

Governing Boards

- A missing piece in HE reform in Latin America

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LAC`s governance model

- The typical Latin American public university is governed under an idiosyncratic variation of the French and German models, generalized in the 20s as a consequence of Cordoba University`s reform in 1918.
- The distinctive feature of this governance model is an extreme imbalance between public mission and support and accountability. Institutions are fully funded by the government, while
 - Authorities are elected internally, accountable only to interest group within the institution.
 - No external boards exist.

Difficulties in moving forward

- This problem has long been diagnosed, but:
 - Political obstacles to change are formidable, since changing the mechanisms for appointing the leadership implies, at least to some extent, disenfranchising most of internal constituencies.
 - No clear alternatives are widely known. External boards and its potential benefits are just not part of the culture.
- Public policy has approached accountability piecemeal:
 - Mainstreaming of competition-based systems to distribute funds for research.
 - Vigorous introduction of accreditation systems.
 - Experimentation with system-wide evaluation systems (rankings, standardized testing).
- This has made a difference, but it does not address the critical issues that only reforms in governance can achieve:
 - Poor articulation with external stakeholders
 - Poor differentiation and inattention to distinctive missions.

What could be done

- Disseminate the notion of external boards and its considerable potential
- Approach individual institutions or categories of them that can be more open to the idea and start transferring know-how (technological universities, regional universities...)
- Run experiments that can be turned into exemplary cases.
- Bring to bear, for the purpose of public debate. examples of successful reforms and improvement based in the experience around the world.