

This volume, “Trends in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean”, presents various themes in the field of Higher Education examined from a regional perspective. These texts will serve as a basis for reflection and discussion at the Regional Conference on Higher Education – CRES 2008.

The work is a result of a project of the same name which Axel Didriksson presented to the Governing Board of IESALC - UNESCO at its ordinary session from August 29-30, 2006. This date coincided with the beginning of the mandate of Ana Lúcia Gazzola, IESALC Director for the 2006 – 2008 period. For her part, on the occasion she presented to the council the project entitled “The Map of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean” (MESALC). The “Trends in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean” project seeks, using a future perspective, to identify possible scenarios and long-term trends in Higher Education, MESALC, for its part, presents snapshots of different aspects of Higher Education in the region, using indicators to make possible the construction of comparable national data bases that converge into a regional data base. Much like an atlas viewed in layers, stages, and sets of indicators, which make it possible to gradually focus on the realities of Higher Education in the region. MESALC is meant to afford the reader successive snapshots in simultaneous historical views. As complements, both projects are intended to foster the discussion and comparative study of public and institutional policies in the region. With the projects approved by the Board, committees of specialists were organized for their academic coordination under the direction of IESALC - UNESCO¹.

Through different meetings at the IESALC-UNESCO headquarters in Caracas, projects were formulated and methodologies defined for each one. In the case of the “Trends ...” project, themes to be treated were identified, as well as the different types of indicators for MESALC. Later, the projects were discussed and approved in two meetings – that of the Presidents of Councils of Rectors, and of the International, Regional, and Sub-Regional University Networks of Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by IESALC-UNESCO in November, 2006 in Brasília and in May, 2007 in Caracas, respectively². These two meetings were perhaps the most representative of all that had been held until that date between university associations and networks of the region.

As the result of the discussions that took place at these meetings, priority themes were defined for the “Trends ...” project among those that were proposed initially. In addition, various working groups were organized in order to jointly develop each of the themes, based on a vision of their mutual complexities and inter-relations, and aimed at making possible the

1 The members of the coordinating commission of the “Trends ...” project were: Eduardo Aponte-Hernández (Puerto Rico), José Dias Sobrinho (Brazil), Jorge Landinelli (Uruguay), Hebe Vessuri (Venezuela), Xiomara Zarur Miranda (Colombia), under the coordination of Ana Lúcia Gazzola (IESALC) and Axel Didriksson (Mexico). For the Map Project: Mauro Braga (Brazil), Galo Burbano (Colombia), Sylvie Didou Aupetit (Mexico), Luís Eduardo González (Chile), Gabriel Macaya (Costa Rica), Luis Piscocoy (Peru), Hélijo Trindade (Brazil), Ernesto Villanueva (Argentina), under the coordination of Ana Lúcia Gazzola, Klaus Jaffé, and José Renato Carvalho (IESALC - UNESCO).

2 With the financial support of the governments of Spain (AECID), Brazil (MEC), and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (MES), that made possible the projects and these meetings.

development of integrative proposals. The final result of the project is this collective work that we present here.

The themes and the respective coordinators are the following: the world and regional contexts of Higher Education, Axel Didriksson; the role of Higher Education in the construction of knowledge, Hebe Vessuri; quality, pertinence, and relevance: the social responsibility of institutions of Higher Education, José Dias Sobrinho; inclusion and equity, Eduardo Aponte-Hernández; diversification, differentiation, and segmentation of Higher Education, Jorge Landinelli; regional integration and the internationalization of Higher Education, Xiomara Zarur Miranda; Higher Education reforms, Ernesto Villanueva; accreditation and assessment systems of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, Sueli Pires and Maria José Lemaitre; government and governability of institutions of Higher Education, Daniel Samoïlovich; and the financing of Higher Education, Luís A. Riveros.

Once the working groups had been organized and the treatment of the themes had begun, a new factor appeared: the year 2006 marked the tenth anniversary of the First Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Havana 1996), which was preparatory for the 1998 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education. Both IESALC-UNESCO and the various university networks of the region felt that it was vital to carry out a systematic and comparative analysis of the progress, changes, and impacts that had occurred since 1998 in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the world. Therefore, in August, 2007, IESALC – UNESCO authorities presented to its Governing Board the proposal of holding in 2008 a second Regional Conference on Higher Education, in the expectation that Latin America and the Caribbean would encourage the organization of a Paris + 10 Conference. The council approved the meeting and proposed that the themes of the “Trends ...” project, under development at that time, form the basis for discussion of the Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES 2008). The themes of the project became themes for CRES 2008, and for its preparatory meetings. Together with the development of the studies, the themes were discussed at various national or sub-regional meetings, many with the participation of IESALC-UNESCO and the coordinators of the working groups of the project.

