

# BORDÓN

## Revista de Pedagogía

NÚMERO MONOGRÁFICO

Gobierno y gobernanza de la universidad:  
el debate emergente

Hugo Casanova Cardiel  
y Roberto Rodríguez Gómez  
(coords.)



Volumen 66  
Número 1  
2014

**SOCIEDAD ESPAÑOLA DE PEDAGOGÍA**



# GOVERNANCE AND CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE DEBATE BETWEEN CLASSICAL POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY, NEW INSTITUTIONALISM AND CRITICAL THEORIES

*Gobierno y cambio en la educación superior: el debate  
entre la sociología política clásica, el nuevo institucionalismo  
y las teorías críticas*

IMANOL ORDORIKA

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

DOI: 10.13042/Bordon.2014.66107

---

**INTRODUCCIÓN.** One of the most intense debates about higher education governance and change took place in the twentieth century between the 1970's and 90's. **METHOD.** A systematic examination of the literature on governance in higher education during this period. The core of the works reviewed in this paper, and the analysis of the development of the field is based essentially on literature from the United States. **RESULTS.** The review shows the gaps and limitations of existing theory. It also provides the necessary foundations for the development of new conceptual frameworks that will enhance our understanding of the subject matter: the relationship between power, politics, and change in higher education. This article: a) provides a brief account of the development of this field of research, and b) presents a synthesis of the literature in widely accepted models of higher education governance. We find that the absence of an understanding about the State and the position of post-secondary organizations within society, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and the deficient comprehension of theories of change, can explain the limited success in the attempt to grasp the complex relation between "internal" and "external" processes. **DISCUSSION.** Contemporary debates in higher education still need to provide a better understanding of university governance that takes into consideration the broader issues of political economy and power relations within higher education organizations. This is fundamental to comprehend the relationship between power and change in higher education.

**Key words:** *Governance, Higher Education, Politics, Trend Analysis, Institutional Autonomy.*

---

## Evolution of the study of higher education governance

Most of the literature on governance in higher education in the United States developed since the early 1960s. There are several reasons for the expansion of this area of studies. Among these are: the growth in size and complexity of colleges and universities; the increasing importance of higher education as a social institution; growth in government funding and desire to control higher education; and many problems of society that have been reflected within higher education.

Mets and Peterson (1987) argue that the evolution of the study on governance has been related to the development of higher education itself. In this development, they identify four eras that are similar to evolution processes of higher education in other countries:

They have called the first an era of “growth expansion and optimism”. During the 1950s and 1960s, there was a strong commitment to the expansion of higher education at all levels. This was a period of enrollment growth, emergence of new campuses, and increasing complexity of higher education institutions. The movement towards mass education generated strong optimism and the expansion of administrative hierarchy. Two governance frames develop in this period: the bureaucratic model (Stroup, 1966) and the collegial model (Goodman, 1962; Millett, 1962).

Mets and Peterson’s second era has been labeled the era of “disruption and revolution”. Student struggles and faculty collective bargaining processes in the late-1960s and early seventies generated new concerns about university governance. Student dissatisfaction with increasingly large and impersonal universities, growing professionalization of faculty, and “external” issues like the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War brought issues of student and faculty power, autonomy, etc. into the picture.

Two additional governance frames developed: the open system model (Katz and Kahn, 1978) and the political (Baldrige, 1971).

The third is the era of “constraint and consolidation”. Student struggles decreased and an era of economic recession began. Financial constraints supplant campus revolution as the main concern in this period. Cohen and March (1974) develop their “organized anarchy model”. Institutional theorists develop the idea that environments shape, to a great extent, the meanings, values, and structures of higher education organizations (Meyer and Rowan, 1978). Building upon the contributions of these two theoretical perspectives, Weick (1976) describes higher education institutions as “loosely coupled systems”.

The final period is the era of “reduction and redirection”. The continuing scarcity of resources made management techniques insufficient to cope with continuing competition. The focus on retrenchment, reduction, and reallocation generated a transition from earlier “open system” models towards ecological approaches to higher education governance. The new emphasis on goal redefinition, change in mission, and selection of new clienteles suggested that higher education institutions could effectively change their surrounding environment. Simultaneously, a new emerging model focusing on the culture of higher education organizations started to develop.

Research on higher education governance has grown relatively fast. The brief description of the evolution of the field provided by Mets and Peterson shows that analytic approaches have evolved to more complex models (Chaffee, 1987).

