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Critical Approaches
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A Practical Introduction

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Since their emergence in twelfth-century Europe, higher education institutions have been the sites of political conflict and contest. Once controlled by church or crown, universities today function as key political institutions of the state. As such, they serve as a staging ground for conflicting societal demands, ranging from capitalist accumulation and the reproduction of existing class structures on the one hand to upward mobility and social equality on the other (Ordorika, 2003).

In spite of historical evidence, theoretical perspectives that focus on issues of power and political interactions within higher education—as well as those occurring between universities and the state—are still scarce. In recent decades, few scholars have conducted studies of higher education that are theoretically grounded and focus on political perspectives. This approach, which fills a key void in the field of contemporary higher education research, incorporates theories of the state and political economy into a broader analysis of the combined impact of the decline of the welfare state and the advent of globalization on higher education institutions. In particular, it challenges mainstream notions that universities are largely apolitical and autonomous institutions, and that academe is somehow a privileged space exempt from external pressures (Marginson, 2007; Pusser, 2006).

In this chapter, we seek to contribute to those theoretical perspectives by focusing on the role universities play in the struggle for hegemony in the globalized era. We begin by providing a brief overview of the history of political contests within universities, from their origins in Italy and France in the twelfth century to the present day. We then review the dominant theories of authority relations in higher education since the 1970s, with emphasis on the limitations of those models and analytical perspectives, in particular, the lack of explicit theories of the state and higher education. Next, we describe the main tenets of globalization and the conflicting theories regarding its impact on the nation-state. We follow

with a discussion of the utility of critical theories for analyzing the effects of changing power relations in higher education. Finally, we propose a hegemonic model for the study of politics, governance, and change in higher education that builds on emerging critical theories of the state and contest in higher education.

The struggle for economic, political, and cultural hegemony has intensified as a result of the shifting power dynamics of globalization. We recognize that globalization is not a monolithic process. Instead, its impact varies significantly from country to country, as well as among regions. But there are many similarities in the ways governments and other institutional actors respond to the new demands. Among fundamental transformations affecting higher education institutions are the commodification of education and the decline of the public sphere in general (Boggs, 1997; Pusser, 2011), which has been replaced with notions of individual responsibility and market competition. Other changes include a new emphasis on accountability, flexibility, and quality control; major reductions in government funding; closer ties to industry; and demand for skilled workers for the global knowledge economy.

These changes, which are fueled by the hegemonic market-oriented logic of governance, have triggered resistance from both dominant and subaltern groups (Jessop, 2000), where subaltern is defined as fragmented, subordinate, and subject to the hegemony of the dominant ruling classes (Gramsci, 1971). The resulting conflict can be viewed as a sign of the repoliticization of higher education. Among new spheres of political contest are the dispute over affirmative action policies in the United States and Brazil; the protests against skyrocketing student-loan debt in Chile, Colombia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; and the backlash against the international university rankings paradigm in Latin America and elsewhere. This conflict is not restricted to public institutions, as both public and private universities are subject to state oversight, in many cases rely on state funding, and carry out broader state goals (Pusser, 2008; Pusser & Marginson, 2012). As institutions of the state, universities play a crucial role in adapting to market and societal demands. Change in higher education is largely the result of internal and external power dynamics, however, with implications that extend far beyond university walls. In sum, postsecondary change is the result of power and politics within—and external to—higher education.

One of the main proponents of studying higher education through the lens of political dynamics is Sheila Slaughter. Her work focuses on power and the relationship between institutions and the state, which Slaughter (1988) views as subject to similar internal and external pressures: "It may be necessary to conceive of the state and higher education as engaged in multiple and sometimes conflicting

functions simultaneously. For example, the state and higher education are both the subject and object of struggle. They are arenas of conflict in which various groups try to win ideological hegemony, yet at the same time they are resources for members of contending groups intent on political mobilization in external arenas" (p. 245).

Brian Pusser (2004) has argued that the university should be understood as "an institution with both symbolic and instrumental political value in broader contests for state power and authority" (p. 3). We argue that universities are not only engaged in political conflict with the state, but also are themselves political institutions of the state. As such, they play a fundamental role in hegemonic contest (Ordorika, 2003, 2004; Ordorika Sacristán, 2001). These conflicts have acquired renewed intensity in the globalized era. Along similar lines, Pusser and Marginson (2012) state that, in the context of international university rankings, "postsecondary organizations in the United States (and elsewhere) are usefully conceptualized as political institutions of the state, where the state is understood as encompassing political institutions, laws, rules and regulations, judicial systems, and formal systems of power including law enforcement and military organizations, as well as a variety of other formal organizations that serve to shape collective activity and protect individual rights" (pp. 91–92).

