

Lifelong Learning principles and higher education policies

Carlos Vargas Tamez

Abstract: The role of higher education in promoting economic growth and social cohesion has been recognised in multiple international documents, programmes and strategies. Likewise, a number of countries and higher education institutions worldwide have introduced policies that aim at fostering learners' employability, active citizenship, personal development, knowledge base, competences and capabilities. However, not all these policies have successfully addressed current global trends like the economic downturn, demographic change, the changing nature of the labour market, and pressing social needs. This paper posits that introducing lifelong learning principles to the formulation and implementation of higher education policies may provide more inclusive and comprehensive frameworks for meeting the needs and aspirations of the multiple stakeholders of higher education.

Keywords: Higher education; learners; education policy; lifelong learning; learning organisations.

I. Introduction

At the turn of the twenty-first century, different governments, academic institutions, non-governmental organisations and international agencies have produced a vast array of studies on the kind of higher education required to address current and future social, economic, cultural, and environmental challenges. International organisations have been particularly keen to explore and suggest initiatives by means of international summits (e.g. UNESCO), reform agendas (e.g. World Bank), the assessment of learning outcomes (e.g. the OECD), and the construction of comparable, compatible, and coherent higher education systems (e.g. the European Higher Education Area, and the Bologna Process championed by the European Commission). These initiatives reveal that the challenges which higher education must confront are pervasive and pressing, and compounded by an increasingly unfavourable economic environment. They come from international organisations which are vastly different and whose proposals range from the privatisation, deregulation, and marketization of higher education, to seeing the latter as a public good and a human right. However different their conceptualisations of HE might be, they all agree that HE is the responsibility

of all stakeholders, and that greater funding and efficiency is needed to promote equity and quality in and through HE.

In the economic domain, HE must face a paradigm shift: the transition from industrial capitalism, in which economic growth was based on trade, to knowledge-based economies in which innovation is considered the key to economic and social development. HE, thus, plays an increasingly important role in the development of learning societies, and in addressing the transformations undergone by both the economic system and the social order. In order to respond to current economic and social imperatives, higher education systems must simultaneously develop competencies for employment, innovation and entrepreneurship (economically valuable skills), and capabilities for democracy, active citizenship, and personal development aiming at promoting social cohesion and more just and egalitarian societies.

In today's global society, the effectiveness of HE systems to develop such complex competencies has been questioned. The traditional higher education model, rooted in academic tradition and coined for industrial societies -and often driven by teaching and testing rather than learning- has arguably produced limited results in the provision of quality HE for all population groups. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that HE actually widens and reproduces socioeconomic inequalities and leads to skills mismatches.¹ It has been argued that HE has not been successful enough in catching-up with the emergence of new competencies, attitudes and values that are currently rendered as fundamental capabilities of individuals and society at large.

It is likely that HE systems will continue to be a key for the accomplishment and satisfaction of individual and collective needs as they carry out a duty that no other institution can currently replicate. It therefore becomes imperative to explore paths towards the innovation and reform of such systems. Reform efforts have been undertaken in most countries, and many good examples can be drawn from the diverse contexts, intentions, rationalities and structures. For

¹ Cf. Patrick Clancy and Gaële Goastellec, "Exploring access and equity in higher education: Policy and performance in comparative perspective," *Higher Education Quarterly* 61, n° 2 (2007): 136-154; Peter Frederiksson, "Economic Incentives and the Demand for Higher Education," *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 99, 1 (1997): 129-142; Gaële Goastellec, *Understanding inequalities in, through and by higher education* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2010); Tritan McCowan, "Expansion without Equity: An Analysis of Current Policy on Access to Higher Education in Brazil," *Higher Education* 53, n° 5 (2007): 579-598; Carlos Alberto Torres and Daniel Schugurensky, "The Political Economy of Higher Education in the era of Neoliberal Globalization: Latin America in Comparative Perspective," *Higher Education* 43 (2002): 429-455.

example, recent research on the internationalisation of HE; its outcomes and effects on social mobility; the triple helix; the access to, and efficiency of HE, has shed some light on fruitful areas of analysis. These include higher education policy, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, infrastructure, teacher training and development, funding and financing, social inclusion, and stakeholder participation. Despite this great variety of issues, this paper argues that, in pursuing greater relevance, HE policy could benefit from a wider frame for analysis — that of lifelong learning- and from the lessons derived from reforms and innovations taking place worldwide. Thus, it is suggested that HEIs become learning — and not only teaching- organisations.