The result of the process described above is the work before you. It has become the basis for fostering a profound discussion to take place in Cartagena de Indias during CRES 2008. The work, published in Spanish and in English, is presented in three parts. Parts I and II, in Spanish and in English respectively, contain ten texts that correspond to each of the themes, under the responsibility of the thematic coordinators who appear as their principal authors. The treatment of the themes and the opinions expressed are the responsibilities of their authors. Part III is a CD-ROM which accompanies this publication. Its production was coordinated by Beatriz Tancredi³. The CD-Rom organizes and integrates, in their original form, the specific contributions to each theme by the consultants who made up the working groups. The authors of these texts assume entire responsibility for the opinions expressed therein. Their names are given in the summaries of each chapter and in the notes at the beginning of each summary text. In order to foster discussion among the conference participants, the texts that make up each of the above-mentioned publications are available on the web sites of IESALC-UNESCO and of CRES 2008.

3 Beatriz Tancredi also coordinated the management of the “Trends ...” project beginning in July, 2007, with the technical support of Erika Medina, María Fernanda Gutiérrez, Yeritza Rodríguez, and Zulay Gómez.

The “Trends in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean” project is based on the principle that education is a public good and a social and universal right, and on the conviction that education has a strategic role to play in the sustainable development of the countries of the region. The project brings together the efforts of the academic and non-academic communities of the region in the important task of identifying desirable and feasible scenarios, as well as presenting the principal ideas and forces that can aid in defining state policies for the consolidation, expansion, and increasing quality and pertinence of Higher Education in the region.

The key to the project and the vision that has guided the elaboration of the texts may be summarized under the theme of the Regional Conference on Higher Education: “Local and Global Challenges: a Strategic Agenda for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean”. It presents in prospective terms the challenges and opportunities faced by Higher Education in the region in the light of regional integration and of globalization. What it seeks, in essence, is to identify scenarios of change in order to carry out a new phase of substantive reforms of Higher Education, and to guide the efforts of the different actors, institutions, and governments toward the formulation of regional and state policies that can contribute to the sustainable development of the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region. The objective is to shape a scenario for articulating in a creative and sustainable manner, policies that strengthen the social commitments of institutions of Higher Education, their quality, pertinence, and responsible autonomy. These policies should have as a goal the achievement of greater social coverage with quality, equality, and equity. They should induce the development of alternatives and innovations in curricula, in educational offerings, in the production and transfer of knowledge and learning, as well as fostering the establishment and consolidation of strategic alliances.

In Chapter 1, “Global and Regional Contexts of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean”, Axel Didriksson (with contributions by Efraín Medina, Miguel Rojas Mix, Lincoln Bizzozero, and Javier Pablo Hermo) discusses the principal changes that have taken place in Higher Education in recent decades, such as growing heterogeneity and diversity, the rise of macro-universities and technical training institutions, expansion in the numbers of students and of the private system, the increase of scientific research, the impact of the new technologies, the commercialization of education, the development of new courses and new areas of interdisciplinary-based knowledge, and the growing importance of internationalization. He then analyzes the changes associated to the development of a knowledge society and the role of institutions of Higher Education in this perspective that require new models of training, learning, and innovation. Another aspect analyzed is the exclusion of Latin America and the Caribbean from international classifications in terms of knowledge and innovation, causing the region to be characterized, as revealed by science and technology indicators, as one that receives or imitates knowledge rather than for its innovation and creativity. The analysis distinguishes two kinds of knowledge societies: the nominal or unbalanced type, and the intelligent type in which the benefits of development are distributed to the majority of the population. In addition, the author treats the difficult conditions of the transition process through which the region is passing. The so-called “lost decades” of Latin America and the Caribbean resulted in a long period of economic contraction that damaged the quality and the equity of education. In spite of significant changes that have occurred, the region still shows

low indicators of educational development compared to those of the industrialized countries, while grave imbalances persist, such as the concentration of enrolments in a few countries and in specific fields of knowledge; the unequal distribution of researchers; and the uncontrolled advance of the private sector. The analysis then treats the effects of resource diversification policy in Higher Education, and the impulse given to market orientations. It affirms the need for basic reforms in institutions of Higher Education through the new actors in the processes of change – the researchers. Regional cooperation is presented as an important dimension in such change processes: student mobility, equivalences of degrees and titles, cooperation agreements, and particularly, university networks, are instruments that will foster moving toward a “Latin American society of knowledge”. An obstacle to this progress in the region is the poor use of the transition conditions toward a new economy, as revealed by low education rates within the labour force, concentration of research capacity in a few countries, the scant interest of the productive sector in developing endogenous capacity, and the flight of talent out of the region. The text concludes with a proposal for a new university reform, and for fundamental changes in terms of cooperation and integration in order to make possible the development of strategic research and the effective transfer of knowledge.