This emphasis on the political nature of higher education represents a departure from mainstream approaches in the field. Apart from a brief period in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when student movements throughout the world focused attention on political conflict within universities, political-theoretical perspectives have largely been absent from the study of higher education (Ordorika, 2003; Pusser, 2008). Instead, research since the early 1970s has tended to utilize structural approaches that downplay the role of the state and other sources of institutional power in fueling change within higher education institutions.

Mainstream theories tend to view the state either as a source of funding or as an intrusive entity interfering with the development of professional and scientific expertise (Slaughter, 1988). At the same time, they adopt an implicit view of the state as a pluralist institution that represents the interests of society at large, rather than certain elite sectors (Rhoades, 1992). A powerful myth about the apolitical nature of education undergirds that perspective (Wirt & Kirst, 1972), portraying higher education institutions as politically neutral and autonomous organizations rooted in professional competence and rational behavior (as opposed to the politically driven, irrational state; Ordorika, 2004; Rhoades, 1992). "This myth or modern narrative of the university (Bonavecchio, 1991) was based on the idealization of the German model of free and autonomous academic commu-

nities that produced universal culture and knowledge" (Ordorika, 2004, p. 9). In consequence, political conflicts within universities are viewed as an aberration from the harmonious, disinterested, and pluralistic status quo, rather than a fundamental part of university life (Pusser, 2004).

Whether intentionally or not, these theories have served to reproduce existing power relations in higher education. As Ordorika Sacristán and López González (2007) note, "The denial of politics is essential discourse for the exercise of power and the legitimation of dominant groups, as well as a basic element of the political nature of the university" (p. 478). In moments of open conflict, this tradition of apoliticism is frequently invoked to disqualify and dismiss actors and social movements involved in the university conflict. Such was the case of conflicts in the 1970s between administrators and unions at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, when members of the latter group were denounced as "politicians" and "university outsiders" (Ordorika Sacristán & López González, 2007, p. 478).

Prevailing theories of the impact of globalization, which present a weakening or dissolution of the state and its role in dictating policy (Rosecrance, 1999), such as at the university level, may have recently strengthened the widespread tendency to disregard the state's role. Mainstream studies tend to view structural changes underway in higher education as the natural outcome of globalization, without taking into account the political nature of the drastic reduction in public funding for higher education and the new evaluation culture, among related trends. Nor do they acknowledge the conflicts generated by those policies, particularly between dominant and subaltern social groups.

We argue that these perspectives oversimplify the changing power dynamics wrought by globalization, in which the role of the nation-state is increasingly transformed but not necessarily diminished. In that context, we view political approaches as providing a particularly essential framework for understanding the multiple ways in which globalization has affected higher education. Perhaps more than ever, higher education institutions play a critical role in broader state efforts to compete in the global knowledge economy, as well as in meeting industry demands for a globalized workforce. But that relationship is complicated by the state's diminishing financial support for higher education in many national contexts and the resulting pressure on institutions and academics to secure alternative forms of funding (Ordorika, 2004; Pusser et al., 2012).

According to Slaughter (1990), conflict in higher education is expressed around "major policy issues" such as access, social uses of knowledge (career preparation as well as research and service), and the allocation of resources (p. 30), all of which are deeply political in nature. Pusser (2008), in revisiting Burton Clark's

(1983) triangle of coordination, found that the dynamics of a contemporary legislative contest over university restructuring placed the state, the market, and the institutional estate in "an orbit of contest and negotiation" (p. 133), one in which these forces are politically interdependent and in competitive tension.

Universities and Conflict in Historical Perspective

From their origins in twelfth-century Europe, universities have occupied a privileged place in society. But their potential to shape cultural and economic processes has also made them the sites of political contest. The term *universitates* originally referred to communities, technical associations, or publicly constituted corporations that emerged in Europe (Rashdall, 1936) through a process that mirrored the guild system (Le Goff, 1980). Students approached renowned professionals—called doctors—in order to learn a trade, leading to the creation of a new category of scholar-apprentices. Teaching evolved slowly into a distinct way of life, through which scholars attempted to create their own special corporate arrangement vis-à-vis the Catholic Church, secular authorities, and the rest of society (Le Goff, 1980).

