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The Bologna Process From a Latin American Perspective

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Although Latin America's geography, history, and languages might seem a suitable foundation for a Bologna-type process, the development of a common Latin American higher education and research area meets predictable difficulties.The reasons are to be found in the continent's historic and modern institutional patterns. Latin American governments increasingly limit their interventions to funding and rely on the free play of the forces of supply and demand, institutional and corporate interests, and negotiated rules of the game to coordinate their systems. Moreover, Latin America's dynamic tertiary education systems face structural, organizational, and functional obstacles that often discourage international convergence.However, Bologna is stimulating closer university collaboration between Latin American and European institutions, particularly Spanish and Portuguese universities, in an effort to create an Ibero-American area of knowledge, with student and faculty exchanges. Thus Bologna has had an indirect stimulus by encouraging collaboration, and concomitant issues such as Latin America's current debate about curricular reform and higher education competitiveness.

Keywords: *national systems; institutional patterns; political economy; government policies; marketization; convergence*

In spite of the enthusiasm that the Bologna process has raised in some Latin American academic and government circles and the European effort to push the "external dimension" of this process, in Latin America's present circumstances Bologna represents an unlikely goal.

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Lack of Common Ground

Above all and in contrast to what has occurred in Europe, in Latin America there is no common area—neither political, nor economic, nor monetary and less so a common knowledge area—to which to appeal. We remain an archipelago-continent made up of island countries, a mosaic of nations grouped together by geography, history, and languages but separated by all remaining factors: historic disputes, different levels and models of development, diverse modalities of integration into the world, distinct institutional traditions and visions of the future, unequal relations with the North, dissimilar ethnic makeup, and different religious practices, ways of confronting poverty, and expressing our hopes. We share, without doubt, the same frustrations about deprivation and inequality, the deterioration of the environment, the precariousness of social networks, political clientelism and corruption, fragility of states and a lack of trust in democratic institutions, the insecurity of citizens, and the ever-present violence under the surface of our civility. With little or no common ground to contain our dreams of integration, they float freely in the air, boundless and rhetorical; eloquent, yes, but lacking content, objectives, goals, and instruments to bring them to fruition.

It follows that the representatives of our governments are in no condition, nor could they harbor the intention—when meeting, say in Santo Domingo or Lima, locations of the first universities in Latin America, as their European counterparts did, first in Paris, at the Sorbonne, and then in Bologna—to start a process for the construction of a common higher education area and the adoption of an integrated architecture for the national systems of degrees and diplomas.

In contrast to the European tradition where governments decisively intervene in the coordination of their tertiary education systems and have agreed to a policy framework to promote integration andheighten their competitiveness, Latin American governments limit themselves to financing 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, governments are relatively impotent faced with institutions whose autonomy has become almost absolute during the 20th century, among other reasons, to protect themselves during periods of political instability and avoid the arbitrary intrusion of *caudillos* and dictators, while providing an independent power base to intellectual elites and contentious student movements.

Given these conditions, might it be possible to imagine that the representatives of Latin American governments, meeting on their own—that is above the heads of the rectors and institutions—could agree on an integration process that includes, as did the Bologna Declaration, the adoption of a common structure for studies (curriculum), transferable education credits, the development of comparable criteria and methods to ensure quality, the promotion of a Latin American dimension to higher education, and student, academic, and research mobilityand exchanges within this

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common geographical and intellectual space? Not even with the greatest leap of the imagination could our ministers of education, appealing to their own authority, make a public commitment of this magnitude and expect to carry it out, setting goals and a time table by which to do so, and then revise its fulfillment in successive meetings, as occurred with Bologna in Prague, Berlin, Bergen, and London. Nor could they count, as in the case of Europe, with the active support and participation of the leading universities. It is also worth recalling that in Europe, in spite of its intergovernmental nature, the Bologna process has benefited from a strong support and even a strong push from the European Union—financial support from its inception in 1998 and even more importantly strong institutional backing since 2002 through the development of a higher education strand within the European Union's overall knowledge strategy (the so-called Lisbon Strategy) which assumes that the Bologna reforms will indeed be implemented. The absence of a comparable institutional structure and budget in Latin America is an important additional factor making Bologna not "replicable" in our region.

Colonial Legacy

Beyond these macro differences of both institutional environment and government intervention found in Europe and Latin America, there are multiple other differences at the *meso* and *micro* levels that lead to the conclusion that it would be highly unlikely to conceive and organize here, in the south, something similar to the Bologna process.

Bologna itself, to begin with. Or Sorbonne.Names that evoke ancient university traditions born of the needs of society, their cities, the powers of crown and cross, and the need to professionalize available knowledge, first, and then to produce new knowledge to comprehend and control the world.Names that symbolize centuries of gradual university development, from "general studies"—*studium generale o universitas magistrorum et scholarium*—to national universities and their later modernizationdriven by the industrial revolution and democracy, to finally become the contemporary research universities that find in their own past the possibilities of their future. International in the past within the territory of Christendom, with students who travelled from one place to another forming student "nations," and with teachers who from the beginning exercised the *ius ubique docendi*—the right to teach throughout Christendom and not merely in a particular diocese—these roots continue to grow to this day in our secular, global, and postmodern world.