In Chapter 2, “Overtaken by the Future: Foreseeable Changes in Science and Technology” Hebe Vessuri (with contributions by José Miguel Cruces, Renato Janine Ribeiro, and José Luís Ramírez) treats the function of science and technology in the preparation of future transformations, and discusses foreseeable changes in their influence on Higher Education and on societies in Latin America and the Caribbean. She also discusses the ways of identifying possible and desirable techno-futures, the understanding of their scientific and institutional scopes, as well as their social implications. Considering the characteristics of countries such as those in Latin America and the Caribbean that are basically consumers of science and technology, the author discusses the alternatives and degrees of autonomy in the construction of their futures. She analyzes the role of knowledge in the modern world in codifying meanings and reducing uncertainty in the collective representation of social systems, resulting in a reflective and anticipatory capacity that explains the stability of the trajectories of knowledge-based economies. The author demonstrates that the promotion of certain agendas as rational and coherent does in fact foster a specific technological future, both in terms of scenarios and policies as well as in particular practices, while at the same time, other possible futures are discarded. Based on these considerations, the text concentrates on the analysis of various trends: changes in the stratified and hierarchical structure of science in this phase of globalization; the new technological convergence, particularly of nanotechnologies; the bio-sciences and information and communication technologies; the role of science and its impact on Higher Education; the production and consumption of knowledge, and the type of “science system” increasingly fostered in order to support the search for sustainable development.

The author then analyzes the great challenges of the next twenty years, which include the possibility of participating in the creation and distribution of knowledge from varied contexts, the forms of making effective scientific collaboration from different contexts, controls on types of patents, and other exclusionary mechanisms that will become more complex, diversified, and penetrating. She concludes that the ability to overcome barriers and frontiers will grow, while at the same time effective barriers will be defined. Another aspect analyzed is that of public legislation – which is also changing drastically as a result of competitive values and

interests, but without adequate and rapid political responses to technical change. Among the various questions posed for discussion, the author emphasizes the importance of defining what Latin America and the Caribbean are to do in order to manage new scenarios and to participate in the world that is emerging as a consequence of current developments in science and technology and those that will certainly appear in coming years.

In Chapter 3, “Quality, pertinence, and the social responsibility of the Latin American and Caribbean university”, José Dias Sobrinho (with contributors Adolfo Stubrin, Elvira Martín, Luís Eduardo González and Oscar Espinoza, and Pedro Goergen) argues that the quality of Higher Education is particularly linked to pertinence, equity, and social responsibility, and should take into consideration the public commitments and social roles proper to educational institutions. The text presents different concepts and aspects of quality in Higher Education, without disregarding the fact that education should always be considered as a public good, meaning that it is a social right to be extended to all, following a logic of decreasing inequalities and a commitment to social justice, as well as the goal of reconciling quantity and quality. Moreover, it is vital to consider the criteria of equity and of social justice, joined to the concept of education as a public good. The author states that quality does not exist in education systems that marginalize citizens, that are excluding, and in which inclusion is not fostered through the criteria of pertinence, relevance, equity, and quality.

The text also presents general suggestions for approaching the great heterogeneity of Latin America and the Caribbean. Stating that the social responsibility of Higher Education is also associated with the concepts of pertinence and relevance, and therefore, to quality as a public value, the author concludes that education cannot content itself with the economist and business meaning of development. He states that, consequently, the quality of Higher Education must clearly refer to the commitments of institutions, to the social meaning of knowledge and training, the ethical and moral values of collective well-being, the democratization of access and permanence, and to social justice and sustainable development. For this reason, quality assessment and accreditation models in Latin America and the Caribbean cannot copy the criteria and standards of the major powers, but rather must take into account the realities of different national contexts. This means that it is vital to preserve university autonomy in order for them to think independently and to make their decision based on agreed upon academic values, while maintaining as referents the criteria of pertinence, relevance, and quality.

