

Higher Education Research in Latin America: Trends and Resources

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Approximately half of the students in higher education today live in the developing world. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the number of books and research centers on higher education is rapidly rising in developing countries. This is the case in Latin America, where a significant number of specialists are working on the problems of higher education institutions in the region. The fact that most of their research output is published in Spanish complicates the access to the English-speaking academic community. However, these important studies should not be ignored by specialists in the English-speaking community and other communities. Therefore, this article provides information concerning several books recently published in Latin America—specifically, in Argentina, Mexico, and Columbia.

Many differences exist among Latin American countries in the development of their higher education systems, research infrastructure, and number of specialists working on higher education. These variations relate to the number of institutions and the total enrollments in higher education as well as factors such as academic traditions or national policies. Nevertheless, it may be useful to classify the countries according to the level of institutionalized research on higher education. Some countries have quite a few research centers, specialists, associations of practitioners, journals, governmental bodies, and established networks of experts. Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina fall into this group. Countries in the process of consolidating their research systems include Colombia, Venezuela, and Cuba. A group of countries that has made serious efforts to develop more institutionalized research in this field, but are at an early stage of development, includes Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Peru. A final group is comprised of countries that have not yet developed institutionalized research on higher education—such as the Central American countries as well as others about whose research systems specialists know very little, such as Uruguay and Paraguay.

Another relevant factor concerns the diverse topics analyzed in the region, a reflection of the differences that exist across Latin America. Many of the topics concern

only specific institutions, but others are relevant for the majority of the higher education systems worldwide.

Current Literature

Orlando, Albornoz. *Cuba y China, ¿Son dos opciones académicas para Venezuela? Un ejercicio de educación superior comparada internacional* (Cuba and China: Are they two academic options for Venezuela? An exercise in comparative international higher education). Caracas, Venezuela: Universidad Central de Venezuela-Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Sociales, 2000. 345 pp. ISBN: 980-00-1659-0. Address: Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Sociales, UCV, Unidad de publicaciones, Caracas, Venezuela.

Venezuela is one of the countries in Latin America currently experiencing a complicated political and economic situation. This is the context in which Albornoz presented his analysis. According to Venezuelan officials, Cuba and China are the two educational models that Venezuela should follow. Therefore, Albornoz, one of the most well-known researchers on higher education in Venezuela, decided to undertake a comparative analysis of the viability of this idea. Albornoz analyzes the Cuban and Chinese education systems, their characteristics, history, and problems to see what Venezuela can learn from these two countries' experiences. The author discusses the real possibilities for its future in the Venezuelan higher education system.

Pablo González Casanova. *La universidad necesaria en el siglo XXI* (A university paradigm for the twenty-first century). Mexico: Era, 2001. 167 pp. ISBN: 968-411-512-1. Address: Editorial Era, Calle del Trabajo 31, 14269, Mexico, D.F., Mexico.

González Casanova discusses the relevant issues concerning the type of university a society like Mexico's needs as it confronts its most pressing national problems. The author addresses the current challenges for universities in the context of globalization: finance, the relationship with state and national governments, privatization, and access. He proposes a university model for Mexico that addresses all these issues from a humanistic, democratic, and critical perspective; this is one of the most important strengths of this text.

Francisco López Segrera and Alma Maldonado-Maldonado, eds. *Educación superior latinoamericana y organismos internacionales. Un análisis crítico* (Latin American higher education and international organizations. A critical analysis). Cali: Universidad de San Buenaventura Cali, 2002. 267 pp. \$15 (pb). ISBN: 958-95925-4-6. Address: Universidad de San Buenaventura Cali, La Umbría. Carretera a Pance, A.A. 25162 y 7154, Colombia. E-mail: <jlgrosso@usb.edu.co>.

López Segrera and Maldonado have edited a collection of eight different essays analyzing the impact of the report *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2000), focusing on Latin American countries. The book includes chapters by authors such as José Joaquín Brunner, Carlos Tünnermann, Axel Didriksson, Roberto Rodríguez, and other specialists, as well as by the editors. The authors analyze, from a Latin American perspective, the future impact of this report in the implementation of different policies involving higher education institutions. The essays point out many important topics: the influence of globalization on higher education, the process of institutional reform, a historical review of World Bank recommendations, the problems with research, the trends with regard to curriculum, and the pertinence and future of Latin American higher education institutions—all in the context of the main recommendations and conclusions of the document written by the Task Force on Higher Education and Society.

Renate Marsiske, ed. *La universidad de México: Un recorrido histórico de la época colonial al presente* (The Mexican University: A historical journey from colonial times to the present). Mexico: Centro de Estudios sobre la Universidad (CESU)-UNAM- Plaza y Valdés Editores, 2001. 326 pp. \$15 (pb). ISBN: 968-36-9737-2. Address: CESU, Edif. de la Unidad bibliográfica, lado norte del Centro Cultural Universitario, Coyoacán, Mexico, D.F. 04510, Mexico. E-mail: <emaro@servidor.unam.mx>.

This book includes 14 chapters about the history of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). The authors, 12 researchers at the CESU-UNAM, analyze the different stages in UNAM's history—first, as the Royal University, then the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico, the National University of Mexico, the Autonomous University of Mexico, and finally in its current configuration. This book constitutes a good source on UNAM and provides an important interdisciplinary study not only about this institution but about Mexican universities in general.