The first universities were founded in Italy and France in the twelfth century, and though they quickly became powerful, they were not completely autonomous from the Church or state. The University of Bologna, a largely student-led initiative, acquired extensive privileges and jurisdiction as a result of the confrontation between the pope and the emperor (Luna Díaz, 1987b). The University of Paris, meanwhile, grew out of the cathedral schools of Notre Dame and was strongly tied to the Church, although professors wielded considerable control (Le Goff, 1993; Wences Reza, 1984).

In spite of their differences, both institutions enjoyed a large degree of autonomy owing to the absence of a unique centralized source of power in medieval societies (Luna Díaz, 1987a). But university demands for academic and administrative freedom—as well as efforts by the Church, the crown, and local authorities to exercise external control over the institutions—led to frequent conflicts (Le Goff, 1993; Luna Díaz, 1987b).

One such conflict triggered a two-year strike at the University of Paris in 1229. The university's prolonged closure in turn prompted the mass migration of faculty and students, a period known as the Great Dispersion, to a second wave of European universities (Brunner, 1990; Young, 2014). These institutions included the new universities in Vicenza (1204) and Padua (1220), both of which were heavily influenced by the lay and student-centered university model of Bologna (Perkin, 1984). The Italian model eventually succumbed to external controls by

the pope and the commune, but it gave birth to a strong tradition of student participation (Perkin, 1997). The Church-centered model of Paris, meanwhile, inspired the creation of universities in Spain and Portugal, including Alcalá, Barcelona, Lisbon, and Salamanca (Brunner, 1990), as well as Oxford (1167) and Cambridge (1209) in England. Eventually, the Paris model was to give birth to the still-dominant university tradition in which scholars oversee students and the learning process (Perkin, 1984).

The university as an institution grew rapidly throughout the continent, where it played a key role in fueling political and social change. But the process was not without conflict. Tensions between university traditions and state needs permeated higher education institutions during the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, leading to the eventual shift of control over higher education from the Church to the state (Perkin, 1984, 1997).

In Latin America, where the first universities were established during the sixteenth century, institutions were frequently caught in the crossfire of Church-state conflicts (Brunner, 1989; González-Polo y Acosta, 1983; Lanning & Heliodoro Valle, 1946), disputes that continued through the early years of independence. Among the most relevant of those conflicts was the 1918 university autonomy movement in Córdoba, Argentina, which inspired subsequent battles for institutional autonomy in no fewer than eighteen countries in the region (Marsiske Schulte, 2004; Portantiero, 1978).

Fueled in part by the rapid growth in enrollments in the post-WWII era, political conflicts in higher education erupted again during the 1960s with the emergence of student movements throughout the world. Those conflicts, exemplified by the student revolts in France, Germany, and Mexico—as well as at Columbia, Kent State, and UC Berkeley in the United States—prompted scholars in the social sciences to begin to address the political nature of higher education over the next decade (Ehrenreich & Ehrenreich, 1969; Lipset & Altbach, 1969). That focus gave way to a new emphasis on the managerial aspects of university governance starting in the 1970s—a focus that remains dominant today.

Mainstream Theories of Governance and Change in Higher Education

Despite eight centuries of conflict within universities, contemporary approaches to authority relations tend to downplay political factors. Instead, they either focus exclusively on structures or view decision-making processes as deterministic, causal relations between social actors. These functionalist approaches can be divided into two broad perspectives,[1] both of which provide helpful, but incomplete,

analyses of the dynamics fueling patterns of governance, politics, and change in higher education (Ordorika, 2003; Pusser & Marginson, 2012).

The most common perspectives are concerned primarily with the management functions of a university and decision-making processes (Ordorika Sacristán, 2001), positing that universities change through rational responses to internal inefficiencies, organizational growth, and increased complexity (Clark, 1983). A few studies also suggest that internal politics and interest dynamics drive change within higher education institutions, where administrative leaders weigh various interests in making decisions (Baldridge, 1971). In most cases, however, these theories tend to overstate internal homogeneity—and harmony. More notably they fail to acknowledge the impact of external requirements upon universities as well as the contested nature of internal and external demands. In reality, universities' organizational development often responds to dynamics that contradict the internal rationality of bureaucratic or collegial arrangements.

