship between global pressures and influences and local responses to these pressures and influences. These relationships are characterized by complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty that are informed by not only the historical policy traditions in Paraguay but also the current political interests and debates about the processes of transformation of higher education in Paraguay.

Complexities, Uncertainties and Ambiguities

I analyzed the gathered evidence alongside theoretical discussion of policy transfer. It is possible to infer that at the heart of policy mobilities lies a complexity that is the result of the interaction of contemporary global and national policy environments. These interactions do not necessarily result from the decisions of the state to embrace international policy ideas, and are more profoundly related to the state capacities to negotiate these ideas, and more particularly, its access to specific resources and technical expertise. In this way, transfer involves the local adaptation of specific policy ideas. Thus, processes of policy circulation consists in specific assemblages of global pressures, local dilemmas, and contextual constraints that determine the degree to which policy transfer and mobilities can in fact take place at a particular time. As well, these processes determine the array of unintended consequences that may result during policy transfer.

Unintended consequences are the result of the impossibility of policy changes in a public system, without generating an array of changes affecting the further configuration of the context and policy environment. As we noted in the case of Paraguay, recent regional agreements have, for example, transformed its policy environment, which in turn, affects its further engagement with global policy advice, technical or otherwise. Therefore, it is not possible to assess in any specific terms how policy mobilities, including neoliberal inspired ideas, at a specific period and context operate. All that it is possible to say is that policy mobility is a more complex and contentious situation than is often assumed by rational policy making accounts of transfer.

Moreover, my data of the case of higher education in Paraguay shows that the spatial and temporal pathways for a specific exchange between international, local, national, and transnational spaces are difficult to establish in terms of clear boundaries between national and international in specific instances of transfer. When local and international policy experts work together on a set of policy problems, the boundaries between global and local are difficult to define. Instances that involve the creation of policy intuitions may arise from any source, and subsequently become part of state capacities for international communication. They have the appearance of policy movement but may in reality be an example of local group-think.

As indicated in the case of Paraguay, ambiguities in relation to the role of international organization in debates and developments at higher education seem to relate to the perceptions of past interventions by stakeholders in the systems, the type of conditions in which interactions takes place, and the degree of involvement of those institutions with public counterparts. International organizations provide the least assertive support to the implementation of early policy reforms in higher education, as has clearly been the case in Paraguay at the beginning of the education reform process in the 1990s, which centered on other sectors within the educational system.

Main Findings

One of the main findings of this research is that proposals for reform do not necessarily imply change. At the same time, changes can sometimes occur even in the absence of specific reforms. Changes, in terms of the growth and diversification of a system of higher education institutions, do not necessarily imply a substantial

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transformation in the ways in which institutions in a national system operate. In the same way, transfer and the implementation of specific modifications in public policy may represent only a symbolic adoption, resulting from policy inertia or political resistance to innovation in public policy, as observed in the case of Paraguay.

As shown through descriptions of the context, contingency is relevant to any modification in a system. As indicated in Chapters 5 and 6, the initial introduction of policy innovations, the promulgation of new legislations, or the effective constitution of new institutions, is contingent on local policy environments. Institutions created with scarce financial support may make effective transfer inoperative. At the same time, the evolution of those local institutions, legislative innovations, and the interactions that are established through long periods of time, in pursuit of policy innovations, indicates the possibility that policy success or failure may not be a clear measure of the outcome of a specific transfer.

This analysis points to the importance of historical approaches to the study of policy mobility in creating conditions for the developments of educational systems at each country. This development of policy is often related to common patterns of historically constituted public policy response, as shown in Chapter 5, where approaches of university institutions—both new and old—to reform initiatives are based, for example, on long held beliefs about university autonomy. However, as this dissertation indicates, global or regional patterns, are not irrelevant, but are contingently applied. Similarly, the significance attached to the activities of intergovernmental organizations in public policy seems contingent on particular economic and political interests, local policy trajectories, and past processes of international transfer.