### Models of governance in higher education

The expansion of the body of literature on university governance has generated concern among several authors about the fragmentation

of this area of research and the need for synthesis and integrative efforts (Peterson, 1985). Perhaps this concern can explain the large number of literature reviews on the topic of higher education governance. Most of these reviewers (Baldrige, 1971; Riley and Baldrige, 1977; Baldrige *et al.*, 1983; Peterson, 1985; Chaffee, 1987; Mets and Peterson, 1987; Bensimon, 1989; Hardy, 1990) agree on the existence of four major analytical models: bureaucratic-rational, collegial, political, and garbage can or symbolic.

### *The bureaucratic frame*

In 1966 Stroup argued that university governance featured many of the characteristics described by Weber in his work on bureaucracy (Stroup, 1966). According to this model: the organization's goals are clear, the organization is a closed system insulated from environmental penetration, and administrative leaders have the power to analyze a problem, determine various solutions, choose the best, and execute it (Scott, 1992).

The bureaucratic model focuses on the stability of higher education organizations. This approach essentially looks at structures. This perspective on governance, and how it handles its existing functions, is highly associated with rational leadership and decision making and with management tasks.

Several authors have pointed out that many basic features of bureaucracies are not present in higher education governance. Baldrige (1971) argued that the bureaucratic model focuses on authority (legitimate, formalized power) but excludes other types of power (mass movements, power based on expertise, and power based on appeals to emotion and sentiment). He also maintained that it deals with governance structures but not with decision-making processes; and that it has difficulties in dealing with change. Blau (1973) pointed out the existing contradictions between authority

based on position and authority based on expertise and knowledge as another weakness of the traditional bureaucratic model.

In a second generation of research on governance, other authors focused on the latter issue (Hardy, 1990). In his book *Professional Bureaucracy* (1991) Henry Mintzberg argued that the traditional bureaucratic authority coexists, in higher education organizations (among others), with a professional bureaucracy. The latter differs from the traditional approach in that obedience is obtained by commitment to an absolute value based on ideology and norms. Coordination of activities is the product of a standardization of skills. Professional standards and norms develop largely outside the organization (Mintzberg, 1991).

### *The collegial frame*

Explanatory limitations of the traditional bureaucratic model opened the way for other views of the university as a "collegium" or a "community of scholars" (Baldrige, 1971). In the collegial frame, organizations are viewed as collectivities with organizational members as their primary resource. The emphasis is on human needs and on how organizations can be tailored to meet them.

Colleges are pictured as these communities of scholars (Millett, 1962) who, because of their professional expertise and a shared value system, control and determine organizational goals. This collegial frame is useful for understanding stable organizations, or organizational sub-units, in which preferences are developed by consensus through interaction (Bensimon, 1989). The collegial frame seeks participatory, democratic decision-making and strives to meet people's needs and help them realize their aspirations.

Collegial views emphasize the importance of both decentralized structures and consensual decision-making processes (Hardy, 1990).

However this model provides very few insights to decision-making processes. Conflict is completely absent from this theoretical perspective. Consensus is presented as a natural consequence of shared values and responsibilities within the institution.

This model shifts from describing practical management within a university, to analyzing the professionalization of the academic community, and finally to a prescriptive idea of how university governance should be run (Baldrige, 1971).

#### *The political frame*

Baldrige (1971) assumes that complex organizations can be studied as miniature political systems. This model is based on three theoretical perspectives: conflict theory (Dahrendorf, 1959; Coser, 1964), literature on community (Dahl, 1961), and work on interest groups in organizations (Selznick, 1949).

From this *political* perspective, organizations are seen as formal and informal groups competing for power to control institutional processes and outcomes. Decisions result from bargaining, influencing, and coalition building. This frame assumes that colleges and universities are pluralistic entities made of groups with different interests and values and that conflict will erupt when resources are scarce (Baldrige, 1971).

Conflict, not salient in the two previous frames, is here a central feature of organizational life. Baldrige dismisses consensual decision-making as unrealistic and utopian. Although there have been other political approaches systematically focusing on structures (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974) the most salient approach, Baldrige's, emphasizes the decision-making process.

A major weakness of the model is its difficulty to explain how a higher education organization can work in the long run in the midst of

permanent conflict (Hardy, 1990). Riley and Baldrige as well as Baldrige et al provided a second version of this political model (1977; 1983). In this new approach, they argued that conflict is not always present, that the original model underestimated the impact of routine bureaucratic processes, and that a variety of political processes had not been acknowledged. They expressed the need to pay more attention to environmental factors. Finally they recognized that "the model did not give enough emphasis to long-term decision-making patterns, and failed to consider the way institutional structure may shape and channel political efforts" (Baldrige et al., 1983).

In qualifying the political frame, Baldrige provided a mixed model. He downplayed the political nature of university governance and incorporated elements of the bureaucratic, collegial and garbage can models. The new frame is ambiguous. It does not provide a clear idea of what conditions make politics and conflict more likely to occur (Hardy, 1990).