In contrast, the first Latin American universities could only imitate, thus impoverishing, the sense and content of this institutional and cultural experience, organically the product of Western European culture. These were rather more nominal than real imports. Institutions called themselves universities—thanks to a distant monarch or the Pope, more concerned about the needs of empire or the conversion of a continent—even

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before being able to find sufficient teachers or an occupational structure that might productively absorb graduates. Here, as Simon Schwartzman has correctly noted, the profound social and cultural differences could not but lead to serious misunderstandings and problems of both transfer and translation. "Institutions with similar names, organized in similar ways, using often the same textbooks and claiming the same values and goals would produce widely different outcomes, which could not be attributed solely to the limitations of the receivers, or the ethnocentric biases of the senders (Schwartzman, 1992, p. 970).

Of 33 universities that were established in Latin America during the colonial period, 8 disappeared without trace. The remainder, with a few exceptions, subsisted precariously. Students were few and came mainly from predominant colonial groups. Educated teachers were difficult to find, as shown by the fact that the first academic degrees conferred by the University of Mexico were obtained by its own teachers (Steger, 1974).Or that in Chile, the University of San Felipe had to wait for 10 years before it could organize its own teaching body and 2 more years to provide a mathematics chair (Harding, 1987). To the above should be added the slow economic growth of colonial societies during this period, offering few employment opportunities to university graduates. In fact, between 1500 and 1820, Europe increased its participation in world production from 17.9% to 23.6% whereas that of colonial Latin America fell by almost a third—from 2.9% to 2.0% (Maddison, 2001).

Modern Trends and Common Limitations

In the 125 years following independence, to the 25 universities inherited from the colonial period another 50 were added, reaching about 75 by 1950 with a total student body of 266,000 students, scarcely 1.9% of those typically in the age range for pursuing higher education. In fact, higher education institutions catered only to the education of the elites, with some sporadic, meritocratic, middle-class inclusion.

It is only from the second half of the 20th century, although helped by traditions forged during the first part of the century, such as the Cordoba reform (1918), that these systems acquired their own identity. Between 1950 and 1975, the tertiary education student body grew 13 times, to reach about 3.5 million students. Latin America's higher education participation rate reached 13.8%, just at the edge of systems conventionally considered as massified (Trow, 2006).

What are the characteristics of these systems once they develop their own identities and give birth to their own dynamics of stability and change, and which make them resistant to processes such as Bologna?

Of course, these are very different systems: in size (Mexico and Paraguay, for example), participation rates (Argentina and Honduras), relations with the state (Chile and Cuba), funding amounts (Brazil and Bolivia), and the relative weight of private institutions and students (Colombia and Uruguay, for example) (Brunner,

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2007). Even so and without twisting national experiences, it is possible to identify common trends in their development, which are important to understand the limitations to which these systems are subject in the region.

First, a proliferation of tertiary education institutions of all types: university and nonuniversity; some with more than 200,000 full-time students and others with less than a thousand; state institutions that depend more or less on public subsidies and private institutions with and without government funding; complete universities in terms of knowledge areas covered or, at the other extreme, those with only one discipline, for example teacher training, medicine, or engineering; universities for the social elite, the middle class, the lower classes, multicultural and native peoples; institutions managed by businessmen, the military, the Church, and national, provincial, or municipal governments, foundations, corporations, or communities, and in some cases for-profit organizations; universities committed solely to undergraduate teaching and others with a growing weight of graduate studies and researchactivities, etc. Briefly, Latin America tertiary education institutions have, according to the latest available records, multiplied to more than 11,000, including 4,000 universities, both public and private (Brunner, 2007, p. 74).

Second, a strong and growing presence of private tertiary institutions not dependent on state funds, and that today makes up a majority reaching on average about 47% of Latin America's total enrollment. Their relative weight accounts for more than a half of registered enrollment in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Paraguay, and the Dominican Republic (García Guadilla, 2006). They constitute a dense network of nongovernmental institutions and interests, of teachers and students, investments and projects, and economic and social capital—providing massive services and catering to social niches in the higher education market, which today extends from the north to the south, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, giving it its special character, mixed and heterogeneous, for the provision of higher education in the region.

Third, and as a result of the two previous dynamics, higher education is highly differentiated, both horizontally and vertically, with structures and services diversifying themselves continuously. Institutions seek to expand or deepen their student recruitment and broaden their areas of knowledge by creating new programs, new branches, and new academic degrees and professional diplomas. Rather than moving toward greater homogeneity and institutional isomorphism, Latin America's national educational systems are subject to intense centrifugal tendencies, organizational diversification, competitive pressure, and on the other hand little capacity to cooperate. All this is apparent in the lack of comparative institutional typologies and the absence of agreed comparative criteria (Brunner, 2007, chap. B).

Fourth, as a result of the historic evolution of national policies and systems, the major, traditional, *state* universities predominate in each country—symbolically represented by the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina, the University of San Marcos in Peru, the University of Chile, the Central University of Venezuela, the

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University of Costa Rica, the University of the Republic of Uruguay, the National University of Colombia, the University of San Pablo in Brazil, etc.—and are at the top of the national institutional hierarchy, having accumulated throughout their history the advantages of public subsidies and the prestige associated with their role as representatives of the national intelligentsia and as the educators of professionals with the greatest reputation. In contrast, private institutions with a few exceptions—especially those that emerged during the second half of the 20th century—struggleto obtain a minimum of social recognition hindered by the shadow of their confessional, business, bourgeois, or commercial origins as well as their relative youth in a market that rewards traditions and historically accumulated symbolic capital.