Other perspectives contrast with organizational perspectives in that they present change as being imposed from the outside. They view university dynamics as a function of the internal strategies adopted by institutions to adapt or minimize the influence of largely hostile or disruptive external surroundings, such as in the case of organizational responses to market dynamics (Massy, 1992). Resource dependency theories, meanwhile, argue that universities change in order to increase their odds of surviving in an environment where resources are scarce (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

There is no doubt that markets and resources are extremely relevant in the transformation of higher education, particularly in the globalized era. While these theories usefully turn attention to the need for resources, however, they offer little insight into the ways in which universities define key resources or the choices they make in pursuit of resources. These theories are further limited in their ability to explain why many universities resist or remain unresponsive to labor and economic market demands, maintain unique forms of organization and governance, and remain highly subsidized (Ordorika, 2003). They also fail to explain situations in which universities make decisions that limit their access to financial resources.

Yet another group of theories emphasizes the importance of culture and meaning in determining organizational dynamics. These approaches focus more on processes than on structures, and highlight the relationship between the subject and object of study. Institutional theorists, for example, explain change in higher education as a response to social and cultural demands for conformance to prevailing sets of shared beliefs (Clark, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1978). They have

focused on symbolic as well as substantive interactions, and argue that myths and belief systems are essential parts of organizational legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1978; Weick, 1976).

Together, institutional perspectives have brought a much-needed cultural dimension into the study of higher education. But like other approaches, they pay insufficient attention to areas of conflict and contest both within and outside organizations. There is no recognition that institutional myths and cultural perceptions shape and are in turn shaped by political contests at the organizational and societal levels. Pusser and Marginson (2012) note that "there is unrecognized conflict between those in power and the larger interests of social society" (p. 96). That conflict is reproduced within higher education organizations, and those tensions have acquired renewed relevance in the globalized era. In that context, political theories provide a more effective lens through which to examine the multiple changes underway in universities today, in part given the evolving role of the state and its institutions due to globalization.

The Globalization Debate

In analyzing the impact of globalization on higher education institutions, we begin by outlining the basic characteristics that define this latest phase of capitalist development. In the discourse of everyday life and in the social sciences, globalization has become an all-encompassing notion that attempts to be inclusive and at the same time obscures a broad set of processes, ideas, policies, and structures. Like the notion of industrialization, globalization broadly depicts a historical period characterized by distinct dynamics, ideologies, forms, and institutions.

The vagueness and ambiguity of the concept itself account for the multiplicity of definitions, perspectives, and debates about and over globalization (Altbach & Balán, 2007; Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Castells, 1996; Marginson, Murphy, & Peters, 2010; Putzel, 2005; Sen, 2002; Stiglitz, 2002). Most notable among these exchanges are arguments over the degree to which this contemporary phenomenon is truly unique in light of historical instances of economic and cultural internationalization (Lechner & Boli, 2000); discussions about the extent to which capital accumulation has transcended nation-states to become supranational or transnational in essence (Carnoy, 1993); or debates over the role and power of nation-states in the face of globalization (Evans 1997; Jessop, 2000; Marginson et al., 2010; Rosecrance, 1999; Stiglitz, 2002, 2006).

In general, most authors agree that the essence of this phase of capitalist development lies in the fact that economic processes, social interactions, politics, culture, and even individual relationships transcend national borders (Muñoz

García, 2011). These exchanges take place in a world made smaller and at a virtually instantaneous pace by information technologies, digital communications, and modern transportation. Interactions occurring in real time and on a planetary scale redefine space and time (Castells, 1996).

At the same time, the scholarship of globalization rarely accounts for the multiple dimensions of globalization. Manuel Castells (1996, 1997, 1998) identifies at least three significant spheres: economy, society, and culture. For many authors, globalization is essentially a new economic order (Castells, 1996), a "force that is reorganizing the world's economy" (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002, p. 1). The reorganization of core economic processes is based on the use of information and communication technologies, which are knowledge intensive (Carnoy, 1999; Castells, 2012). Knowledge, information, and symbolic communication have consequently become the most important sources of productivity and profit (Appadurai, 1996).