As for the theoretical efficacy of the concept of global policy transfer, this dissertation has shown it can be limited in one sense and misleading in another, in terms of its capacity to provide a better understanding of the context of transfer. Certainly the concept of policy transfer has certain limitations for the description and understanding of processes of policy shifts in Paraguayan higher education. I have argued, in Chapter 6 in particular, that this limitation is linked to a set of basic assumptions, shared by most works on the study of transfer. These assumptions appear to be derived from a positivistic frame of policy analysis, which tends to emphasize policy as a linear rational process of policy making. I have underlined in contrast the importance of complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty in policy processes. I have presented an alternative perspective that views policy transfer not only in terms of ideological strategy, but also as an assemblage of policy in which non-rational choices of transfer are possible, in light of constraints to formulate something different. In other words, choices in policy making may not be the result of rational or bounded rationality that the notion of transfer appears to imply.

Another limitation of the concept of policy transfer is that the analysis it encourages is largely state-centric. That is, it applies transfer to the analysis of the state-related policies, without due exploration of the complexities and diversity of state configurations and institutions, and the larger context in which the state may be embedded. In other words, the homogenous representation of the state offers a simplistic perspective ignoring the complexity of the concept. I have argued that a more holistic perspective on policy transfer is needed to be able to recognize mobilities outside and within the framework of state activities. This is a serious limitation of the dominant view of policy transfer found in the literature. Therefore, a holistic perspective provides a

richer understanding of the complexity of interactions, but also allows us to understand

the contingencies associated with attempts to recognize the asymmetrical power relations

within which policy mobility can be negotiated.

Such recognition is necessary to the understanding of the national policy

environments in which the movements of public ideas occur. In light of this, this

dissertation suggests the need to seriously consider the notion of context, while providing

a better account of the way that power/influence operates in processes of transfer. The

consistent and systematic approach to policy circulation presented in Chapter 6 indicates

that a better understanding of public policy change requires both a holistic account of the

context and the constraints of policy environments. It requires, as well, accounts of the

way in which influence in transfer processes takes place, and the role that external and

local agents play in the negotiation of the processes of adoption of public policy

innovations.

Suggestions for Further Research

In Chapter 3, I indicated some of the limitations of this empirical case study, and

ended in Chapter 6 with conceptual inadequacies associated with the dominant linear

rationalist notion of global policy transfer. Making some tentative suggestions for further

research into this area, I would like to emphasize the need to expand the variety of policy

actors included in the research, for example, to include the voices of university students,

and representatives of intergovernmental organizations. Furthermore, further research

centered on the current processes of policy mobilities in higher education at the Common

Market of the South may provide a better understanding of the role the processes of

regional integration play in shaping initiatives of reform among their members. In addition, special consideration might be given to the possibility of researching the dynamics of debate, exchange and agenda setting at the regular meetings of ministers of education that configure the Educational Common Market of the South in Latin America.

Moreover, a study of multiple cases in the region may offer a clearer picture of the different types of policy mobility and public policy making processes that affect higher education. A study of multiple country cases may allow us to compare developments at different national settings in order to understand which strategies and institutional configurations enable or hinder specific policy developments. This will also help us to recognize the types of interpretations and debates on higher education that are generated in different contexts. Such a study of all policy might generate rich mapping of policy adoptions and lending, providing a better understanding of the ways in which policy making, at different policy fields within a national space, are interrelated.

I began this research with the basic idea, presented by comparativists, that context matters in the analysis of policy. To take context seriously is to recognize the importance of policy environments in specific places. This dissertation affirms the argument that, in an age of globalization, nation-states and their institutions are still relevant, because of their distinctive position relating to the implementation processes of public policy. In other words, specific policy responses to global and regional pressures are organized, and they allocate authority within particular territorial assemblages that we call the nation-state.

In the current period of globalization, policy environments within the borders of the nation state cannot be adequately comprehended without an understanding of the role

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that externalities—exogenous factors and institutions—play in the processes of policy making. However, the influence of those externalities, as in the case of international transfer of policy, is always contingent on the national policy environment that past and present activities of national institutions, within specific sectors of policy making, have helped produce. Both global and local processes, in terms of public policy, are thus, always contextually located, as is the nature of the relationship between the two. We must recognize that this is an insight that is fundamental to an understanding of the concept of global policy transfer.