Fifth, in general, weak development of academic research within national systems, concentrated in only a few, mostly state, universities, although in some cases also with the participation of a small number of private universities. In general the human resources involved in science and technology research are few in number and clustered within this group of universities. Altogether, the region contributed 3.41% of the world production of scientific and technical publications registered by Scopus, a figure similar to that of Italy alone, and within which Brazil represents almost 50% of the regional output.[1] In 2007, only nine Latin American universities qualified among the top 500 according to the *Academic Ranking of World Universities* (ARWU): five from Brazil, two from Chile, and one each from Argentina and Mexico, and of which none is ranked within the top 100.[2]

Sixth, an endemic tendency in Latin American universities to leave unresolved the tension between legitimacy and effectiveness of governance, often considered to be one of their most outstanding characteristics. Although the principles of the Córdoba Reform (1918) predominate in the majority of state universities—consisting in the election for one person and collective authority positions by the votes of academics, students, nonacademic personnel, and occasionally also graduates—in private universities there is a tendency for governance structures to follow business leadership and organizational models. So state universities face chronic problems of management effectiveness and, depending on national events, their legitimacy can be challenged through intense faculty and student political mobilization. On the other hand, government structures of private universities often face a deficit of academic legitimacy and must face issues of low academic motivation and involvement. In both cases the principal-agent problem is poorly resolved and gives rise to capture by corporate interests in the case of state universities and to the unchecked predominance of proprietary interests in private universities.

The Organization of Instruction

More directly relevant to the Bologna process, tertiary education systems in Latin America are characterized (with individual institutional exceptions in each country)

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by the organization of instruction modeled on the Napoleonic idea of a university—with its centralism, bureaucracy, elitism, and emphasis on professional courses[3]—transferred through Spain and adapted to local conditions. In other words, education systems are imported and adopted under the changing needs of the national power elites and their interests, the forces of demand and supply, educational policies, and the actual behavior of institutions.

What has been the final result of this combination of elements?

A rigid teaching structure, organized by professional diplomas, together with a low status and market valuation of academic grades that precede the professional title; that is, the undergraduate degree (*licenciatura*) on its own has little effect on employment. Absent are initial cycles of general education and, at the other extreme—with Brazil as the relative exception—of training in advanced research programs (doctoral programs). Between this latter degree and professional diplomas, one observes a recent and disorderly growth of master's programs in both disciplinary and professional tracks according to their emphasis and, in addition, a track for unconventional subjects, among which are a varied multiplicity of specialist courses and those for cultural consumption that the market is able to sustain.

Briefly, within this structure there are considerable advantages given for professional diplomas, which continue to be supported, in spite of their progressive massification, by their high rates of return in the labor market and by their strong status connotation and sociocultural prestige.

The early and overwhelming professionalization of university teaching of a stovepipe nature (one entrance, one exit) is usually associated with lectures as the preferred teaching method, the emphasis on content—and not on skills—and the subordinate role of students.In general, there is little experimentation and not much room for research or problem solving. Case studies appear sporadically here and there. Classroom technologies have varied little since the 19th century, in spite of the computer invasion and Internet connections. Learning continues to be defined as a process for the acquisition of knowledge, weakly linked with practical reflection that supposedly forms the nucleus of the professions (Schon, 1983).

Within this organizational scheme, there are few possibilities for student mobility either within or between institutions, neither in horizontal nor in vertical directions. Curriculum rigidities are still further underscored by the lack of learning credits, which impedes computing studies already achieved, validate acquired skills, and define individual learning paths.

As a result of these teaching modalities, although not the only motive, Latin American higher education systems show higher desertion rates than most comparative undergraduate programs and a low efficiency in terms of the time required by students to graduate. At the same time, the system possesses a reduced capacity to promote student mobility, either regionally or internationally. In fact the number of Latin American students who studied abroad in 2005 reached scarcely 165,000 or about 1% of the region's total undergraduate enrollment and 6.1% of world international

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students.[4] On the other hand, the number of foreign students studying in Latin America does not reach 0.5% of international outbound mobile students.

In sum, Latin America's national higher education systems, beyond the hopes of some government officials,university administrators, and academics—and notwithstanding the old Bolivarian dream or new dreams for common areas—face structural, organizational, and functional obstacles toconverge as European systems are doing under the impulse of the Bologna process.

The Political Economy of Systems

To succinctly recap the main argument to this point, it is that given the political economy conditions of these systems it is improbable, if not impossible, to producean integration of academic teaching and research similar to that in Europe, even with its own limitations.

What makes Latin America's political economy of higher education (Halsey, 1992) adverse or resistant to the dynamics of integration?