Among many aspects, this discourse addresses material transformations at the level of economic production (Castells, 1996; Krugman, 2004); the future of the nation-state (Castells, 1997; Evans, Rueschemeyer, & Skocpol, 1985; Rosecrance, 1999); changes in the nature and speed of communications (Carnoy, 2000); incredibly fast exchanges in the financial and commercial realms; the preeminence of market and business practices and discourse in many spheres of societal interaction (Santos, 2006; Sen, 1999; Touraine, 2000); the economization of social life (Wolin, 1981); and the emergence of a hegemonic discourse based on deification of the free market (Ball, 2012; Touraine, 2000). These changes emerged from new conservative coalitions in the United Kingdom and United States that transformed the economic and ideological foundations of the welfare state in the 1970s and 1980s. A new approach to the political economy emerged—neoliberalism—that endeavored to redirect state purposes and in turn propelled the hegemony of a new discourse, a new public philosophy of a state focused on privileging markets and private benefits through public action (Harvey, 2005; Wolin, 1981).

Despite common definitions of globalization, there is little consensus on its impact on the state—in particular, whether the nation-state is destined to disappear or give way to a global unified state. In Rosecrance's (1999) view, the "virtual nation"—defined as "based on mobile capital, labor, and information" (p. 3)—has essentially replaced the traditional nation-state. "Nations are shrinking—in function if not in geographic size" (p. 3). That view implies a diminished role of the state in guiding domestic policy, including in the realm of higher education, which is seen as being at the mercy of market demands (Pusser et al., 2012). "Al-

though post-secondary education initially remained relatively autonomous relative to lower levels, it has subsequently lost control of its pact with the devil in opening itself to commercialization in the name of public responsibility" (Morrow, 2005, p. xvii).

Such changes do not imply the absence of the state, however, but rather its shifting role on a global scale. Under globalization, the state continues to promote capitalist and other societal interests, albeit in a more multifaceted manner. The privileged group is no longer a solely domestic industry; it has expanded to include multinational corporations and institutions, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, under the guiding principle of promoting competitiveness on a global scale. Building on Poulantzas's prescient analysis of the shifting economic paradigms of the 1970s, Jessop (2000) describes the post-Fordist era as one in which the state promotes "flexibility and permanent innovation in open economies by intervening on the supply-side and tries to strengthen as far as possible the competitiveness of the relevant economic spaces" (p. 11). Under what Jessop terms the new "Schumpeterian workfare post-national regime" (p. 10), competitiveness depends more on "penetrating the micro-social level in the interests of valorization" (p. 11).

Higher education institutions play a dual role in this process: creating knowledge and providing technical capacity for the global marketplace. But decisions about the types and uses of knowledge, as well as the ideal profile of workers, are largely determined from abroad and later internalized through domestic and institutional policies (Rhoads & Torres, 2006). Among external actors influencing university policy are international organizations such as the OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank; national and international industries; and of course the state. The latter exerts its influence through instrumental means as well as through cultural processes and hegemony building.

Nonetheless, while the role of universities in stimulating economic growth and development has perhaps never been greater, higher education institutions in general receive diminishing financial support from the state. Underscoring that apparent contradiction is the hegemonic "neoliberal core message: that higher education is a competitive market in the economic sense, that it primarily generates private benefits rather than common benefits, and that higher education organizations, which must resource themselves, are primarily focused on their own interests" (Pusser & Marginson, 2012, p. 104).

These trends do not signify that the state is no longer necessary, but rather that its priorities have changed in conformance with the hegemonic model. The state "is not only an important actor in many individual governance mechanisms but

also retains responsibility for the oversight in light of the overall balance of class forces and the maintenance of social cohesion" (Jessop, 2000, p. 13).

We share Jessop's view of the shifting, rather than diminished, role of the state in the post-Fordist era. Rather than a pluralistic or cohesive entity, however, we view the state as serving privileged capitalist interests over subaltern ones, particularly in contexts such as Latin America (Ordorika, 2003; Santos, 2006). It is also the site of struggle between competing groups and agendas. In the case of higher education, the state plays a key role in promoting hegemonic values and in shaping policies designed to bring institutions in line with the dictates of the global marketplace, but those efforts are not without resistance. For example, students in Canada, Chile, Colombia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (among other countries) have staged mass protests over the past few years in opposition to government funding policies for higher education that have resulted in crippling levels of student-loan debt. Governments in all those countries have implicitly defined higher education as a private—rather than public—good, shifting the financial burden of paying college tuition from the state to students and their families.