II. Lifelong Learning and HE

Lifelong Learning (LLL) is not a new phenomenon. It has been present in education history for almost a century. Its roots can be traced back to the 1920s and 30s when LLL was only about education and training opportunities for adults, particularly for workers. Half a century later, the concept of *education permanent* reconfigured the idea of LLL and introduced a few more features into its definition: that learning takes place throughout life, that it includes diverse sectors and social groups, that it takes place in different settings (i.e. formal, non-formal and informal), and that it aims at fulfilling a great variety of social, economic, and cultural purposes.

Since then, LLL has become an important part of educational discourse throughout the world, an emerging field of study and practice, and a flagship for the formulation of education policy worldwide. Just like it has been the case with HE, different international organizations (e.g. UNESCO, OCDE, World Bank, European Commission) have stressed the role of LLL as prerequisite for economic growth and social cohesion. Such emphasis, and the level of influence these agencies have upon global education policy, has contributed to the visibility and thrust of LLL in educational debates.

These transnational organizations also present different definitions of LLL; however, they all agree that it is an approach that contributes towards the adaptation to and participation of individuals to knowledge societies. There seems to be an economic rationale behind this conceptualization of LLL, that of the transition from industrial capitalism (based on the production and exchange of goods and services) to a new form of capitalism based on innovation and knowledge intensive economies. In this order of things, education and learning, and specially LLL, play a fundamental role inasmuch as they foster knowledge production and promote creativity as necessary supports for innovation and, hence, economic life.

However strong this conceptualisation of LLL might be, there are other views that question and are critical of the economic impetus conferred to LLL. These alternative views assert that LLL must go beyond economic preoccupations and that education and learning must contemplate other, equally important, social and cultural purposes such as building -and living together in- more egalitarian societies, and developing critical thinking to transform social reality.

In any case, and despite these differences in their conceptualization of LLL, international organizations and academic developments converge in a few distinctive features of LLL: that LLL is about placing learners, their needs, aspirations, and demands, at the centre of educational methods, programmes and policies, and that LLL must prepare individuals and societies to face a world that is constantly changing; to adapt to it and/or to transform it. These are some of the characteristics of LLL that may help inform HE policies if they are to have a positive impact upon learners and societies.

HE as part of LLL must address a great variety of educational topics that concern an equally varied number of audiences and target groups. In order to do so, HE might benefit from the adoption of LLL as an organising principle. This entails embracing a number of characteristics; namely, that there is a multiplicity of settings and environments in which learning occurs; the autonomy and agency of learners; and universal participation.

The first characteristic is the acknowledgement that HE might benefit from expanding its traditional settings and environments by recognizing that, besides schooling and formal training, individuals develop skills, knowledge and values in their everyday lives and through the use of other educational supports, like the family, neighbourhood, work, leisure, the media, libraries, etc. Not only could HEI benefit from the learning taking place in informal and non-formal settings, but could make use of these environments to carry out teaching, learning, and outreach activities that might enhance the relevance and outcomes of HE. This implies also recognizing, validating and accrediting the skills and knowledge that learners have acquired elsewhere, and which are valuable for the purpose of HE programmes.

The second characteristic concerns respecting and enhancing the autonomy and agency of learners. This includes on the one hand, placing learners' needs and concerns at the centre of curriculum, delivery and assessment methods, and making students responsible for their own learning. Lifelong learners are not defined by the kind of education or training in which they take part, but rather by personal traits that drive them to partake in learning opportunities. According to Nesbit, Dunlop, and

Gibson,² the individuals who are prone to participate in either formal or informal learning processes throughout life share a few traits among which are: the right attitude and skills for learning; the confidence to learn and to keep learning, including a sense of commitment towards education and learning; and the will and motivation to learn.