As Figure 1 shows, this political economy exhibits a high level of *privatism*,[5] in contrast to that prevailing in European systems which creates a sort of academic welfare system. An examination of the two basic dimensions that describe the political economy of higher education systems—(a) the relative proportion of undergraduates in private (dependent and independent) institutions within the total undergraduate student body in higher education and (b) the relative proportion of total expenditure on higher education from private sources—shows that various Latin American national systems (where information is available and comparable) is found in the upper right quadrant of Figure 1, together with Asian countries like the Republic of Korea, Japan, and Indonesia.These systems show a net predominance of students enrolled in private institutions while their expenditure is also predominantly private. In turn, those Latin American systems located outside the quadrant of highest *privatism* are also distant, with few exceptions, from the average position of OECD systems in terms of their greater *privatism.*

Which are the most outstanding features that distinguish the systems that fall into the upper Quadrant with the highest *privatism?*

First, the combined weight of private provision (through private *independent* and *dependent* institutions) and private funds determines that system coordination will be based on competitive exchanges, independent of the nature of public regulations introduced by the government and its policies in the various relevant markets.There is a *consumer market* in undergraduate education with choices made by students who normally pay, directly or with government scholarships and subsidized loans, or with loans backed by the financial system with state guarantees or administered by the institutions themselves. In most but not all of these systems, students pay tuition fees at *state* universities, as in Chile, Indonesia (where 40% of state university

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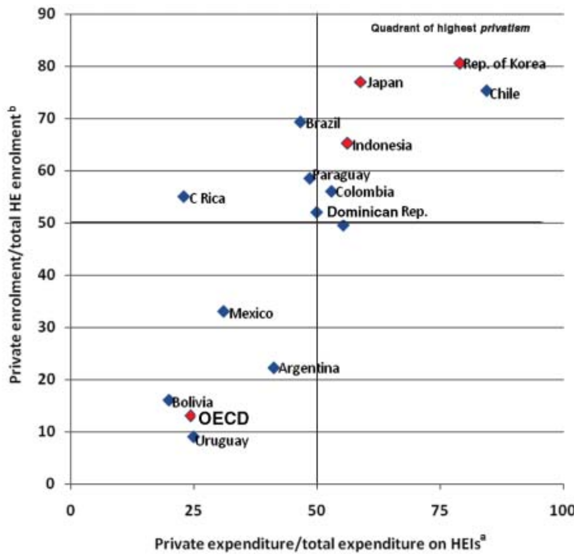
Figure 1
The Political Economy of Higher Education Systems and the Quadrant of Highest Privatism



Source: Based on OECD (2007, Table B3.2b) and UNESCO (2006, Table 5.b and 2.b.ii). For Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and Uruguay, and private expenditure in Brazil, see Brunner (2007, Graph F.3.1). HE = higher education; HEI = higher education institutions.
a. Percentage of total enrolment in private independent and dependent institutions of higher education in each country.
b. Percentage of total expenditure of higher education institutions from private sources, including public subsidies provided for payments in these institutions.

income comes from this source; Tadjudin, 2006, p. 774), Japan (Yonezawa, 2006), and Korea (where student fees amount to about 50% of per-student expenditure; Park, 2006, p. 871). The fees charged by state institutions in systems with greater *privatism* are comparatively high, as also in Australia and the United States, with Chile the outstanding example in terms of the much higher ratio of fees paid at state universities to per capita income.

So too *institutional funding* is organized competitively and depends on the capacity to attract undergraduate students. This applies, first, to private *independent* universities but also to private *dependent* and *state* universities that receive various levels of subsidy.In practice, national systems in this quadrant provide only a fraction of public higher education expenditure directly to *state* universities because a proportion of funds are allocated to private *dependent* universities and/or transferred to the private

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sector as student loans and scholarships. Chile, for example, provides the least amount of public expenditure directly to *state* institutions (35.1%), with almost two thirds going to private *dependent* institutions (30%) and student support (34.8%).

There is also a market for *academic positions* that functions with greater or less intensity by country and institutional sector. Usually, the "academic marketplace" is lightly regulated in the case of private institutions and functions with various types of regulations in state institutions. But as Chile shows, this is not always the case (Bernasconi, 2003, chap. 5); in fact, here *state* universities have significant degrees of discretion to contract and fire academic staff, fix salary scales, and regulate, according to their own statutes, academic careers.

Finally, in these systems there is a market for institutional reputations where, as noted by Clark (1983), "reputation becomes the main commodity of exchange" (p. 165), resulting in a prestige hierarchy that is signaled to the market by rankings of institutions and programs.This reputational scale is supposed to provide an indication about the quality of institutions to attract both the best students and most productive teachers and researchers, and which under market conditions continuously feeds on and reinforces itself.

At the apex is a university or group of universities with the highest reputation within the system whereas the remaining institutions are ordered hierarchically by decreasing reputations to the base. The institutions at the peak tend to be the oldest and most traditional *state* universities, which receive government subsidies and customarily have educated the national political, management, and administrative elites (e.g., Korea and Japan). Some *private dependent* universities can reach this peak, as in Chile. In other cases, *private independent* universities reach the apex, as for example in the United States and Colombia.

Furthermore, competition in these different markets, particularly for undergraduates, is often segmented geographically (regional and local markets; Brunner et al., 2005; Brunner & Uribe, 2007), has different degrees of openness or can be limited to different types of higher education institutions (state and private, university and nonuniversity institutions), or it can include more strongly targeted student segments defined by their academic and socioeconomic characteristics or be circumscribed, in the case of the market for academic positions, to certain faculty groups.

In summary, there is no *one* higher education market (Teixeira,Jongbloed, Dill, & Amaral, 2004),[6] nor are these markets geographically, functionally, or socially unified (Avery, Glickman, Hoxby, & Metrick, 2005; Hoxby, 1997, 2001). Rather the system's development is subject to the forces of supply and demand with no central coordination, and leads to strong institutional differentiation. As a result, institutions are ordered around diverse hierarchies that in turn determine their position within each relevant market.