#### *The garbage can or symbolic frame*

Within this frame, organizations are seen as systems of shared meanings and beliefs in which organizational structures and processes are invented. Leaders construct and maintain "systems of shared meanings, paradigms, and shared languages and cultures" (Pfeffer, 1981) by sustaining rituals, symbols and myths that create a unifying system of belief for the institution (Bensimon, 1989).

In higher education, Michael Cohen and James March's *Leadership and Ambiguity* (1974) gives the best analysis of governance as a symbolic process. Cohen and March characterize universities as "organized anarchies" because of their problematic goals, unclear technology, and fluid participation (Cohen and March, 1974).

This model emphasized the growing complexity of higher education institutions and viewed the

decision-making process as a “garbage can”. The garbage can model does not presume any structural arrangement of governance. The basic assumption is that decision making is a non-rational process in which independent streams of participants, problems, solutions, and choice opportunities are linked through coincidence in time.

Decisions are made by reflecting university officials’ personal perspectives and those are in turn matched to particular problems. This perspective focuses mainly on leadership and presidential activity. Politics and conflict are “of lesser importance”, power is ambiguous and focused on the president (Cohen and March, 1974).

#### *Cultural models, a new generation of research*

Cynthia Hardy (1990) argues that these four models were developed in a first generation of research. A second generation,

“[...] continued to explore the bureaucratic/professional continuum. The garbage can was often cited, but there were few attempts to systematically examine or empirically verify it. Collegiality as a consensual process remained relatively undeveloped. The political frame started to attract attention, as did the idea of “mixed models” (Hardy, 1990).

This second generation has provided a more complex view of university governance. Ideas on professional bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1991) have enhanced the understanding of internal structures. Several authors have continued to work on Pfeffer’s approach to political structures. Mixed models have attempted to combine bureaucratic, collegial, and political models, identifying a bureaucratic/collegial structure (Childers, 1981) and looking at consensus and conflict (collegiality and politics) as part of a unique process of decision making (Hardy, 1990).

A new generation of research has focused on culture and looks at cultural and symbolic sides of

university life both at the level of the discipline, and the institution. These studies followed the development of organizational culture in management literature. Organizational culture is a persistent patterned way of thinking about the organization’s goals and tasks, the human relations within the organization, the forms of coordination, and the relation with the environment. Selznick argued that an organization is much more than a technical system of cooperation; it is an institution that has been infused with values, and in this way it has acquired a distinct way of responding to external demands and challenges, that is, a “distinct competence” (Selznick, 1957).

Some authors emphasize culture as an external variable that plays a major role in shaping goals, control structures, and relations within organizations (Meyer and Rowan, 1978). Other perspectives look at culture as an internal component of organizations articulating beliefs and meanings into an organizational *mission*. Developments about the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) in the social sciences opened the way for cultural approaches to the study of education. Burton Clark (1970; 1971; 1972; 1983a) advanced this perspective in higher education with his work on beliefs and university *sagas*.

In 1974 Cohen and March suggested that higher education institutions held a wide range of cultures. This approach has attracted a variety of scholars in the field of higher education. Some attempts to address this issue have been made with traditional theoretical stances and methodologies that are not well suited for cultural studies (Hardy, 1990).

Other scholars (Tierney, 1988; Tierney, 1991; Tierney and Rhoades, 1993; Kempner and Tierney, 1996; Pusser, 1999), however, have developed an important genre of literature that has brought new insights into the understanding of higher education. Most of these have developed from critical theory or other postmodern epistemological perspectives.

## **An organizing frame for the analysis of the literature**

In this section I will provide two dimensions that can be used to organize the literature that was reviewed. One dimension varies between organizational and social-historical approaches to the issue of governance in higher education. The other dimension, subjective versus objective approaches, is founded on basic assumptions about the social sciences. Once I have established these dimensions I will take another look at the literature within this organizing frame.

### **Organizational versus social-historical analysis**

Brunner (1988) argues that the analytical perspectives on higher education systems are extremely diverse. It is possible to distinguish among several types of analysis based on their different classification criteria. The most important efforts to integrate these diverse perspectives have been developed under two views: *organizational analysis* and *social-historical analysis*. These views have been mutually exclusive or at least divergent in terms of their practice.

In organizational perspectives the unit of analysis is set on the internal properties of the system. It develops from within the system itself to the outside without ever losing its internal rooting. Organizational analysis focuses on goals, structures, and relations with the environment as defined essentially through internal dynamics.

Social-historical analysis looks at the system from an inverse perspective. It is essentially based on external determinants of organizations. Higher education institutions are perceived, in this latter perspective, as concrete social and historical products. Structures, goals, and processes are determined by external economic, political and cultural conditions.