Although education and training, and especially HE, may result in economic benefits for learners, research has demonstrated that economic incentives alone might not be enough to motivate individuals to get involved in education.³ A number of barriers -motivational, economic, and otherwise- must be identified and addressed so that some individuals who don't usually participate in education may be able to do so. Some of these obstacles are economic and can thus be surmounted by means of financial assistance, but other dissuasive factors are social, cultural and personal in nature. That is the case of the so-called non-traditional students in HE; learners whose age, background, social and cultural capitals, and the social construction and stigmas behind being a non-traditional student, might inhibit them from taking part in HE. The relevance of HE provision is also an issue that concerns individual motivation, or lack thereof, to enroll a given HE programme. Identifying the obstacles faced by different social groups to enter and benefit from HE is the first step towards universal participation.

The third characteristic is precisely that of universal participation; that is, the possibility that all social groups regardless of their ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, religious, sexual, physical, age, or gender conditions may be able to participate in HE. Likewise, a HEI that welcomes and promotes participation from diverse groups should be able to cover the social, economic, and personal goals that these groups attach to HE.

The massification of HE, and the response that HE systems have chosen to give to this phenomenon, based on competition dynamics, have meant the systematic exclusion of society's most disadvantaged groups from HE. These include adults but also youth from low-income families, people with disabilities, racial minorities, indigenous groups, immigrants, and women.

² Tom Nesbit, Catherine Dunlop, and Lorraine Gibson, "Lifelong Learning in Institutions of Higher Education," *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education* 33, n° 1 (2007): 35-60.

³ Cf. Bradley M. Allan, and Roland G. Fryer, "The Power and Pitfalls of Education Incentives" (*Discussion Paper 2011-07*, Washington DC, Brookings, 2011); Lisa Barrow, and Cecilia E. Rouse, "Financial Incentives and Educational Investment: The Impact of Performance-Based Scholarships on Student Time Use" (*Working Paper No. 19351*, Cambridge, MA, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2013); Peter Frederiksson, "Economic Incentives and the Demand for Higher Education," *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 99, n° 1 (1997): 129-142.

Whereas there are measures to monitor the progress of HEI regarding their quality and excellence (e.g. rankings, and performance indicators), these have not yet been developed to assess the efforts that HEI undergo in order to provide fairer and more inclusive access and progression to underserved societal groups. As explained by Usher:

It is difficult to understand what kind of progress is being made internationally in this quest for ‘fairness’ or ‘equity’ in participation, for the simple reason that there is not an international standard for measuring it and different countries have chosen to try to capture the issue in very different ways. In America, the unit of measurement for equality of participation is usually race, though family income is used as well. In the UK, measures of ‘class’ predominate. In much of Europe, there are concerns about the participation rates of recent immigrants, but administrative or survey data that can measure participation rates of these groups is quite limited. About a decade ago, however, the Eurostudent project began publishing a comparison of equality based on parental education levels — a measure which was later dubbed the ‘Education Equity Index’ and brought into use in comparisons involving non-European OECD countries. This data is somewhat patchy (no data is available in many countries) and cannot — as yet — tell us anything about changes over time as it has not been collected for very long. It can, however, show some basic differences in equality of access across different systems.⁴

In short, applying the principles of LLL to HE policy encompasses:

- Awareness of the fact that valuable learning takes place beyond HEI, and of the ample possibilities these other environments offer for HE;
- Understanding learning as a continuous need of individuals throughout their lives, and of the contributions HE can make in this respect;
- Acknowledging that contemporary societies need more than formal education to deal with constant local and global changes;
- Recognising that a learning society — and a learning organisation — are better alternatives to deal with such changes; and
- Admitting that both individuals and their communities need to be involved in determining learning needs and goals, and that they should do so throughout life.

⁴ Alex Usher, “Ten Years Back and Ten Years Forward: Development and Trends in Higher Education in Europe” (paper presented at the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in the Europe Region: Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness, Bucharest, Romania, May 21-24, 2009): 7.

Evidently, these principles beg for profound transformations in the way HE has traditionally been organized and structured, and the relationships of HEI with other stakeholders of HE. Among other factors, recruitment, admission, accreditation and recognition of prior learning, curricula, delivery methods and environments, assessment, quality assurance, and funding must be revised in order to orientate HE towards LLL. Perhaps the most challenging transformations have to do with how HE is conceived either as a public good or a private gain, and whose purposes HEI must seek to fulfil, those of the economy, individuals, or society at large.

