

14.9.2025

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Title

The political economy of higher education in the era of neoliberal globalization : Latin America in comparative perspective / Carlos A. Torres ; Daniel Schugurensky

Publication year

2002

Source/Footnote

In: Higher education. - 43 (2002) 4, S. 429 - 455

Inventory number

14317

Keywords

Ausland : Lateinamerika : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Ausland : Lateinamerika ; Hochschule und Staat : allgemein

Abstract

During the last two decades, Latin American universities have experienced intense pressure to abandon the main principles established in the 1918 Córdoba Reform (i.e., autonomy and autarchy). While funding for public higher education has declined, they are pressured to relinquish a large portion of institutional autonomy in order to accommodate to market demands and to a new set of control strategies emanating from the state. We argue that current changes in Latin American higher education cannot be examined in isolation from larger political and economic changes in the region, which in turn are related to the dynamics of globalization. After the decline of socialist and welfare-state models, neoliberal regimes have become hegemonic in many parts of the world. In most countries, changes in financial arrangements, coupled with accountability mechanisms, have forced universities to reconsider their social missions, academic priorities and organizational structures. Concerns about equity, accessibility, autonomy or the contribution of higher education to social

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transformation, which were prevalent during previous decades, have been overshadowed by concerns about excellence, efficiency, expenditures and rates of return. The notion that higher education is primarily a citizen's right and a social investment ? which has been taken for granted for many decades ? is being seriously challenged by a neoliberal agenda that places extreme faith in the market. Though we focus on the international dimension of university change, it is important to note that global trends are promoted, resisted and negotiated differently in each national context and in each individual institution. In the emerging knowledge-based society, the polarization between North and South is expected to increase even further if the scientific and technological gaps are not narrowed. Latin American universities have a crucial role to play in this regard. The paper is organized in two parts. The first describes the context of university change, focusing on issues of globalization and neoliberalism. The second examines the main features of university restructuring in comparative perspective, with a particular focus on Latin America. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)