Thus, there is a need for a broad technical and political discussion in an effort to arrive at an integral and integrating conception that, while producing some adjustments in language, can establish general criteria appropriate to national realities, to efforts at regional and sub-regional integration, and to solidarity-based internationalization.

In Chapter 4, “Inequality, inclusion, and equity trends in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: towards an alternative scenario for 2021” Eduardo Aponte-Hernández (with contributions by Mauro Mendes Braga, Luís Piscoya Hermoza, Dora Celton, and Daniel Macadar) begins a discussion on the theme based on declarations of the UNESCO Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean of 1996, the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education of 1998, and the Vision and Action for the XXI Century guidelines which propose fostering policies and action strategies for greater inclusion and equity of opportunities in institutions of Higher Education in order to broaden the access based on talent, skills, and effort, without discrimination in terms of gender, race, ethnicity,

physical disabilities, language, culture, religion, or economic or social considerations. These documents understand the educational process as one that begins early and extends to Higher Education, and that eventually merges with society.

The text discusses both inequality and movements in the direction of inclusion and equity in Higher Education in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and makes recommendations in terms of public and institutional policies for reducing inequality and fostering inclusion and equity within Higher Education in the countries of the region within the time horizon of 2021. The author's analysis shows that, in spite of increases in demand and offers of study opportunities (access) in the region, the expansion is characterized by a differentiation in the scope of coverage, an increase in the cost of study, and heterogeneity in the levels of quality of institutions of Higher Education, thus resulting in more exclusion than inclusion. The same tendency is in evidence in secondary education. He then discusses the new economy and the advent of knowledge societies, a context within which the insufficiency of study opportunities and the absence or lack of effective inclusion policies in the region can have the effect of increasing existing inequalities, deepening the cognitive and "digital" gap, and thus encouraging the migration of talent, increasing unemployment, and resulting in a negative impact on cohesion and the social fabric.

The text emphasizes the important role of governments in the formulation and implementation of public policies in order to face challenges in the field of Higher Education, and affirms that such a role can neither be delegated to the market, nor to private initiative. Finally, through the analysis of trend indicators and the construction of scenarios, the author seeks to determine their impact on the political, economic, and social development of the region, and proposes lines of action for governments and Higher Education systems, with the support of international organizations linked to the development in institutions of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Chapter 5, "Scenarios of diversification, differentiation, and segmentation of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean" by Jorge Landinelli (with contributions from Antonio MacDowell de Figueiredo, Marcela Mollis, Sabine Manigat, and Daniel Mato), treats the phenomenon of the stratification of systems by asking a vital question: are current institutional formats adequate for supporting the design and implementation of sustainable development policies in the region, linked to collective well-being, the construction of democratic citizenship, and the shaping of a new architecture of inter-culturality? The article links together two key analytic parameters. The first refers to the determinants of the organizational development of Higher Education in recent history – that is, the changes which, as results of complex social processes, have made necessary strategic reconsiderations that led to processes of diversification, differentiations, and segmentation of university organizations. The second parameter refers to the challenges presented by the new international division of academic labour, and the incorporation of Latin America and the Caribbean into the civilizing paradigm of information and knowledge societies.

In this context, the author argues that the future of Higher Education is linked to the propensity to interact on the international plane and to integrate academic activities, proposing a different scenario that makes possible a reassignment of meaning of institutions of Higher Education, aimed at the definition of alternate lines of action and explicit reforms that lend meaning to the changes, in accordance with the contexts proper to each national experience.

In this perspective, the author presents some necessary areas of structural renovation of education systems, within a perspective of future development based on the requisites of pertinence, and underlines the strategic meaning of the coordination of public regulation policies and democratic control of the quality of education.

In Chapter 6, “Regional integration and the internationalization of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean”, Xiomara Zarur Miranda (with contributions by Sylvie Didou Aupetit, Galo Burbano López, Rafael Guarga, Lorna Parkins, and Gabriela Siufi) seeks to analyze in a regional context, the implications of the dynamic of expansion of world trade on educational services, currently driven by business interests connected to transnational economic agents, in the face of the possibility of carrying out other types of cooperation and integration in the region such as academic exchange agreements between universities with parity, the development of regional and sub-regional blocks, as well as other modalities conceived within the action framework of UNESCO.