III. The LLL University

Throughout the world, different initiatives that aim at promoting LLL among and within HEIs have been undertaken. Examples of this can be found in the Mumbai Statement on Lifelong Learning, Active Citizenship and the Reform of Higher Education (1998), which draws from the work begun at Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V, 1997) in which a working group on Adult Education and Universities was put together. The Mumbai Statement was meant as a call for action for the delegates to the 1998 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, and was signed by HE and LLL experts and practitioners who proposed opening universities to adult learners and transforming HEI into LLL institutions. According to the statement, this requires a holistic approach which:

a) supports institutions to become LLL communities; b) integrates academic, financial and administrative elements; c) provides structures which are responsible for organizational, staff, student and curriculum development and community engagement; and d) aligns the various supportive structures such as academic information systems, library provision and learning technologies to the new mission of universities in learning societies.⁵

The signatories' main preoccupations were the societal challenges taking place due to economic globalisation, the rapid development of science, technology, and knowledge based societies that have given rise to unprecedented unemployment and inequality among nations and between countries, and tensions between social groups. Thus, the Statement recalls democratic citizenship as a key purpose of LLL and recognises that

⁵ "Mumbai Statement on Lifelong Learning, Active Citizenship and the Reform of Higher Education," in *Adult Education and Development* 55, ed. DVV International (Bonn, 1998): 2.

...democratic citizenship depends on such factors as effective economic development, attention to the demands of the least powerful in our societies, and on the impact of industrial processes on the caring capacity of our common home...The notion of citizenship is important in terms of connecting individuals and groups to the structures of social, political and economic activity in both local and global contexts. Democratic citizenship highlights the importance of women and men as agents of history in all aspects of their lives.⁶

While the World Conference on Higher Education (UNESCO, 1998), echoed some of the concerns posed by the Mumbai Statement; namely those regarding access and equity, and, to a lesser extent, LLL and the promotion of active citizenship, it did not provide guidelines (rather a Declaration for HE in the XXI Century) that could assist HE stakeholders in pursuing the transformations of HE.

A couple of years later, the participants to a Conference on Lifelong Learning, Higher Education, and Active Citizenship held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2000 (some of which had taken part in CONFINTEA V, The Mumbai Statement, and UNESCO's 1998 World Conference on Higher Education), issued the Cape Town Statement on the Characteristic Elements of a Lifelong Learning Higher Education Institution (2001) as "an organisational tool to be developed further in local contexts".⁷

The Cape Town Statement recollected many of the concerns developed in the preceding international fora but with a view to developing "an instrument to assist transformation within HEIs". The Statement elaborates on six characteristic elements:⁸

- **Overarching Frameworks**, including regulatory, financial, and socio-cultural supports upon and within which to build a LLL culture in and through HEIs
- **Strategic Partnerships and Linkages**, including international partnerships, cross-sectoral collaboration between institutions and stakeholders, and partnerships within HEIs (e.g. shared decision making, policies and strategies)
- **Research** across disciplines, traditions, and institutions. This involves collaborative research, the recognition of a plurality of research paradigms and of the legitimacy of LLL as an area of study and practice.

⁶ Mumbai Statement, 3.

⁷ UNESCO Institute of Education, *The Cape Town Statement on Characteristic Elements of a Lifelong Learning Higher Education institution* (UIE, Cape Town: 2001), 2.

⁸ UNESCO, *The Cape Town Statement*, 4-7.

- **The Teaching and Learning Process** by which educators encourage self-directed learning, engage with the different forms of knowledge, interests, and life situations which learners bring to their education, and promote autonomous and experiential learning approaches and opportunities.
- **Administration Policies and Mechanisms** which put learners and their learning processes at the centre of all processes. This includes, for example, prior learning recognition and accreditation, and the flexibility of programmes, courses and formats that may enable learners to choose, to move between offers, and to build their own learning paths.
- **Student Support Systems and Services**, including those supporting learning, and enabling conditions for learning (e.g. costs, financial aid, childcare, transport, accessibility)

Although some 95 people from 19 different countries attended and subscribed the Cape Town Statement, and despite the fact that it was supported and published by the then UNESCO Institute of Education, it is not clear to what extent it has been used in reforming HEI or systems around the globe. Documented cases include the University of the Western Cape, South Africa (host to the Conference that gave birth to the Statement) which developed LLL strategies, including an on-going policy for the recognition of prior learning; the University of Missouri (USA) whose collaboration with the latter included the ideation of measurable performance indicators for the characteristic elements of a LLL HEI; and Chulalongkorn University in Thailand which adopted lifelong education as an institutional paradigm.⁹