The continuum between organizational and social-historical approaches will be one of the organizing dimensions of this review on governance in higher education. I will focus on the diversity of approaches to the problems of power and politics in Higher Education from these distinct perspectives.

### **Subjective versus objective approaches**

The second organizing dimension I have selected is the *subjective* versus *objective* distinction. This distinction will differentiate between meta-theoretical assumptions that underlie the diverse perspectives on higher education governance. These assumptions determine the way in which theories and explanations are constructed, the issues they highlight, and those that are not illuminated. In the construction of a conceptual frame, it will be possible to draw from a diversity of perspectives. To be able to do this it is necessary to fully comprehend their foundations and grounding.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) suggest two different and opposing approaches to the social sciences, which determine the basic assumptions of diverse theoretical frameworks. Traditionally these approaches have been labeled *subjective* and *objective*. Each of these makes basic contrasting assumptions related to ontology, epistemology, human nature, and methodology.

Milam (1991) summarizes these dichotomies in the following way:

- *Nominalism versus Realism*. This dimension looks at the assumptions of each approach concerning the essence of the social phenomena. Subjectivist approaches consider that names and labels of the social world are the products of individual cognition. Objectivist approaches consider that the social world is made of real tangible structures that exist as empirical entities independent from the observer.



**TABLE 1. Meta-theoretical assumptions**

	Subjective	Objective
Ontology	Nominalism	Realism
Epistemology	Antipositivism	Positivism
Human nature	Voluntarism	Determinism
Methodology	Idiographic	Nomothetic

- *Antipositivism versus Positivism.* This dimension looks at the assumptions concerning the grounds for understanding knowledge. Positivism attempts to explain and predict the social world by searching for underlying regularities, causal relationships and patterns. Antipositivism views the world as relativistic and subjective and denounces the positivist approach.
- *Voluntarism versus Determinism.* This dimension looks at the assumptions concerning human nature and focusing on relations between human being and their environment. Voluntarist perspectives view people as autonomous and free willed. Determinist approaches portray people as being controlled by situational, behavioral, or environmental variables.
- *Idiographic versus Nomothetic.* This dimension looks at methodological assumptions concerned with the ways of investigating and obtaining knowledge about the social world. Idiographic research focuses on the importance of first-hand, subjective knowledge (such as ethnography and naturalistic inquiry). Nomothetic research focuses on systematic protocols and techniques that

reflect the approach and methods of the social sciences.

#### Four perspectives on higher education governance

I have previously defined two dimensions of a matrix that will enable me to organize the reviewed literature on governance in higher education. The ranges within these two dimensions establish the boundaries of four analytical perspectives on this subject. These perspectives are:

- *Organizational / Functional.* These are governance theories that focus on the internal organization and governance structure of universities as interrelated and homogeneous components that are functional to organizational requirements. Most of the literature on university governance up to the third generation of research (Hardy, 1990), is situated within the boundaries of this analytical perspective. The *bureaucratic model* (Stroup, 1966), its variation the professional bureaucracy model (Mintzberg, 1991), and the *collegial model* (Millet, 1991), and the *collegial model* (Millet,

**TABLE 2. Analytic perspectives**

	Objective	Subjective
Organizational	Organizational / Functional	Organizational / Interpretive
Historical-social	Societal / Functional	Societal / Interpretive

1962) are conceived as natural outcomes of rational processes. These models are deterministic because the outcomes follow unique causality paths. These arrangements within complex organizations exist in reality independently of individuals and social actors. Bureaucratic and consensual decision-making are viewed as a consequence of the rational quest for the collective good. Both the bureaucratic and collegial models focus exclusively on decision-making structures within the organization.

Baldrige's political model (1971), his revised political model (Baldrige *et al.*, 1983), and Pfeffer's systematic approach to political structures, are based on a pluralistic view of power and politics. These models are also deterministic and based on causal relations. Pfeffer's approach is grounded on a highly quantitative methodology. Although mainly concerned with internal processes and structures, the political models account for the presence of external pressures and linkages not fully developed. Most of the mixed models that developed during the second generation of research and some functional approaches to organizational culture are also part of this analytical perspective.

- *Organizational / Interpretive*. These theories focus on organization as a product of cultural perceptions, shared meanings and interpretations of the university. Burton Clark's work (1972) on organizational sagas as sources of identity and internal cohesion and Cohen and March's (Cohen and March, 1974) symbolic model developed new ways of looking at governance and decision-making in higher education. Meanings and beliefs are socially constructed and are not determined by structures or causal relations. The construction of meanings and beliefs is studied through interpretive methodologies.