The author presents a brief description of the context, trends, and the impact of a series of themes in regard to Higher Education in the region, as well as of the major changes that have occurred since the UNESCO World Conference of 1998, describing the current situation and the trends of the principle variables which have had an impact in this field. Among these are: quality, pertinence, the social responsibility of universities, inequalities in Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of access and study opportunities and conditions of permanence and graduation associated with conditions of poverty and social injustice in the region, the development of ICTs, and their impacts on education systems, and the need to establish new paradigms that make it possible to confront, on the one hand, the complexity of global and local contexts, and on the other, the ways in which universities will have to face situations such as the need for coverage, the training of professionals, and the production and use of knowledge in times of uncertainty.

Based on the above analysis, the author then introduces elements for defining the role of Higher Education in key transformations in order to achieve sustainable human development for Latin America and the Caribbean. This role is no other than being the catalyst for solidarity-based cooperation based on horizontal and complementary relationships that make possible fostering South-South dialogue, the development of a sense of pertinence in the region, cooperation with areas of governmental integration in order to influence the formulation of public policies, the nourishment of processes of development of teachers and students, and the generation and exchange of knowledge, among other factors, and all of this taking place in order to take mutual advantage of our strengths and to overcome our weaknesses as a region.

Finally, the author presents policy proposals and strategies for fostering the construction of new scenarios of international cooperation, and the development of specific capacities that make possible the promotion and establishment of integration processes of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Among these are regional and sub-regional agendas, observatories of good practices, legislative reforms, and collaborative graduate study – all conceived from the perspective of the construction of desirable future scenarios, and the positioning of Higher Education vis-a-vis society and the state as we approach 2021. In these future scenarios the author emphasizes the role of IESALC-UNESCO as a network of networks and as a platform for bringing together the activities of other multi-lateral organizations and the university networks that function in the region.

In Chapter 7, “Higher Education reforms: 25 proposals for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean”, Ernesto Villanueva (with contributions by Claudia Bogosian, Carolina González Velasco, Nicolás Bentancur, Maria do Carmo de Lacerda Peixoto, and Maribel Duriez González) states that changes underway in Higher Education represent a transition between the development style of the 1990s and the beginning of the construction of a new growth model and the distinctive presence in this level of education in the new century. The underlying determinants and final consequences of the changes in course are far from clear. It is possible, however, to point toward elements that indicate a different scenario.

However, the arrival of these elements represents a key opportunity for defining the position of the region for the World Conference on Higher Education to be held in 2009 as a forum for the discussion of the global policies that will guide Higher Education in the coming decade throughout the world. At the same time, consideration of these elements is vital in order to change the structural obstacles that affect the balanced development of the region, and involving a process of change in both organizations and institutions. Therefore, the article proposes 25 actions in regard to the following themes: the social commitment of advanced knowledge; the potential and challenges of new technologies; management and financing; and national and international frameworks.

Chapter 8, “Higher Education Accreditation and Assessment Systems in Latin America and the Caribbean” by Sueli Pires and Maria José Lemaitre (with contributions by Hélió Trindade, Eduardo Ali, and Hernán Trebino), treats the theme of accreditation and assessment of Higher Education in the region from a proactive perspective of change and improvement of the quality of social subjects and education systems, in order to convert quality assurance processes into assets for improvement rather than for the control or freezing of national systems. The article presents readers with an eminently practical view of what has occurred in the region in terms of assessment and accreditation, their functioning in a comparative perspective with a focus on trends, motivations, challenges, and risks. The presentation begins with a historical perspective, seeking to focus on scenarios of the recent growth in supply and demand (undergraduate and graduate) of Higher Education. It analyzes structural changes and the establishment of initiatives in countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, beginning in the 1990s in order to establish and strengthen national assessment and accreditation policies within the context of the new knowledge societies. An analysis of the set of systems in the region reveals, on the one hand, countries with quite consolidated policies, and others with progress and successful national experiences. On the other hand, there are countries that are still in the phase of implementing their systems. Using a comparative perspective, the author points toward the strengthening of national and institutional systems as a challenge for the progress of education policies in the region. Both situations are discussed from the perspectives of their models, applications, social functions, and difficulties, within the framework of sub-regional and regional assessment and accreditation initiatives. Through the set of specific conclusions presented in the document of the comparative analysis of systems and of the pertinence and efficacy of quality assurance mechanisms, the analysis arrives at a general understanding of quality assurance assessment and accreditation processes which have changed from mere theoretical recommendations to effectively implemented policy in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in other regions of the world.