At a regional level, a more recent example can be seen in the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning (EUA, 2008). Derived from a seminar on LLL held in Paris, and by invitation of the then French Prime Minister, the EUA developed a set of commitments that both universities and governments need to subscribe if they are to transform HEI into lifelong learning institutions. The commitments made by universities entail promoting and embedding LLL as an organising principle of HE; providing education and learning to a diversified student population; adapt study programmes to widen participation and attract adult learners; providing guidance and counselling services; recognising prior learning; developing internal quality

⁹ Hohn Henschke, "Common Elements for Re-Orienting Higher education Institutions in Various Countries toward Lifelong Learning: Research and Implications for Practice" (paper presented at the Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, Extension, and Community Education. St. Louis, Missouri, October 4-6, 2006).

culture; strengthening the relationships between research, teaching, and innovation in a LLL perspective; consolidating reforms to promote flexible and creative environments for all learners; developing partnerships at all levels to increase the relevance of HE; and becoming LLL role models for inside and outside stakeholders.¹⁰

While it acknowledges the role of HEI in promoting LLL, the Charter recognises that these transformations demand actions from governments and other partners in order to secure the necessary funding and appropriate legal and institutional frameworks. Among these are: “recognising the university contribution to lifelong learning as major benefit to individuals and societies; promoting social equity and inclusive learning in society; supporting guidance and counselling services”.¹¹ The Charter also states that governments need to play a leading role in mainstreaming LLL in the systems and agencies in charge of quality assurance, recognition, validation and accreditation of prior learning, and should remove legal obstacles and constraints that potential learners face in order to access LLL and HE. University autonomy in terms of admission requirements, for example, and incentives to LLL provision in HEIs is also a responsibility governments should bear according to the Charter. Finally, encouraging partnerships with local authorities, employers, and other social organisations, and informing and encouraging citizens to participate in LLL opportunities provided by HEIs is also a role governments need to perform. Like universities, governments can act as role models thus championing LLL in public policy and extending LLL opportunities for public sector employees.¹²

IV. Universities as Learning Organisations

This paper argues that, in order to comply with the above mentioned characteristics of LLL institutions, and to fully promote LLL, universities must become learning organisations. In addition to the social considerations explained up to this point, there are financial reasons for this transformation. Given the fact that there are numerous stakeholders in HE (e.g. learners, governments, enterprises), and that they present a multiplicity of needs, HEI may transform themselves into providers of learning opportunities and research outcomes that aim at solving problems and satisfying the personal,

¹⁰ European University Association, *European University Charter on Lifelong Learning* (Brussels: EUA, 2008), 5-7.

¹¹ EUA, *European University Charter*, 8.

¹² EUA, *European University Charter*, 9-10.

social, and professional demands for education and training presented by different sectors, thus diversifying their sources of funding.

According to some authors¹³ the university's mission to produce and organise advanced knowledge has been challenged by the knowledge economy, and newer demands have emerged from government, industry, and other stakeholders. Likewise, these authors recognise that the production and organisation of knowledge, and its use in addressing public and private concerns escapes the sole academic spectrum. Every time more, the university is presented with opportunities to partner with other sectors in order to undertake research and training. This way, industry, for example, can seek to address the learning needs of employees (e.g. up-skilling, re-tooling) via university LLL courses and modules, or to research education and learning solutions to private strategies together with HEIs. Likewise, the public sector may find university offers of continuous learning as a means to promote active citizenship, social inclusion, or even leisure, cultural and personal development.

This cooperation between three sectors which once acted separately (i.e. university, government and industry) has been called the 'Triple Helix'. This approach was developed by Etzkowitz¹⁴ and Leydesdorff¹⁵ as a model to promote innovation. The approach is based in the perspective of the university as a leader of the relationship with industry and government to generate new knowledge, innovation, and economic development. Innovation is understood as resulting from a complex and dynamic process of experiences and relations between science, technology, research, and development among the three sectors in a spiral of endless transitions.

This approach necessarily involves learning processes for all the stakeholders engaged in the innovation process. On the one hand, the university needs to enhance its third mission (apart from teaching and research), and needs to learn different analytical frameworks to approach problems; those traditionally applied by government and industry. On the other hand, the university needs to learn how to bridge the gap between public, private, and academic concerns in order for the cross-fertilisation of ideas to work.