The third generation of research has developed an extensive body of literature

on culture in higher education. Not all of this research falls within the boundaries of subjective approaches.

There is important work dealing with issues of culture and ideology in higher education. Much of this literature has looked at epistemological and theoretical issues and recognized the political nature of the social construction of reality, knowledge and culture, where dominant groups and ideologies are protected by certain cultural and ideological arrangements (Chaffee and Tierney, 1988; Tierney, 1988; Hardy, 1990; Tierney, 1991; Tierney and Rhoades, 1993).

- *Societal / Functional*. These theories attempt to explain university governance as a functional response to external historical or structural contexts. These analytic perspectives can be found in mainstream literature dealing with issues of autonomy in colleges and universities and in studies about State involvement in higher education. Examples of these studies are *The Control of the Campus: A report on the Governance of Higher Education* (Carnegie, 1982) and *Conflict in Higher Education; State Government Coordination Versus Institutional Independence* (Millett and Harclerod, 1984). Most of these are descriptive quantitative studies with limited theoretical analysis.

Brunner (1988) argues that this perspective has been dominant in Latin America. Some examples are Daniel Levy's studies about universities and autonomy in Mexico (Levy, 1986) and in all of Latin America (Levy, 1980). It is also typical of traditional Marxist structural approaches to the study of higher education institutions. These studies focus on historical development of colleges and universities as an outcome of the development of productive forces and State organization.

- *Societal / Interpretive*. Theories within this analytical perspective explain the

development of university governance and organization as a product of historically determined cultural perceptions that take place in the external environment. This analytical perspective has been less developed. It presents the smallest body of literature. Much of the critical and post-modernist approaches use this perspective in theoretical developments (Lincoln, 1991; Tierney and Rhoades, 1993), but only a few articles and books apply this theoretical frame to practical research. Within this framework, we can find some of Sheila Slaughter's work (Slaughter and Silva, 1985; Slaughter, 1988; Slaughter, 1993). Slaughter argues about the need to look at post-secondary education within the "broad patterns of redistribution of wealth and power in the broader society" (Slaughter, 1993: 2). In *The Political Economy of restructuring Post-secondary Education*, Sheila Slaughter analyzes retrenchment in higher education as a State welfare function rather than a production function. In this process, she utilizes a combination of neo-Marxist, postmodernist, and feminist perspectives.

### **Limitations of existing models and analytical perspectives**

In looking at the literature it is very evident that the major body of work approaches governance from a functionalist perspective by either focusing exclusively on structures or looking at decision-making processes as deterministic causal relations between social actors. Organizational-functional approaches to governance in higher education provide important elements that help us perceive relevant some aspects of university organizations. They have contributed to inform a basic understanding of the structures and processes of higher education institutions. These approaches have focused on organizational goals, technologies, and work. According to these perspectives universities

change through rational responses to internal inefficiencies, organizational growth and increased complexity (Clark, 1983b). Fewer studies suggest that internal politics and interest articulation within the university drive change within higher education institutions (Baldrige, 1971). In most cases, however, organizational-functional theories assume internal homogeneity and fail to acknowledge the impact of external requirements upon universities as well as the contested nature of internal and external demands. However, in many occasions universities' organizational development responds to dynamics that contradict the internal rationality of bureaucratic or collegial arrangements. Organizational boundaries are difficult to establish and goals are vaguely defined (Cohen and March, 1974).

Societal-functional approaches to university governance contrast with organizational perspectives. Societal-functional theories have focused their attention on the relation between postsecondary institutions and their environments. According to these views, university organizations and governance structures are determined by external factors. They look at the environment in terms of the internal strategies to adapt or to minimize the influence of surroundings upon organizations. Some perspectives within this frame explain change within higher education as organizational responses to market dynamics (Massy, 1992). Resource dependency theories argue that universities change in order to increase their chances to survive within and environment where resources are scarce (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). These theories, however, are limited in their ability to explain why many universities have remained unresponsive to labor and economic market demands maintaining the traditional organization of academic disciplines and professional schools as well as remaining virtually tuition free. Resource dependency also fails to explain situations in which universities make conscious choices that limit their access to financial resources.

If we evaluate external and internal approaches in terms of their results on the field, it is possible to find that the strengths of one perspective are the weaknesses of the other. It becomes clear that none of them is able to advance a full understanding of change in higher education without including elements from the other approach (Brunner, 1988).