Javier Mendoza Rojas. *Los conflictos de la UNAM en el siglo XX* (UNAM's conflicts in the 20th century). Mexico: Centro de Estudios sobre la Universidad (CESU)-UNAM-Plaza y Valdés Editores, 2001. 254 pp. \$15 (pb). ISBN: 968-36-9485-3. Address: CESU, Edif. de la Unidad bibliográfica, lado norte del Centro Cultural Universitario, Coyoacán, México, D.F. 04510, México. E-mail: <emaro@servidor.unam.mx>.

The National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) is one of the largest universities in Latin America and the world. It is also one of the oldest and

most complex institutions of higher education in the region. UNAM has lived through many important political conflicts during its history and particularly since 1900. The most recent event was the student strike that started in 1999 and ended almost one year later, as a consequence of the attempt of the authorities to increase tuition. Mendoza Rojas traces the major conflicts that have arisen at UNAM since its reopening in 1910. The author divides the history of the institution into eight periods: its creation as an elite institution, the Mexican Revolution, the phase between 1920 and 1940, the "golden age" of the university, the political and cultural crisis in the 1960s, the populism of the 1970s, the lost decade in the 1980s (when the state no longer considered the university a useful social institution for its national project), and the modernization process began in the 1990s. For those who are interested in learning about the most important public university in Mexico this book represents an important source.

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Javier Mendoza Rojas. *Transición de la educación superior contemporánea en México: de la planeación al Estado Evaluador* (The transition of contemporary higher education in Mexico: From planning to evaluating State). Mexico: Centro de Estudios sobre la Universidad (CESU)-UNAM-Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2002. 374 pp. \$12 (pb). ISBN: 970-701-201-2. Address: CESU, Edif. de la Unidad bibliográfica, lado norte del Centro Cultural Universitario, Coyoacán, Mexico, D.F. 04510, Mexico. E-mail: <emaro@servidor.unam.mx>.

The decade of the 1990s is considered the period in which significant reforms occurred in Latin American higher education systems. Mendoza Rojas points out that at the beginning of this decade, a new approach to coordinating the higher education system was initiated. The traditional role of the state changed, and evaluation became the most important policy mechanism, together with market logic, to regulate the development of higher education institutions. In addition to an analysis of the policies implemented during the 1980s, the author presents a discussion of the main actors, programs, and initiatives that influenced and regulated higher education institutions. The analysis is centered on the changes started in the 1990s when the economic crisis forced institutions

to modify their policies. A range of evaluation and accountability procedures were introduced encompassing institutions, programs, academics, students, and research projects, among other elements. Mendoza Rojas's book constitutes a basic document for understanding the transformation in the public policies that took place in Mexico over the last two decades.

Marcela Mollis. *La Universidad argentina en tránsito: Ensayo para jóvenes y no tan jóvenes* (The Argentine University in transition: An essay for the young and not so young). Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001. 145 pp. \$7. (pb) ISBN: 950-557-421-5. Address: Fondo de Cultura Económica S.A., El Salvador 5665, 1414, Buenos Aires, Argentina. E-mail: <fondo@fce.com.ar>.

Every book that focuses on Argentina has acquired special relevance in view of the economic and political crisis that the country is now experiencing. This is the case with Mollis's book. The author describes and analyzes the Argentine higher education system and the principal trends, problems, and transformations that the system has been facing. The text is presented in a very informal way because it is addressed to a general audience. In fact, one of the author's main purposes is to provide a guide for

young people of college age, to help them in making decisions about their educational options and especially their professional future. Mollis discusses the current process of marketization in Argentina from a very critical point of view. Although this book was written prior to the recent economic crisis in Argentina, it provides a realistic analysis that remains relevant.

Alberto C. Taquini. *La transformación de la educación superior argentina: De las nuevas universidades a los colegios universitarios* (The transformation of Argentine higher education: From the new universities to traditional colleges). Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de Educación, 2000. 339 pp. ISBN: 987-9145-10-0. Address: Pacheco de Melo, 2084, 1126 Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Taquini's book presents a study about Argentine higher education. The author presents important data about the system and some statistics about enrollment, institutions, and programs. The author also discusses the problems and major trends of the system. The book provides an analysis of the context for Argentine higher education, labor market demands, and other issues, such as decentralization of the system. ■

News of the Center and the Boston College Program in Higher Education

The Center has received support for a research project on The Past and Future of Asian Universities. Experts from 12 Asian countries will examine past and future trends affecting universities in their countries. The countries involved include China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Cambodia. The research group will meet at Nagoya University in Japan, in December 2002, to discuss their findings, and a book will be published based on this work. The project is undertaken in cooperation with Prof. Toru Umakoshi of Nagoya University, and is supported by the Toyota Foundation, The Japan Foundation, and the Japanese Ministry of Education.

Work on our major reference handbook on African higher education has been completed and the book will be published by Indiana University Press at the end of 2002. Copies will be made available without cost to key research institutions in Africa. Damtew Teferra has been the main researcher on this project. Philip G. Altbach spent a month as a visiting professor at the Fondation Nationale d'Etudes Sciences Politique and the Centre de Sociologie des Organisations. While in Paris, he lectured at the OECD, Sciences Po, CSO, and others. Damtew Teferra, Center staff member, is participating in an Africa-focused study of information technology. He recently participated in a conference on African higher education at the University of Illinois. The Center welcomes Roberta Bassett, Jef Davis, Francesca Purcell, Alma Maldonado-Maldonado, and Robin Matross as graduate assistants for the 2002 fall semester.