In Chapter 9, “Pathways to innovation. Re-thinking the government of public universities in Latin America”,⁴ Daniel Samoilovich states that Latin American universities need and deserve better government. Without denying the contributions they make to society, he sees universities as being lost in a labyrinth, the result of both scarcely articulated and insufficiently financed public policies and institutional inertia and corporative academic interests. However, he sees evidence that institutions are improving their governmental practices as a result of stimuli of context and of their own decisions through innovations that are contributing to better governability, understood as the capacity to develop an institutional project and put it into practice.

In order to reduce the great heterogeneity of situations, the work undertakes an analysis of the public universities in the region, while recognizing that many innovations take place within private institutions.

He explores, first, the contextual factors that require a greater response capacity of public universities: increases in coverage, an improvement in the permanence of students that come from underprivileged social sectors, greater pertinence and quality of their offerings.

In a second part, he analyzes the obstacles that commonly hinder the governability of institutions: their complexity, the diversity of their actors, their characteristics of loosely-coupled organizations, the intrinsic weakness of the form of authority exercised by rectors, and the little efficacious functioning of collegial bodies. Globally, the flow of power in the organization presents problems of “analytic topology” as in a Mobius strip.

The author then focuses attention on the disarticulation between three key functions: an institutional project, academic management, and financial administration. An important part of the obstacles is related to difficulties in linking these three orders of questions among each other, which produces various pathologies: strategic planning without implementation, academic management without a relation to an institutional project, and inertial resource allocation. Thus “good government” is seen as a triangle between the functions of government, academia, and administration. The work is not prescriptive since it doesn’t propose a model, but it does highlight the importance of the interaction between the three functions mentioned.

The third part analyzes major changes in public policies during the last 15 years – particularly in regard to norms, the introduction of assessment and accreditation systems, and the utilization of non-traditional finance mechanisms. In this sense, one can state that changes in norms have been scarce, reflecting a governmental determination of the difficulties or problems of proposing radical changes. There has been a preference, in general, to introduce assessment or accreditation mechanisms as a form of influencing the behaviour of institutions. It has been more difficult, however, to link the results of assessments with complementary financing mechanisms, which have in some cases been applied with disparate results.

Finally, the author proposes a route map for improving the governability of institutions and to identify institutional innovations that have a favourable impact on the governmental capacities of universities.

Chapter 10, “Challenges and dilemmas of the financing of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean” by Luís A. Riveros (with contributions by Carlos Cáceres, Efraín Medina, and Jacques Schwartzman), presents the situation and context of the financing of Higher Education in the region. The author states that financing mechanisms and policies of Higher Education is one of the most decisive areas in Latin America and the Caribbean. On

⁴ This text is part of a IESALC-UNESCO project with the partnership of the Universidad de Buenos Aires and Columbus.

the one hand, the results of Higher Education have been considered crucial from the perspective of economic development and of the achievements desired by countries in this area, which requires specialized human capital and the development of applied knowledge. On the other hand, Higher Education is a sensitive area, and the treatment of new financing policies is a very important political factor. Furthermore, the impact of Higher Education on equity is important, with this having growing weight in economic and social policy. However, although the economic situation of Latin American countries has improved considerably in recent years, there have not been financial policies that guarantee the sustainable development of Higher Education, particularly in the fields most linked to public goods and the externalities that it produces. The expansion in demand for Higher Education in recent years has been covered through greater efficiency in the use of resources, but also through declining quality. On the other hand, the still scant private participation of the private sector in financing Higher Education as well as scientific research and technology is a cause for concern, given that state resources also show a decline due to new policies in the matter of subsidies. The policy challenges of Higher Education occur in seven inter-related areas: providing better access, quality, and equity; encouraging the training of high-level technicians; improving the training relevance of education in the presence of significant institutional autonomy; optimizing internal efficiency of institutions of Higher Education; discussing complementary models of student financing; improving the design of public financing; and carrying out significant changes in policies for financing research and development activities.

It is our hope that this work, the fruit of the reflection of researchers, rectors, Higher Education institutional authorities, and representatives of university networks and associations from 2006-2008 will provide a solid basis for discussion at the Regional Conference on Higher Education – Cartagena 2008.

On behalf of IESALC – UNESCO and of the coordination of the project, we thank all of the coordinators of themes and consultants that have contributed with their texts. Similarly, we express our gratitude to the Ministry of Higher Education of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the person of Minister Luis Acuña, for the financing that made possible the translation and publication of this work. Finally, we thank the Colombian Association of Universities (ASCUN) for support in the graphic editing process.

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Ana Lúcia Gazzola and Axel Didriksson