Interpretive approaches have shed light on processes more than structures. They have brought our attention to issues of culture and meaning. They have also increased our awareness and understanding about the relation between research and the subject matter. In this way, they have constituted a theoretical alternative for the study of higher education governance. These cultural perspectives have also focused alternatively on the organizational and societal levels. Following Berger and Luckman's (1966) views on the social construction of reality, a number of researchers have focused on symbolic as well as substantive interactions, enacting myths and belief systems that are essential for organizational legitimacy (Weick, 1976; Meyer and Rowan, 1978). Institutional theorists explain change in higher education in response to social and cultural demands for conformance to prevailing sets of shared beliefs (Meyer and Rowan, 1978; Clark, 1983b).

Institutional perspectives have successfully brought the cultural dimension into the study of higher education. Like other perspectives, these approaches do not deal with the fact that cultural perceptions in the organization and its environment are contested. 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.

In the light of these limitations, it is possible to argue that some of the theoretical challenges—in dealing with governance and change in higher education—lie in the possibility to bridge some of the gaps between these four

analytical frames. On the one hand, it is necessary to focus on the connections between societal and organizational processes. On the other hand, it is important to look at the linkages between structure and culture. The foundation of this theoretical construct is the contested nature of higher education organizations themselves.

Based on an extensive review of current literature on higher education, Gary Rhoades (1993) has shown that this implicit view about the State and the apolitical nature of post-secondary education is also promoted by the views of university scholars about themselves and their institutions. It is assumed that higher education institutions are politically neutral and autonomous organizations rooted on professional competence and rational behavior (as opposed to the politically driven irrational State) (Rhoades, 1993).

Usually the State is viewed as opposed to academe. Higher education is considered autonomous and independent of bureaucratic and political practices. The State is seen as external and adversary. In most cases, the State is perceived as equal to formal political bodies, inefficient and intrusive. Most of these views are not grounded on any explicit state theory. Rhoades, however, argues that these assumptions are rooted in a structuralist and pluralist view of the State that permeates the work of higher education scholars.

Only a small amount of literature openly acknowledges the presence of power and politics in higher education governance. Many of the stated and underlying views of power in these perspectives are founded on pluralistic models. These views, based on the Weberian notion of power, argue that power exists only in the presence of conflict.

Most of the views we have reviewed make some sort of distinction between governance, management, and leadership. This distinction implicitly confines the locus of power to the restricted

notion of governance as decision-making. This distinction is based on the assumption that the university is essentially a technical institution. Following Wolin (1991), I argue that the political nature of the university is obscured by the argument of the neutrality of techniques in their intent to disengage technical analysis from political judgment (Readings, 1996).

The absence of an understanding about the State and the position of post-secondary organizations within society, in the last fourth of the twentieth century, and the deficient comprehension of theories of change, can explain the limited success in the attempt to grasp the complex relation between

“internal” and “external” processes. The distinction between internal and external levels in higher education is extremely problematic (Pusser, 1999). More recent attempts to address the issues of higher education governance, power and change have made headway in building critical political approaches (Ordorika, 2003; Marginson and Ordorika, 2011; Pusser and Marginson, 2013). However, contemporary debates in higher education still need to provide a better understanding of the broader issues of political economy and power relations within the higher education organizations and between these and external sources is necessary to understand power and change in higher education.

## Bibliography

---

- Baldrige, J. V. (1971). *Power and conflict in the university: research in the sociology of complex organizations*. New York: J. Wiley.
- Baldrige, J. V., Curtis, D. V., Ecker, G. P., and Riley, G. L. (1983). Alternative models of governance in higher education. In M. W. Peterson (ed.). *Organization and Governance in Higher Education*. Massachusetts: Ginn Press.
- Bensimon, E. M. (1989). The meaning of “good presidential leadership”: a frame analysis. *Review of Higher Education*, 12 (2), 107-123.
- Berger, P. L., and Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.
- Blau, P. (1973). *The organization of academic work*. New York: John Wiley.
- Brunner, J. J. (1988). *Notas para una teoría del cambio en los sistemas de educación superior*. Santiago de Chile: FLACSO.
- Burrell, G., and Morgan G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis: elements of the sociology of corporate life*. London: Heinemann.
- Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1982). *The Control of the campus: a report on the governance of higher education*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching/Princeton University Press.
- Chaffee, E. (1987). Organizational concepts underlying governance and administration. In M. W. Peterson and L. A. Mets (eds.), *Key resources on higher education governance, management, and leadership: a guide to the literature*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Chaffee, E., and Tierney, W. G. (1988). *Collegiate culture and leadership strategies*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Childers, M. E. (1981). What is political about bureaucratic-collegial decision-making? *Review of Higher Education*, 5 (1), 25-45.
- Clark, B. R. (1970). *The distinctive college: Antioch, Reed & Swarthmore*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Clark, B. R. (1971). Belief and loyalty in college organization. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 42 (6), 499-515.