In addition—and this is the most important point in the context of our discussion mism is that systems that function in the highest *privatism* quadrant tend to self-regulation, that is, to adjust on the basis of institutional competition in different markets.

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In these conditions, systems themselves continually emerge as a result of unsought and unanticipated interactions together with the strategies that institutions use in each relevant market. Here a system is neither constituted nor maintained by design of a central authority, nor by any plan agreed between institutions or between them and the government. There is a low level of social constructivism in this quadrant and little rational planning such as existed in Europe between 1960 and 1980 (Bertrand, 2004; Neave & van Vught, 1991, chap. 13). In fact, even today under the Bologna process, planning survives, although in a more subtle version. According to Veiga and Amaral (2006) Bologna follows an "open method of coordination" that although not being managed through central commands nonetheless assumes "policy implementation as a logical and rational top-down linear process from the Commission to States, institutions and citizens" (p. 284). On the contrary, it is unlikely that this type of coordination will occur in systems that function with a high degree of *privatism*. As stated by Clark (1983), "Market coordination works without benefit of a superstructure: unregulated exchanges link persons and parts together" (pp. 161-162). This brings two consequences of special interest to the argument here.

On one hand, under market conditions, systems do not adopt an architectural or geometric form but appear rather as an arrangement of "loosely coupled" pieces (Weick, 1976), each propelled by their own mission and interests, with attention given to the actions and decisions taken by competitors and the opportunities opened up by different markets (White, 2002, pp. 131-132).In other words, in these systems institutions behave according to Halsey's analogy (1992), that is, like "small-scale capitalist entrepreneurs subject through market discipline to birth and death by contrast with their European counterparts—slower in gestation and even slower to die" (p. 1916). According to this author, these systems have a specific type of political economy, characterized by a lack of macro planning and where each institution attempts to resolve its own problems, in competition with numerous other suppliers for student-purchasers, academic staff, and for institutional prestige.

On the other hand, given these conditions governments can only act from *a distance* with the object of organizing the markets institutionally, stimulating and regulating competition among the agents that act within it or guide them in terms of welfare objectives. It can use only a limited number of fiscal instruments and its political–bureaucratic power is reduced when facing the system; instead, it has to use instruments of information, evaluation, and quality assurance and will need to define priorities for the system from a distance, as well as using market-type mechanisms to channel funds to higher education institutions. Governments lack the legitimate instruments of direct intervention, even under the reduced scope of an "open method of coordination."

In these circumstances, Bologna seems an unobtainable goal for Latin America. Or put in another way, for this purpose the political economy of Latin American systems is an insurmountable obstacle.

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In this respect, one might consider the points made by some European analysts about the Bologna process, in the sense that even under the "open method of coordination," complex processes of regional convergence like those taking place in Europe are at risk, owing to the difficulty of implementing policies with a strong institutional change component. Some argue that "the use of 'soft-law' mechanisms such as the 'open method of coordination' is not effective when national governments have their own policies. [. . .] The interconnections between the global, the national and the local levels show a high degree of complexity and conflict between the different priorities and interests involved. [. . .] The 'open method of coordination' does not allow for the level of coordination necessary for the coherent implementation of a process that depends on a multitude of local agents (the higher education institutions) with diverse strategies, perceptions, interests and objectives" (Veiga & Amaral, 2006, p. 292). How many more difficulties are to be found in Latin America—with systems based on self-regulation in the dynamic context of intense competition—to carry forward a Bologna-type process?

Echoes of Bologna: Toward a Joint Ibero-American Knowledge Area

Does this mean there is no room at all for Bologna in Latin America? This is not so. In fact, already one can observe some impacts of this process in the south (Zgaga, 2006), even if attenuated and weakened by the peculiar conditions for its reception offered by the region.

Foremost, and surely stimulated by Bologna, the process of constructing a common Ibero-American area of knowledge or higher education has commenced, renewing, enlarging, and enriching the traditional ties between Latin American universities and those of Spain and Portugal. In fact the official declarations of the Ibero-American Heads of States and Governments repeatedly mention the importance of education and place cooperation in this area as a strategic perspective for integration and participation in the global world (Brunner, 2007, pp. 17-30).

Already at the first summit in 1991, the Declaration of Guadalajara[7] stated that the aspirations for economic, social, technological, and cultural development required "a strong push to education and culture that while it will strengthen our identity gives us a solid basis to ensure that our countries have an adequate insertion in an international context characterized by innovation and technology." It continues by affirming a common will to "promote a common market of knowledge which would be a space for knowledge, the arts and culture, liberalizing cultural, didactic and educational exchanges; easing the trade and provision of scientific and technological equipment; and creating incentives for the communication and transmission of knowledge." It also noted that countries should assign resources, within their possibilities, for commencing a project in technological development "to strengthen the

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capacity to generate innovations, to reinforce industrial competitiveness and social efficiency."Later summits, up to 2007, reaffirmed this political commitment in various ways and provide the outlines of an Ibero-American common area of higher education.

The Declaration of Salamanca (2005) of Ibero-American Heads of States and Governments in particular expressed the agreement to advance the creation of an Ibero-American knowledge area, oriented toward the necessary transformation of higher education and stressing research and development and innovation as necessary conditions to increase the region's international competitiveness. To this end, the organization's General Secretariat together with the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science, and Culture and the Ibero-American University Council were commissioned to work out a politico-technical agreement to start this process.

