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Reconfiguring National, Institutional and Human Strategies for the 21st Century

Converging Internationalisations

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Scope of the Series

Even though knowledge is the main content of teaching and universities are key knowledge producers, scholars have only recently begun to actively explore research on knowledge studies in higher education. As this field of study has grown, it has increasingly overlapped with the research focus of other fields, namely research and science policy, and information studies. However, these three fields have developed independently with little interaction between them, causing our understanding of knowledge to be limited, compartmented, and lacking a multidimensional perspective. This book series is designed to improve knowledge studies in higher education by stimulating interactions between these different approaches.

Coverage in this series includes:

- University and knowledge production
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- Research collaborations.

With its comprehensive overview and multidisciplinary perspective, this series provides scholars and policymakers with the theory and data they need to make more informed decisions regarding knowledge research in higher education.

Chapter 4

The State and Its Role in the Internationalisation Process of Higher Education in Argentina and the Reaction to COVID-19



Marcelo Rabossi, Ariadna Guaglianone, and Alex Markman

Abstract The internationalisation of higher education is a growing phenomenon of great interest not only to universities but also to nations and governments. Developed nations are the main receptors of international students and researchers. As a matter of fact, 80% of all enrollees around the globe migrate from peripheral countries to industrialized centers to continue their education. In the case of Argentina, only 1% of all non-local students chose the country as an academic destination and over 90% of that group comes from Latin America. Thus, it can be said that in terms of internationalisation, Argentina and the region, reproduce themselves under a pattern of endogamy. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the policies implemented by the Argentine State to develop and strengthen the internationalisation of higher education in the country. In order to do this, several interviews were conducted with key actors at different public organizations. A documentary analysis of public reports complements primary sources of information. A description of the response given by universities and the State to internationalisation processes in the face of COVID-19 is also provided.

Keywords Internationalisation · Higher education · Public policy · Argentina · COVID-19

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Introduction

The growing globalization which pervades the different aspects of human life, ranging from individual and personal to economic and social ones, has also reached universities. Within this new logic, local policies cease to be solely domestic and adopt a global and comprehensive perspective. As a result of pressures that make universities more competitive, and which arise not only from the national market but from international strains, the change in the customs and behaviours of higher education institutions becomes evident. Therefore, their purposes are not only to enrol more and better international students or to enter into cooperation agreements between universities from different countries but to gradually internationalize their institutional profile so as to gain a privileged position in the academic race.

The internationalisation of higher education arises as an inevitable trend for countries in their pursuit of economic competitiveness within a framework of productive globalization. Since knowledge is not a compartmentalized, isolated process, government policies aimed at strengthening the links between nations according to a global strategic vision, among other aspects, become of paramount importance. Even though internationalisation poses opportunities for growth and improvement for universities and countries, it also presents public policy challenges related to the coordination, expansion, and evolution of the university market from a global perspective. In this respect, the role of governments has proved to be vital when it comes to developing and fostering the internationalisation of their higher education institutions. Their participation is key to bringing closer the local and the global components, thus leading to either a weaker or a stronger integration between local universities and those in the rest of the world (Sariolghalam, 1993).

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the government policies implemented by the Argentine State to develop and strengthen the internationalisation of higher education in the country. Primary and secondary sources have been used to gather information. In the first case, in-depth interviews were conducted with institutional actors associated with the internationalisation policies developed by state entities such as the Secretariat of University Policies (SPU, as per the acronym in Spanish), the Secretariat of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation of the Ministry of Science and Technology (SCTeIP, as per the acronym in Spanish), the Department of Scientific and Technological Development of the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET, as per the acronym in Spanish), and the Study Buenos Aires program (SBA), in charge of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires. The secondary sources include a documentary analysis of public education and science and technology entity reports.

In the first part of the chapter, a framework is defined to help determine what is understood by “internationalisation” and the role played by Latin America in a globalized higher education market. In the second part, the Argentinean university system is described and the degree of internationalisation of the sector is quantified. Then, the opinion of different actors is analysed to better understand the policies adopted by different state agencies to further strengthen the link between the

Argentinean university sector and its peers in the rest of the world. After that, a description of the response to COVID-19's impact given by universities and the State in relation to internationalisation processes is provided. The chapter ends with conclusions and discussions about the strengths and the weaknesses of the policies adopted by the four public entities to foster internationalisation in the country.

Internationalisation: Concepts and Characteristics

The internationalisation of higher education is one of the many aspects of the globalization processes that involve the movement of people and the transfer of goods and services among countries. Although the term is contemporary, globalization is not a new phenomenon. Between the first civilizations that inhabited Europe, Africa and Asia and up to around the seventeenth century, a phenomenon known as “archaic globalization” (Martell, 2010) took place. During this period, countries started a gradual process of interaction through which they exchanged and shared ideas and social rules. Merchants also negotiated goods and services within a world market that was starting to become interconnected through a rationale similar to the one in existence nowadays, though on a much smaller scale.

One special feature of globalization has been turning markets into highly competitive spaces, not only on a local but also on a global scale. In a world where interactions accelerate and consumer demands change faster all the time, the main focus lies in the quality of the product or service offered. This particularity, which aims to attain a position of preference within the global world, forces companies and institutions to be innovative in the offer of goods and services (Aryanto & Fransiska, 2012). According to these dynamics, universities assume the role of becoming repositories of ideas and generators of knowledge on a universal scale. However, this “mandate” has not that sufficiently exploited (Mowery et al., 2001). Indeed, economic competitiveness largely relies on the innovations generated at higher education institutions and as such, the role of governments becomes fundamental to commercialize academic products at a global level (Lindholm Dahlstrand, 2008; Lofsten & Lindelof, 2001). Therefore, for governments and universities to form a beneficial partnership, policies must be consistent, long-term and financed according to the potentiality of the results sought (Narayan, 2012).

From a political-economic point of view, the importance of having more international students is on the strategic agenda of most governments. It is estimated that through the payment of tuition fees and indirect expenses, the global international higher education market involves an annual turnover of around USD 300,000 million (Rabossi, 2020). From a financial perspective, many countries with capacity to attract a large number of students from beyond their frontiers, strategically apply a dual policy as regards the collection of fees. Thus, those coming from other nations have to pay two or three times as much as local ones. Therefore, higher education exports generate a significant financial flow for those countries that have made a gradually stronger move to internationalize their classrooms. Also, in some