¹³ Cf. Henry Etzkowitz, *The Triple Helix: University-Industry-Government Innovation In Action* (London: Routledge, 2008); Loet Leydesdorff, "The Triple Helix of University-Industry-Government Relations," in *Encyclopedia of Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship*, ed. Elias Carayannis and David Campbell (New York: Springer, 2013): 1844-1951; Tom Nesbit, Catherine Dunlop, and Lorraine Gibson, "Lifelong Learning in Institutions of Higher Education," *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education* 33, n° 1 (2007): 35-60.

¹⁴ Etzkowitz, *The Triple Helix*.

¹⁵ Leydesdorff, "The Triple Helix".

The role in innovation that HEIs are called to fulfil does not substitute their more traditional mission in educating and empowering learners, rather it provides a great opportunity for HEIs “to reassess their academic and professional beliefs, values, attitudes, and practices”,¹⁶ and to expand the latter to a range of new actors including workers and non-traditional students. This expansion, as has been mentioned, necessitates the reformulation and modification of HE systems and practices, and this is where HEIs can learn from other stakeholders. For instance by examining how learning takes place in the workplace, in informal settings, and in NGOs, or by looking at how research outcomes are utilised in the public and private sectors.

Looked at it this way, “lifelong learning can represent a set of guiding principles for development, rather than an additional problem for institutions of higher education”.¹⁷ According to Nesbit and colleagues:

Several studies of lifelong learning in different countries have examined how systems of higher education are changing to meet learners’ needs and, in doing so, are impacting various aspects of university governance, funding, resources, planning, and community relations...these studies indicate the extent to which the environment of higher education is changing and how such changes are redefining the character and role of institutions of higher education.¹⁸

The same authors claim that these transformations in HE are also responses to changes in public policy since “for governments, what is taught, investigated, and promoted [in HEIs] influences knowledge, attitudes, and values in many areas of society”.¹⁹

V. Implications for public policy

Following these arguments, it can be deduced that LLL policies in HEIs would need to look at the research and teaching that is carried out by universities, government, and industry, and identify how these institutions cross-over, and the knowledge and the lessons that have been learned in the process of attending to a particular phenomenon should be systematised. This practice of policy learning is made easier “if clear structures and procedures are put in place so that institutional modes of ‘knowing what

¹⁶ Nesbit et al., “Lifelong Learning”, 39.

¹⁷ Nesbit et al., “Lifelong Learning”, 49.

¹⁸ Nesbit et al., “Lifelong Learning”, 38.

¹⁹ Nesbit et al., “Lifelong Learning”, 38.

works’ and ‘learning’ can be extracted, stored, reviewed and communicated”. This concerns the “...issue of how the making of public policy can be a process of organisational and public learning”.²⁰

One challenge of evidence based policy making is that it is not related to the actual amount of evidence out there, but rather to its usage or lack thereof. Many authors have discussed that research findings are underutilised when it comes to decision making.²¹ For example Schön would argue that there is no shortage of evidence, information or data; rather, he maintains, the deficit has less to do with an information gap, than with our capacity for public and private learning. As put forth by Parsons:

Schön focuses on the issue of learning rather than the idea of knowing: on the learning rather than the information or evidence gap, and the gap between institutions and problems [...] what follows from this is that we have to understand government and policy making as a process of learning. For Schön the answer to the question of improving government as a learning system involved radically rethinking and redesigning the policy process of increasingly more complex information societies.²²

Reshaping the policy process involves the redesign of public institutions too. According to Schön “we must become adept at learning, we must be able not only to transform our institutions in response to changing situations and requirements; we must invent and develop institutions which are ‘learning systems’ that is to say capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation”.²³

From this standpoint, public policy, and HE is no exception, is really the study of how societies learn (or fail to learn) about those problems they define as being public and how they seek to solve (or fail to solve) them. This is particularly true of public institutions and governments which “... should lay less stress on the dubious and doubtful claim to know what is best for a particular organisation...and should place more emphasis on organisations making the best use of local knowledge and their learning experiences”.²⁴

²⁰ Wayne Parsons, “From Muddling Through to Muddling Up- Evidence Based Policy Making and the Modernisation of British Government,” *Public Policy and Administration* 17, n° 3 (2002): 47.