In turn, since their first meeting in Salamanca (2001)[8] subsequent meetings of rectors of Ibero-American universities have added to and continue emphasizing academic cooperation toward a common area for higher education, consistent with the goal of the participating governments of forming an Ibero-American common area of knowledge.

More recently, the first Ibero-American meeting of Rectors of Universia[9] gathered in Seville, May 2005, debated the challenges of universities in the emerging global knowledge society, and agreed on, among other things, the following criteria for university action:[10]

Promote ideas, programs, and a university normative framework that favors student, doctorates, faculty, and researcher mobility within the Ibero-American community.
Support the development of collaborative university research networks as the heart of the Ibero-American community, always open to universities in other parts of the world.
Promote common initiatives that as part of university activities, guarantee the cultural and linguistic riches of the region.
Proclaim the university's right and duty to participate in government initiatives and projects that emerge from the Ibero-American Summits of Heads of State and Government.
Request governments for funding and the necessary legal means to appropriately modernize academic structures, advance the construction of an Ibero-American common knowledge area, and assume the appropriate protagonism for the generation and diffusion of knowledge and the globalization of knowledge.
Encourage projects that take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization to reinforce the Ibero-American identity in all its diversity.
Support universities to study the development of indigenous cultures and their languages, using intercultural and bilingual educational models.

At the same time a group of academic organizations, associations, and networks have been constituted to sustain and feed the development ofthe Ibero-American higher education area, such as the Ibero-American Distance Higher Education Association (Asociación Iberoamericana de Educación Superior a Distancia [AIESAD]), the

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Science and Technology for Development Program (Ciencia y Tecnología para el Desarrollo [CYTED]), the Ibero-American Graduate Studies Network (Red Iberoamericana de Estudios de Posgrado [REDIBEP]), the Latin American Network for Higher Education Quality Accreditation (Red Iberoamericana para la Acreditación de la Calidad de la Educación Superior [RIACES]), the Universia Network, the Ibero-American University Council (Consejo Universitario Iberoamericano [CUIB]), the Ibero-American School for Governability and Public Policies (Escuela Iberoamericana de Gobernabilidad y Políticas Públicas [IBERGOB]), the Ibero-American University Graduate Asociation (Asociación Universitaria Iberoamericana de Postgrado [AUIP]), the Ibero-American Guide to International University Cooperation (Guía Iberoamericana de la Cooperación Internacional Universitaria), the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science, and Culture (Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura [OEI]), the Mutis Scholarship Program (Programa de Becas Mutis), the Faculty Interchange and Mobility Program (Programa de Intercambio y Movilidad Académica [PIMA]), and the Ibero-American Science Program (Programa Iberoamericano de Ciencia).

Echoes of Bologna: Interregional Collaborative Initiatives

In parallel, Latin American and European universities have been developing various collaborative initiatives to promote Bologna's ideals and issues southward. There are three activities of particular importance.

First, the European Union–Latin America–Caribbean Higher Education Area (EULAC) was set up, as a key element of bilateral and multilateral relations among states, with the mission of sharing knowledge, transfer of technologies, and mobility of students, teachers, researchers, and administrators, while paying particular attention to the links between training, employment, and scientific knowledge in the countries concerned.[11] The EULAC higher education area will also encourage the establishment of compatible credit systems;focus on priority research themes jointly agreed by ministers responsible for higher education; promote distance education; explore, where appropriate, the potential for cooperation,validation, and recognition of distance learning in a transnational context, the pooling of documentary resources and databases, the promotion of vocational postsecondary education and training, and the recognition of work experience through the employment life cycle; and encourage European study programs and the development of European study centers in the four subregions of Latin America and the Caribbean together with the continuing development of Latin American and Caribbean study centers already established in Europe. Within EULAC's framework, the 6×4 project has particular significance. Its aim is to analyze six professions (chemistry, electronic engineering or similar, history, mathematics, medicine, and public and business administration) around four axes (professional competencies, academic credits, evaluation and

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accreditation, training in innovation, and research). As described by Knight (2006, p. 1), it is "a 'bottom-up initiative' of higher education institutions and organizations from across Latin America. The project's four major areas of work include the creation of (1) strategies to describe and evaluate competency-based learning, (2) a region wide academic credit system, (3) a commonframework for integrating the evaluation of competencies into quality assurance and accreditation systems, and (4) a list of key competencies for research, innovation and related training strategies. [. . .] The overall goal is to improve the quality of higher education in Latin America and to facilitate greater collaboration and mobility among the higher education institutions within the region and with the higher education sector in Europe."[12]

Second, the ALFA–Tuning–Latin America Project has already completed a first phase, based on the experience gained from Tuning Educational Structures in Europe,[13] an initiative that is at the core of the Bologna process. The Latin American version was born at the Fourth Meeting for the Follow-Up for a Higher Education Common Area Among the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean (IV Reunión de Seguimiento del Espacio Común de Enseñanza Superior de la Unión Europea, América Latina y el Caribe [UEALC]), which took place in the city of Córdoba (Spain) in October 2002.