Slaughter and Leslie (1997) identify two distinct processes through which globalization manifests itself in higher education: the reduction of public money for higher education institutions and the emergence of new markets and market connections for higher education products and institutions. The adoption of market-oriented and market-like behavior in colleges and universities is among the most relevant features of contemporary higher education (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). At the same time, governments exert pressure to expand knowledge production and skilled-labor training in order to attract foreign capital. In the process, the university is expected to play a leading role in producing knowledge goods and highly skilled graduates for a knowledge- and global-based economy (Altbach, 2003; Morrow & Torres, 1995). "Governments have realized that science and technology are essential to international competitiveness, at the same time that a new global market has emerged for knowledge and its applications" (Muñoz García, 2011, p. 24).

Among manifestations of globalization is the rise of for-profit higher education providers, which are typically operated by US-based corporations. The for-profit sector now accounts for half of all higher education enrollment in Brazil (Lloyd, 2013) and an increasing share in other countries, in large part because of the acquiescence or promotion on the part of the state as well as the legal backing of institutions such as the World Trade Organization. But the overtly commercial nature of the for-profit model, as well as its aggressive business model, has

sparked heated controversy in many countries, including in the United States and Chile. Recent studies commissioned by the US Senate and the US Department of Education concluded that for-profit universities have adopted questionable recruitment tactics in their efforts to increase enrollment (Lloyd, 2012). Meanwhile, in Chile, an early 2012 government investigation determined that a number of universities were illegally operating as for-profits—a frequent allegation of the student protest movement (Gibney, 2012).

International university rankings are another essential site of contest. Having first gained prominence with the introduction of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University ranking in 2003, a variety of rankings have expanded to become among the dominant measures of institutional performance on a global level. Despite their questionable methodologies (Lloyd, Ordorika Sacristán, & Rodríguez Gómez-Guerra, 2011; Marginson, 2012; Ordorika & Lloyd, 2013), governments throughout the world have increasingly adopted these hierarchical classification systems to justify sweeping higher education reforms in countries such as Denmark, France, Malaysia, and Russia. Those changes have in turn sparked resistance from students, scholars, and administrators in many countries in yet another sign of the repoliticization of higher education.

The popularity of rankings reflects the increasingly pervasive "culture of accountability" in policy agendas as well as societal demands for access to information in both the public and private spheres (Pusser and Marginson, 2013). Supporters of rankings argue for the need to reestablish the principle of academic hierarchy, which the massification and indiscriminate dissemination of knowledge via the Internet have undermined (Ordorika & Lloyd, 2013; Ordorika Sacristán et al., 2008). The methodology responds to demands, established from a market perspective, to classify institutions for the benefit of potential consumers of knowledge, research, and status credentialing. The rankings also reflect the evolving contest on a global level for control over the flow of knowledge (Marginson & Ordorika, 2011).

Even so, there is a growing backlash against the international university rankings among academics in many countries. Critics view the tables as imposing a single Anglo-centric model of higher education at the expense of local and national development priorities (Ordorika Sacristán et al., 2009). Others warn that institutions are being forced to compete in an increasingly costly and high-stakes "academic arms race" (Dill, 2006; Ehrenberg, 2004) to the detriment of more pressing local or national development priorities. In Latin America, for instance, critics cite the rankings' failure to take into account their institutions' broader contributions to society as "state-building universities" (Ordorika & Pusser, 2007),

a regional tradition that has no equivalent in the English-speaking world (Muñoz García, 2009). The debate signals the growing resistance within institutions to models imposed from abroad, a central contest over higher education policy in the globalized era.

Critical Theories of the State and Contest in Higher Education

None of these developments in higher education can be explained without taking into account the role of internal and external power dynamics, a phenomenon we believe is best explained by theories of the state. In developing a conceptual frame for studying higher education, we draw from critical theories of the role of the state, and higher education in particular. Many of these perspectives view the state as representing, in some way or another, the interests of the economic ruling class.

These perspectives vary essentially in two areas: the degree of autonomy or "capture" of the state by the capitalist class and the weight of the economic structure versus the superstructure in the process of domination (Ordorika, 2003). In this analysis we adopt the concept of hegemony and the state as a site of conflict as expressed by Gramsci (1971) and Poulantzas (1978). Their perspectives provide an understanding of the capitalist state as a dynamic institution, the product of historically evolving relations between competing classes in society. They also emphasize the importance of the development of dominant (hegemonic) ideologies and provide a theory of social change as a product of the confrontation between dominant and subaltern sectors of society. Finally, and critically, they situate higher education in a broader context as a state institution.