- Clark, B. R. (1972). The organizational saga in higher education. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17 (2), 178-184.
- Clark, B. R. (1983a). *The higher education system: academic organization in cross-national perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Clark, B. R. (1983b). *Values in higher education: conflict and accomodation*. Tucson, Ariz.: Center for the Study of Higher Education, College of Education-University of Arizona.
- Cohen, M. D., and March, J. G. (1974). *Leadership and ambiguity: the American college president*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press.
- Coser, L. A. (1964). *The functions of social conflict*. New York: Free Press.
- Dahl, R. A. (1961). *Who governs? Democracy and power in an American city*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Dahrendorf, R. (1959). *Class and class conflict in industrial society*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Goodman, P. (1962). *The community of scholars*. New York: Random House.
- Hardy, C. (1990). Putting Power into University Governance. In J. Smart (ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (393-426). New York: Agathon Press. 7.
- Katz, D., and Kahn R. L. (1978). *The social psychology of organizations*. New York: Wiley.
- Kempner, K. M., and Tierney, W. G. (1996). *The social role of higher education: comparative perspectives*. New York: Garland Pub.
- Levy, D. C. (1980). *University and government in Mexico: autonomy in an authoritarian system*. New York: Praeger.
- Levy, D. C. (1986). *Higher education and the state in Latin America: private challenges to public dominance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S. (1991). Advancing a critical agenda. In W. G. Tierney (ed.), *Culture and ideology in higher education: advancing a critical agenda*. New York: Praeger.
- Marginson, S., and Ordorika, I. (2010). "El central volumen de la fuerza" (the hegemonic global pattern in the reorganization of elite higher education and research). In D. Rhoten and C. Calhoun, *The Transformation of "Public" Research Universities: Shaping an International and Interdisciplinary Research Agenda for the Social Sciences*. New York: Social Science Research Council Press.
- Massy, W. F. (1992). *Measuring performance: how colleges and universities can set meaningful goals and be accountable*. Stanford, Calif.: Siher.
- Mets, L. A., and Peterson, M. W. (eds.) (1987). *Key resources on higher education governance, management, and leadership: a guide to the literature*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Meyer, J. W., and Rowan, B. (1978). The structure of educational organizations. In M. W. Meyer (ed.), *Environments and organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Milam, J. H. Jr. (1991). The presence of paradigms in the core higher education journal literature. *Research in Higher Education*, 32 (6), 651-668.
- Millett, J. D. (1962). *The academic community: an essay on organization*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Millett, J. D., and Harclerod, F. F. (1984). *Conflict in higher education: state government coordination versus institutional independence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mintzberg, H. (1991). The professional bureaucracy. In M. W. Peterson (ed.), *Organization and Governance in Higher Education*. Massachusetts: Ginn Press.
- Ordorika, I. (2003). *Power and Politics in University Governance: Organization and Change at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*. New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Peterson, M. W. (1985). Emerging developments in post-secondary organization theory and research: fragmentation and integration. In M. W. Peterson (ed.), *Organization and Governance in Higher Education*. Massachusetts: Ginn Press.

- Pfeffer, J. (1981). *Power in organizations*. Marshfield, Mass.: Pitman Pub.
- Pfeffer, J., and Salancik, G. R. (1978). *The external control of organizations: a resource dependence perspective*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Pusser, B. (1999). The Contest Over Affirmative Action at the University of California: Theory and Politics of Contemporary Higher Education Policy. In *School of Education*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.
- Pusser, B., and Marginson, S. (2013). University Rankings in Critical Perspective. *Journal of Higher Education*, 84 (4), 544-568.
- Readings, B. (1996). *The university in ruins*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Rhoades, G. L. (1993). Beyond "the state": interorganizational relations and state apparatus in post-secondary education. In J. Smart (ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, 7 (84-142). New York: Agathon Press.
- Riley, G. L., and Baldrige, J. V. (1977). *Governing academic organizations: new problems, new perspectives*. Berkeley: McCutchan Pub. Corp.
- Salancik, G. R., and Pfeffer, J. (1974). The bases and use of power in organizational decision making: the case of a university. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 19 (4), 453-473.
- Scott, W. R. (1992). *Organizations: rational, natural, and open systems*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Selznick, Ph. (1949). *TVA and the grass roots*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Selznick, Ph. (1957). *Leadership in administration: a sociological interpretation*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Slaughter, S. (1988). *Academic Freedom and the State: Reflections on the Uses of Knowledge*. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 59 (3), 241-262.
- Slaughter, S. (1993). Retrenchment in the 1980s: the politics of prestige and gender. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 64 (3), 250-282.
- Slaughter, S., and Leslie, L. L. (1997). *Academic capitalism: politics, policies, and the entrepreneurial university*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Slaughter, S., and Silva, E. T. (1985). Towards a political economy of retrenchment: the American public research universities. *Review of Higher Education*, 8 (4), 295-318.
- Stroup, H. H. (1966). *Bureaucracy in higher education*. New York: Free Press.
- Tierney, W. G. (1988). Organizational culture in higher education: defining the essentials. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 59 (1), 2-21.
- Tierney, W. G. (ed.) (1991). *Culture and ideology in higher education: advancing a critical agenda*. New York: Praeger.
- Tierney, W. G., and Rhoades, R. A. (1993). Postmodernism and critical theory in higher education: implications for research and practice. In J. Smart (ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, IX, 84-142. New York: Agathon Press.
- Weick, K. E. (1976). Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21 (1), 1-19.
- Wolin, S. S. (1991). The New Public Philosophy. *Democracy: The Journal of Political Renewal and Radical Change*, 1 (octubre), 23-36.