The project's objectives are to (a) develop easily comprehensible and comparable degreesin the Latin American region; (b) encourage regional convergence in 12 disciplines—architecture, business administration, chemistry, civil engineering, education, geology, history, law, mathematics, medicine, nursing, and physics; (c) develop generic and specific skill profiles, including expertise, knowledge, and content for four disciplinary areas; (d) make educational structures more transparent and encourage innovation by discussion of new experiences and the identification of best practices; (e) create networks capable of showing best practices and encourage innovation and quality through reflection and interchange; (f) exchange information about curriculum development in the disciplinary areas noted above and create model curricula as reference points and encourage the mutual recognition of certificates and the integration of higher education systems in Latin America; and (g) establish links between universities and other organizations.[14]

About 186 Latin American universities are participating and there are now 19 Latin America Tuning Centers in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Third, there is now a Latin American version of the European Reflex Project (The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society[15]), called Proflex,with the aims of (a) gathering results about higher education and university graduate employment in different Latin American countries, (b) analyzing the role played by diverse generic and specific aptitudes in different phases of work and the professional career of university graduates, (c) supplying indicators that would serve as an international reference and facilitate the comparison of university graduates in the Latin American

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labor markets with European and other developed countries, (d) strengthening cooperation in the area of higher education and graduate employment between Europe and Latin America, and (e) developing criteria for research that can be used in the future by Latin American Universities.[16]

These initiatives are in full flight, but it is too early to discuss their achievements and impacts. However, it is already possible to say that these projects have spread Bologna's light on Latin America and started conversations that—had Bologna not existed—might not have taken place or would have developed only locally and in only a few countries.

Echoes of Bologna: New Topics of Conversation

In fact, the Bologna process has had its greatest impact in Latin America in raising new issues and encouraging their discussion by academics, the government, and the press. It can be said that Bologna has shown horizons that without being immediately achievable in Latin America, promote new topics for analysis, encourage debate, and point toward possible solutions, policies, and procedures to achieve them.

The major and most directly relevant topics for discussion in America as echoes of the Bologna process—although not the only reason for their emergence and with different degrees of impact in different countries and among the diverse agents associated with higher education include—from the specific to the general—length of studies, architecture of degrees and diplomas, standards that should guide quality assurance, the establishmentof regional areas, and the international competitiveness of Latin American higher education.

In terms of the organization of instruction, there has been a tendency in Latin America to interpret Bologna merely as a call to abbreviate the length of studies, but which is now giving place to a deeper discussion about the structure and architecture of degrees and programs. This last stage concerns the two main cycles—undergraduate and postgraduate—and deals with the question of the first degree (at least 3 and at most 4 years) followed by master's programs of between 1 and 2 years. It should be highly attractive to Latin America—in striking contrast to its overweight structure of long first degrees—that higher education could be completed, including both undergraduate and graduate degrees, in a period of 4 or 5 years. However, it has not been fully understood that this rule (3+2 or 4+1) allows for a great diversity in Europe (Kehm & Teichler, 2006) and can at times be used for disguising change, when new forms simply contain old habits and content (Mény, 2008).

Neither has there been sufficient consideration in the south that for the Bologna process, the harmonization in European higher education depends on two additional but essential elements. On one hand the adoption of a common metric for studies (i.e., the European Credit Transfer System or ECTS and the homologation of different diplomas) and on the other the diploma supplement for the purpose of promoting graduate mobility in the European labor market.[17]

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Last, the relevance of curriculum for employment has not been sufficiently appreciated in the South. As noted by Haug (2005), Bologna was a response, among other things, to the growth of a single European labor market and the search for greater relevance of tertiary education programs to the labor market, independent of the national origin of graduates.This emphasis on employment, until recently foreign to debates about higher educational policy and the strategic planning of universities in Latin America, is a central element in the European curriculum reform, including at the bachelor level.According to Kehm and Teichler (2006), "a graduate with a bachelor degree is supposed to have acquired qualifications which enable him or her entrance into the European labor market."However, they add, the available empirical evidence points to the fact "that a general acceptance of bachelor level graduates by the labor market is not secured in those countries which have newly introduced the tiered structure of studies and degrees" (p. 276). It is to be hoped that as Latin America discusses curriculum reform and the organization of instruction, these various aspects of Bologna might also become part of the discussion.

There are also echoes of Bologna in the independent quality assurance procedures (through internal and external evaluation), independent accreditation by peers, the demands for greater accountability by governments, and the concern to align quality control mechanisms with international standards being developed in Latin America.

An interesting phenomenon is happening here. In fact, practices and mechanisms originated in North America—such as the accreditation of institutions and programs, for example, or the two-cycle structure of degrees and its articulation—together with the values and ideologies that surround them, when seen as being imported directly from the hegemonic center are looked at with open ideological distrust, if they are not rejected immediately. On the other hand, if the transfer comes from Europe, and although its North American origin might be recognized, the barriers to their acceptance and adoption weaken or completely disappear. It could be, as Malo (2005) notes, that"European globalization is seen as something less fearful than that from the United States, more understanding and humanitarian than Asian globalization and more in agreement with our [Latin American] idiosyncrasies and customs than those of the Australians."