As in many societal conflicts, the contested nature of higher education is largely the result of competing demands for capital accumulation and demands for equalization. But political disputes within universities take a different form than in the case of other state institutions (such as courts or political parties). In higher education, the objects of the contest involve access to knowledge and its social uses, the distribution of resources necessary for the production and distribution of knowledge, and the participation of university actors in decision making. In addition, universities serve as the "critical conscience of the nation" and participate in diverse social and political processes (Ordorika & López González, 2007, p. 479).

Of the various contested terrains in higher education, access is perhaps the most contentious and politically charged. It is shaped by conflicting goals—on the part of the government and industry, of regulating the reproduction of skilled labor, and social demands for higher education as a mechanism for upward social mobil-

ity (Labaree, 1997). The regulation of access is typically based on a meritocratic ideology, which is in turn based on the principles of social Darwinism. The certification process, meanwhile, rewards "skills and attitudes possessed in abundance by the middle class—cultural literacy, numeracy, perseverance, self-confidence, appropriate assertiveness, and social agreeable manners—and not found as frequently among immigrants, the working class, or the working poor" (Slaughter, 1990, p. 31).

Another area in which higher education reproduces existing class structures is in the hierarchical structure, both among and within disciplines and professions. In Mexico and many other countries, for example, a disproportionate share of working-class students become teachers, a profession that ranks low in terms of status and economic remuneration (Vaillant, 2004, p. 12). Meanwhile, wealthier students tend to migrate toward more competitive professions, such as law and business, where both tuition and potential earnings are considerably higher (Osa Edoh & Alutu, 2011). Affordability and the related patterns of resource allocation—the sources of the funding and the share of the burden resting on individuals and their families—are other sources of contest.

Other areas of conflict involve the evolving labor divisions between academic, administrative, and clerical hierarchies (the latter group ranks the lowest). Managerial requirements are producing changes in the autonomous and self-regulated components of faculty work (Rhoades, 1992). The new "evaluation culture" (Ordorika Sacristán, 2001) is replacing collegiality with competition while giving birth to a new, highly influential class of higher education bureaucrats whose primary job it is to secure government or private grants for research and other high-priority activities (Acosta Silva, 2010).

A final area of contest involves students. Academic organizations have traditionally been viewed as "people-processing" or "student-centered" institutions. Individuals—in this case students—with specific needs come into the organization from the environment, the organization acts upon them, and they are returned to society (Ordorika, 2003). But the nature of student participation—once a fundamental part of university power dynamics—has changed dramatically in the globalized era. In most countries, students are expected to shoulder an increasing financial burden but are largely excluded from institutional decision making. This is particularly true in the case of online degree programs, in which students have little contact with their professors and even less with university administrators. The resulting exclusion of students from university reform processes has fueled protests in Canada, Europe, and Latin America, where students are demanding a return to free public higher education.

At the heart of many of the conflicts are demands for rapid changes in the role and nature of higher education institutions in the globalized era. At the internal level, faculty and students react against perceptions about the role of the institution and challenge established rights and practices, while at the external level the state and international organizations pressure students and institutions to conform to new economic and cultural priorities. Taken together, these distinct sites of conflict demonstrate the complex power that dynamics present in the university as both the staging ground and instrument of contest.

A Hegemonic Analytical Perspective

We have identified what we view as deficiencies in historical and contemporary frameworks for the study of change and governance in higher education. The most important is the lack of an explicitly analyzed theory of the state, through which power relationships can be viewed (Pusser, 2008; Rhoades, 1992). Another is the tendency to assume a pluralistic state, even in studying higher education in contexts such as Latin America and other regions, in which democracies are either fragile or nonexistent. A third weakness is the tendency to make distinctions between governance, management, and leadership, thereby implicitly confining the locus of power to a restricted notion of governance as decision making (Ordorika, 2003). This distinction is based on the assumption that the university is essentially a technical institution. Finally, few theories define universities as political institutions of the state (Pusser, 2004), instead portraying political struggle as anomalous and generally counterproductive.

The absence of an understanding about the state and the position of postsecondary organizations within society, as well as an insufficient accounting of theories of change, manifests in the limited success of postsecondary scholars' attempts to grasp the complex relationship between "internal" and "external" processes in higher education. There is a need to incorporate broader issues of political economy and power relations within higher education organizations and beyond in order to understand power and change in higher education.