## Resumen

---

### *Gobierno y cambio en la educación superior: el debate entre la sociología política clásica, el nuevo institucionalismo y las teorías críticas*

**INTRODUCCIÓN.** Uno de los más intensos debates sobre el gobierno de la educación superior y el cambio se llevó a cabo entre las décadas de 1970 y 1990 en el ámbito anglosajón. **MÉTODO.** Un examen sistemático de la literatura sobre gobierno en la educación superior en el periodo. La parte principal de la bibliografía examinada se refiere al debate teórico que ocurrió en el contexto estadounidense en el periodo de referencia. **RESULTADOS.** La revisión bibliográfica muestra los vacíos y las limitaciones de la teoría existente. También proporciona los cimientos necesarios para el desarrollo de nuevos marcos conceptuales que mejorarán nuestro entendimiento del tema: la relación entre poder, política y cambio en la educación superior. En este artículo a) se realiza una breve descripción del desarrollo de este campo de investigación, y b) se presenta una síntesis de la literatura sobre los modelos ampliamente aceptados de gobernanza en la educación superior. **DISCUSIÓN.** Los debates contemporáneos en la educación superior deben aproximarnos a una mejor comprensión de la problemática del gobierno universitario a partir de la economía política y las relaciones de poder dentro de las organizaciones universitarias. Ello resulta indispensable para entender las relaciones entre el poder y el cambio en la educación superior.

**Palabras clave:** *Gobierno, Educación superior, Políticas, Tendencias de análisis, Autonomía institucional.*

## Résumé

---

### *Gouvernance et changement dans l'enseignement supérieur : débat entre la sociologie politique classique, le nouvel institutionnalisme et les théories critiques*

**INTRODUCTION.** Un des débats les plus intenses relatif à la gouvernance de l'enseignement supérieur et le changement a eu lieu des années soixante-dix aux années quatre-vingt-dix. **MÉTHODE.** Un examen systématique de la littérature sur la gouvernance en enseignement supérieur dans la période. La bibliographie considérée concerne le débat théorique qui s'est produit dans le contexte américain dans la période de référence. **RÉSULTATS.** La révision bibliographique montre les vides et les limitations de la théorie existante. Nous apportons aussi les bases nécessaires au développement de nouveaux cadres conceptuels susceptibles d'améliorer notre compréhension du thème : la relation entre pouvoir, politique et changement au sein de l'enseignement supérieur. Dans cet article : a) nous effectuerons une brève description du développement de ce champ de recherche et b) nous présenterons une synthèse de la littérature qui traite des modèles amplement acceptés de gouvernance à l'enseignement supérieur. **DISCUSSION.** Des débats contemporains dans l'enseignement supérieur doivent parvenir à une meilleure compréhension de la problématique du gouvernement universitaire à partir de l'économie politique et les relations de pouvoir au sein des organisations universitaires. Cela est essentiel pour comprendre les relations entre le pouvoir et les changements dans l'enseignement supérieur.

**Mots clés:** *Gouvernance, L'enseignement supérieur, Politiques, Tendances d'analyse, Autonomie institutionnelle.*



## **Perfil profesional del autor**

---

### **Imanol Ordorika**

Doctor en Ciencias Sociales y Educación por la Universidad de Stanford. Investigador y profesor en la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Sus trabajos abordan la temática de las relaciones de poder y política en la universidad y el impacto de la globalización en la institución. Ha publicado numerosos libros, capítulos y artículos. En la actualidad encabeza la Dirección General de Evaluación Institucional de la UNAM y coordina el Estudio Comparativo de las Universidades Mexicanas. Dirige la Revista de la Educación Superior.

Correo electrónico de contacto: [ordorika@unam.mx](mailto:ordorika@unam.mx)