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Appendix A

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIDB/IDB   Inter-American Development Bank

ANEAES   National Agency for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education /*Nacional* de Evaluación y *Acreditación* de la *Educación Superior* (Paraguay)

CARE   Advisory Council for the Education Reform */Consejo Asesor de la Reforma Educativa*

CONEC   National Council of Education and Culture/ *Consejo Nacional de Educación y Cultura* (Paraguay)

CONACYT   National Council for Sciences and Technology/ *Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología* (Paraguay)

CBERES   Bicameral Commission for the study of the Education Reform/National Congress (Paraguay)/

CEPAL   Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe

CPES   Centro Paraguayo de Estudios Sociológicos

CIDSEP   *Centro Interdisciplinario de Derecho Social y Economía Política* (Paraguay)

CNRES   National Commission for the Reform of Higher Education/ *Comisión Nacional para la Reforma de la Educación Superior* (Paraguay)

CU   Council of Universities

DGES   General Directorate for Higher Education/ *Dirección General de Educación Superior* (Paraguay)

DGEEC   *Dirección General de Estadísticas, Encuestas y Censos*

ECLA/UNECLA   United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

EU   European Union

HIID	Harvard Institute for International Development
IO	international organization
IGO	intergovernmental organization/international governmental organization
INGO	international nongovernmental organization
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IESALC	UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean
ISE	*Instituto Superior de Educación*
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture (Paraguay)
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MERCOSUR EDUCATIVO	Educational Southern Common Market
MEXA	Experimental Mechanism of Acreditation for the MERCOSUR/*Mecanismo Experimental de Acreditacion del MERCOSUR*
NGO	non-governmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OEI	Organization of Ibero-American States for the Education, Science and Culture
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
STP	Secretaria Técnica de Planificación
SNA	social network analysis
SNEPE	National Evaluation System for the Education Process/ *Sistema Nacional de Evaluación del Proceso Educativo*(Paraguay)
TFHES	Task Force on Higher Education and Society

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank
USAID	United States Agency of International Development
UCA	*Universidad Católica Nuestra Señora de la Asunción/Universidad Católica*
UNA	*Universidad Nacional de Asunción*
WCEFA	World Conference on Education for All (1990), Jomtien
WER	world education report

Appendix B

Interview Protocol English Version

Questions	Central Theme	Prompts
Introduction Questions:	Profession History and Background on organization/agency	• Can you describe what your current role/position is? • What has prepared you to work in this position? • How long have you been working on issues related to higher education?
Is there any major document/report/publication internationally that has, in your opinion, affected the development of higher education policy in the past decade?	Intergovernmental Organizations/ National Agencies/ Function of Educational policy production	• Who is publishing policy reports/documents about the higher education sector? • Why is this particular report considered important? • Which publications are distributed/promoted by local policy actors? • What was the role of IGOs/ Multilateral Agencies in the promotion/distribution of those publications?
What constrains enable or hinder policy change in higher education in Paraguay?	Role of Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) Role of the Central State and the MEC Description of the context of Higher Education MERCOSUR	• Are Intergovernmental Organizations affecting the development of higher education policies? • What country processes are affecting the development of higher education? • What are the roles that national institutions, departments, or offices play? • What regional processes are affecting the development of higher education?

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Questions	Central Theme	Prompts
Who does advocate higher education policy and why?	Potential Agents of transfer/ Debates of reform/ Purpose of policy change in higher education	• Could you mention some of the more important policy advocates of policy reform in Paraguay? • Are state departments or offices involved in the advocacy of higher education policy change? • Are local agencies of IGOs involved in any way with the advocacy of policy change? • What is the rationale about policy change of those higher education policy advocates?
What policy communities or/policy networks have been involved in the process of policy production of higher education policy in the last decade?	Local policy communities/Epistemic Communities/ Educational Policy Production	• What is the relationship between members of those policy communities? • Do IGOs play any role in the constitution of those communities? • Are any local NGOs involved in the production of those policies? • What are the relationships between the different "policy communities" involved in the production of higher education policy?