Central to that framework is the following assumption: as an institution of the state, higher education is a key site of struggle for cultural and economic hegemony. That struggle typically manifests through competing reform projects, particularly during periods of profound and rapid change, such as in the current globalized era. But just as higher education has the potential to reproduce existing inequalities, it can also be a site of equalization and democratization (Carnoy & Levin, 1985). The development of a political theory of conflict in higher education is based on the analysis of power struggles, understood as the potential

capacity of different groups to determine outcomes (Hardy, 1990). Central to this process is the effort to understand the forces from which cultural hegemony derives—the conformation and incorporation of perceptions, cognitions, and preferences into a dominant ideology (Gramsci, 1971; Lukes, 1974). The outcome depends on the resolution of demands generated both internally and externally.

This conceptual approach, as it turns attention to four key elements, enhances our understanding of the process of governance and change in higher education. It provides the foundations for a political theory of governance by

1. framing political contest in education as a confrontation over ideology and resource allocation;
2. enabling the understanding of decision-making structures and processes in education as a historical product of power struggles between dominant and subaltern groups in education and the broader state;
3. explaining the dynamics of educational reform as a consequence of competing demands for the reproduction and production of ideology and skills on the one hand and struggles for social transformation and equality on the other; and
4. establishing the linkages between political contest at the internal and external levels as central to understanding new sites of educational contest and reform.

Together, these analytical perspectives enhance our understanding of the complex relationship between internal and external forces in higher education, and between the state and the institutions themselves. Yet the specific nature of the political system in question also shapes power dynamics within higher education institutions. In order to place governance and policy making in context, four central characteristics should be taken into account: (1) the scope and limits of political contest; (2) the nature of the dominant ideology; (3) the degrees of political struggle or citizen participation; and (4) the characteristics of political leadership, that is, the role of political parties and other formal state institutions (Ordorika Sacristán, 2001). These elements have a major impact on power relations within state institutions, including higher education. Acknowledging the complex interplay between the broader state and its institutions is key to understanding the forces behind change and governance in higher education.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented the principal limitations of mainstream theories of higher education governance and proposed critical alternatives to enrich

our understanding of the internal and external dynamics affecting institutions in the context of globalization. We have argued that the study of higher education requires alternative theoretical approaches that focus on political processes, from the origins of the idea of the university to its current forms in the twenty-first century. Among key trends affecting postsecondary institutions are the new emphasis on accountability and efficiency, the evaluation culture, dwindling public support for higher education as part of a broader degradation of the public sphere, the commodification of higher education, and a new emphasis on training workers for the global knowledge economy.

Hegemonic models of higher education fuel those trends, dividing universities into two starkly unequal groups: "the autonomous and elite research university focused on knowledge and prestige," of which Harvard is the premier example, and "the heteronomous mass training institutions focused on economic volumes and revenues" (Marginson & Ordorika, 2011, p. 106), exemplified by the new for-profit model of higher education. "The Bourdieuian binary logic of the global sector . . . is the divide between knowledge power and the commodity economy in higher education, and the ultimate divide between inclusion and exclusion" (p. 110).

Such extremes are characteristic of the growing socioeconomic inequalities present on a global scale—the legacy of several decades of neoliberal policies and the dynamics of globalization. Universities play a key role in both advancing the agenda of the economic elites and resisting it through the opposition of subaltern groups. Thus there is a need to repoliticize the study of higher education by acknowledging the role of universities within the broader state apparatus. By defining universities as political institutions of the state, we are highlighting their role in the struggle for cultural hegemony on a global level.

This theoretical perspective integrates distinct levels of analysis and processes, from the most general level of the state to the more particular spaces of higher education organizations. The integration of these levels of analysis with critical theoretical standpoints constitutes a powerful tool for a holistic understanding of the complex arrangement of actors, norms, agendas, and cultural views upon which domination within higher education institutions is founded. Only by reclaiming a critical model of postsecondary politics and conflict can we fully grasp the evolving power relations shaping higher education under globalization.

NOTE

1. Ordorika (1999) divides these approaches into two broad schools: organizational-functional and societal-functional. The first school, which dominated research

on higher education for decades, includes "the *bureaucratic model* (Stroup, 1966), its variation the *professional bureaucracy model* (Mintzberg, 1991), and the *collegial model* (Millett, 1962), all of which are perceived as natural outcomes of rational processes" (p. 12). The second school, which emphasizes the impact of outside forces on institutional dynamics, is common in mainstream literature dealing with issues of university autonomy and in studies about State involvement in higher education.

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