Be that as it may, quality assurance is one of the most visible current changes in Latin American higher education with the gradual adoption of standards and procedures (Brunner, 2007, chap. H). It entails recognition of the public responsibility of institutions for their results and greater scrutiny over institutional performance. At the same time it encourages the continual improvement of programs and institutional services and it provides a guarantee of educational standards in different professional and postgraduate areas. So European cooperation in quality assurance and the development of comparable criteria and methods has served, stimulated by Bologna, as an impulse for a similar endeavor in Latin American countries, here reinforced

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through collaboration within the Ibero-American Network for the Accreditation of Higher Education Quality (Red Iberoamericana para la Acreditación de la Calidad de la Educación Superior [RIACES]) established in Buenos Aires in 2003.[18] Also the notion that different national agencies and their procedures need to be subject to international standards of comparison has been widely circulated by organizations such as the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Finally we have suggested that the discussion about a common area for higher education and the competitiveness of Latin America's national systems have been encouraged by the echoes of Bologna in this region.

In fact, during the last few years there has been a much more active deliberation about the weak position of Latin American universities. Within the ranking of 500 world-class universities only 9 are from Latin America; a small European country such as the Netherlands has 10 in the list, 2 among the first 100 and 4 that are better positioned than the top-ranked Latin American universities.[19]

There are now plenty of academic papers and policy statements about the crisis and limitations of Latin American universities from the most diverse analytical and ideological perspectives, the effects of globalization and transnationalization on them (Didou, 2002; López Segrera, 2006), the new demands that tertiary education institutions face in the region (Brunner, 2005; Holm-Nielsen, Thorn, Brunner, & Balán, 2005), their low levels of internationalization (De Wit, Jaramillo, Gacel-Avila, & Knight, 2005), and high levels of *privatism* or alternatively the negative consequences for tertiary education of privatization and commercialization (Boron, 2005) and the difficult role that public (state) universities face in the region (Brunner, 2005a).

To sum up, there has not been such an enthusiastic debate about the future of Latin American universities and tertiary education institutions since the 1960s. In part this is stimulated by Bologna's waves and their echoes that have arrived on our shores, forcing us to confront—although in an Old World mirror—our own limitations and possibilities.

Notes

1. See SCImago Journal and Country Rank. Available at: http://www.scimagojr.com/index.php.

2. Two are ranked between positions 101 and 200, one between 201 and 300, one between 301 and 400 and the remainder in the last quintile, between 401 and 500. See Institute of Higher Education, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Academic Ranking of World Universities—2007. Available at: http://ed.sjtu.edu.cn/ranking.htm.

3. For a brief description of "ideas" or models of universities, see Mény (2008).

4. On the basis of OECD, "Indicator C3, Number of Foreign Students in Tertiary Education, by Country of Origin and Destination (2005) and Market Shares in International Education (2000, 2005)." Available at: http://ocde.p4.siteinternet.com/publications/doifiles/962007051P1G19.xls.

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5. We prefer to use here this neologism to the more customary *privatization* as the latter is charged with ideological and polemical connotations. In the context of this study *privatism* refers only to the greater relative weight of the private provision and financing of higher education systems. From the point of view of social analysis it is linked to Habermas's use of the term, as summarized by McCarthy (1978): "Essential to this system is a widespread civil privatism—'political abstinence combined with an orientation to career, leisure and consumption'—which 'promotes the expectation of suitable rewards within the system (money, leisure, time, and security).' This involves a 'high output-low input' orientation of the citizenry vis-à-vis the government . . . and a 'familial-vocational privatism' that consists in a 'family orientation with developed interests in consumption and leisure on the one hand, an in a career orientation suitable to status competition on the other,' an orientation that corresponds to the competitive structures of the educational and occupational systems" (p. 369).

6. See especially the Introduction and Conclusion.

7. "In 1991, in the Mexican city of Guadalajara, the idea of the Ibero-American Community of Nations was born based on historic and cultural affinity of our peoples, in the richness of their origins and plural expression as well as a common commitment to democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental liberties." V. Fox Quesada, "Una nueva cultura de Cooperación Internacional." Available at:http://www.cumbresiberoamericanas.com/principal.php?p=127.

8. See Marco Antonio R. Dias, "Relato sobre cooperação interuniversitária no espaço ibero-americano," 2001. Available at: http://www.pucpr.br/comunicacao/revistas_cientificas/dialogo_educacional/pdf/n_3/relato_de_caso.pdf.

9. A privately sponsored network of Ibero-American tertiary education institutions.

10. See the Declaración de Sevilla available at: http://www.encuentr02005.universia.net/declaracion-sevilla.htm.

11. Declaration issued by the First Ministerial European Union–Latin America–Caribbean Conference on Higher education, Paris, November 3, 2000.

12. The final report of the 6×4 Project titled Propuestas y Acciones Universitarias para la Transformación de la Educación Superior en América Latina (Higher Education Proposals and Actions to Transform Higher Education in Latin America) is available at: http://www.6x4uealc.org/site2008/ 6x4_p01.htm (in Spanish).

13. For more information, see the project site: http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/.

14. As a result, the book *Tuning–América Latina* was published in 2007 by the Universities of Deusto and Groningen.

15. For more information see the Project's site, available at:http://www.fdewb.unimaas.nl/roa/ reflex/index.htm.

16. See the project page at the Web page of the Centre d'Estudis en Gestió de l'Educació Superior, UPV. Available at:http://encuesta-proflex.org/.

17. About the comprehension of Latin American degrees, see Lemaitre and Atria (2006).

18. See Fernández Lamarra (2005).

19. See the Institute of Higher Education, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Academic Ranking of World Universities—2007. Available at: http://ed.sjtu.edu.cn/ranking.htm.

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