²¹ Cf. Carlos Vargas, “Acerca de las posibilidades de incidencia de la investigación educativa en las políticas públicas: el caso de la educación básica con personas jóvenes y adultas en México,” *Sinéctica*, 33 (2009).

²² Cited in Parsons, “From Muddling Through,” 47.

²³ Cited in Parsons, “From Muddling Through,” 49.

²⁴ Parsons, “From Muddling Through,” 48.

VI. Conclusion

The same way that governments should learn from their surrounding institutions, including HEIs, these in turn should learn from their stakeholders, including non-traditional learners. This means that HEIs must be transformed into learning organisations so that they may be able to systematise their learning, the knowledge they produce, and share it as an important element to bring about change or the solutions needed by a particular policy object.

Becoming a learning organisation means being subjected to continuous transformation and development processes, and being able to systematise and assess these transformational experiences. But most importantly, becoming a LLL organisation, means that HEIs governance structures become more horizontal, as every person is a learner within and outside the organisation. It also means the acknowledgement that HEIs can learn from other stakeholders and from their own practice, can produce knowledge together, and can put this knowledge to use for the improvement and prosperity of the societies in which they operate.

Bibliography

- Allan, Bradley M., and Roland G. Fryer. "The Power and Pitfalls of Education Incentives." *Discussion Paper 2011-07*, Washington DC, Brookings, 2011.
- Barrow, Lisa, and Cecilia E. Rouse. "Financial Incentives and Educational Investment: The Impact of Performance-Based Scholarships on Student Time Use." *Working Paper No. 19351*. Cambridge, MA, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2013.
- Clancy, Patrick, and Gaële Goastellec. "Exploring access and equity in higher education: Policy and performance in comparative perspective." *Higher Education Quarterly* 61, n° 2 (2007): 136-154.
- Etzkowitz, Henry. *The Triple Helix: University-Industry-Government Innovation In Action*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- European University Association. *European University Charter on Lifelong Learning*. Brussels: EUA, 2008.
- Frederiksson, Peter. "Economic Incentives and the Demand for Higher Education." *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 99, n° 1 (1997): 129-142.
- Goastellec, Gaële. *Understanding inequalities in, through and by higher education*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2010.
- Henschke, John. "Common Elements for Re-Orienting Higher education Institutions in Various Countries toward Lifelong Learning: Research and Implications for Practice." Paper presented at the Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, Extension, and Community Education. St. Louis, Missouri, October 4-6, 2006.

- Leydesdorff, Loet. "The Triple Helix of University-Industry-Government Relations." In *Encyclopedia of Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship*, ed. Elias Carayannis and David Campbell. New York: Springer, 2013: 1844-1951.
- McCowan, Tristan. "Expansion without Equity: An Analysis of Current Policy on Access to Higher Education in Brazil." *Higher Education* 53, n° 5 (2007): 579-598.
- . "Mumbai Statement on Lifelong Learning, Active Citizenship and the Reform of Higher Education." In *Adult Education and Development* 55. Edited by DVV International. Bonn, 1998.
- Nesbit, Tom, Catherine Dunlop, and Lorraine Gibson. "Lifelong Learning in Institutions of Higher Education." *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education* 33, n° 1 (2007): 35-60.
- Torres, Carlos Alberto, and Daniel Schugurensky. "The Political Economy of Higher Education in the era of Neoliberal Globalization: Latin America in Comparative Perspective." *Higher Education* 43 (2002): 429-455.
- Parsons, Wayne. "From Muddling Through to Muddling Up- Evidence Based Policy Making and the Modernisation of British Government." *Public Policy and Administration* 17, n° 3(2002): 43-60.
- UNESCO Institute of Education. *The Cape Town Statement on Characteristic Elements of a Lifelong Learning Higher Education institution*. UIE, Cape Town: 2001.
- Usher, Alex. "Ten Years Back and Ten Years Forward: Development and Trends in Higher Education in Europe." Paper presented at the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in the Europe Region: Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness, Bucharest, Romania, May 21-24, 2009.
- Vargas, Carlos. "Acerca de las posibilidades de incidencia de la investigación educativa en las políticas públicas: el caso de la educación básica con personas jóvenes y adultas en México." *Sinéctica* 33 (2009).