



# Higher Education in Brazil: Retrospective, current challenges and looking ahead

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## Abstract

Higher Education has become an increasingly competitive field, and knowledge, its essence, has become a global commodity. Consequently, universities all over the world have been under pressure to respond to growing new demands quickly, dynamically and creatively. In the Brazilian context, overcoming the challenges that these Higher Education institutions face requires a significant effort to adapt and change, especially by public universities. In this essay we analyze the main challenges of Brazilian Higher Education institutions, especially those resulting from the Coronavirus crisis. We focus on challenges such as quality of Higher Education, funding and academic management. To this end, we explore some of the main changes that Higher Education institutions have undergone over time. We also highlight some alternative paths for those challenges, including reflections on opportunities that have arisen following the pandemic.

**Keywords:** Colleges and Universities. *University* Administration. Financing of Education. Educational Quality.

## 1 Introduction

Universities are among the oldest and most important institutions in society. Originally linked to the church, these institutions underwent significant changes (in form and mission) as the centuries passed until they arrived at the models that we are familiar with today. During this long period, we can perceive a gradual

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shift in power from the church to the state and then the market. This secular model evolved into different types of Higher Education Institutions (HEI), of a public, communal and private business nature (MILLETT, 1975). Although specific characteristics determine the functioning of each of these types, in practice they have presented many more similarities than differences (MEYER JÚNIOR; LOPES, 2015).

In recent decades, the Higher Education sector has become increasingly competitive, further accentuating the similarities between for-profit and non-profit universities. Knowledge, its main essence, has become a global commodity, in some cases of questionable quality. While the development of academic disciplines, the evolution of administrative structures and the growth of the research university (MINOGUE, 2008) have all been important to the progress of universities, they have also significantly increased the challenges involved in managing them.

These challenges involve dealing with a competitive scenario and the new demands that have pressured universities around the world to become more agile, dynamic and creative (BASTEDO, 2012; MULUNEH; GEDIFEW, 2018; TIERNEY, 1998) under the threat of compromising their organizational survival. This is not a simple and trivial issue, especially for Brazilian universities, which need to guarantee adequate quality levels, very often with limited resources.

The debate over quality in Education is not a recent phenomenon (SÁ, 2022). The lack of consensus on this matter and its variations and impact have limited HEIs in their capacity to respond adequately to their needs in terms of the competencies and knowledge of individuals, organizations and society in general (MEYER JÚNIOR; LOPES, 2015; MOREIRA; MORERA; SOARES, 2018). In the case of Brazilian public universities, there is also the challenge of the limited and scarce source of funding for their budgets. The scarcity, or poor use, of resources, has left these institutions in a precarious situation through the years and precluded the changes necessary for the institutions to perform better, including with regard to quality in Education. These characteristics greatly compromise their capacity to respond, especially Brazilian public universities, making them similar to 'dinosaurs' compared with the performance and practices of the 'dynamos' of their private counterparts. (CASTRO, 2003).

Universities, in general, are complex organizations by nature (ETZIONI, 1961). The social nature of the service that universities provide, their strict regulations,

the plurality of actors and interests involved (BALDRIDGE, 1971), ambiguous goals and collegiate decision-making (COHEN; MARCH, 1974) all contribute to this situation. Changes are a very slow, political and challenging process for managers of educational institutions.

Commonly characterized as amateur, academic management has challenged the ability of HEIs to respond with agility and efficiency to internal demands, the demands of the market and, especially, society. Bad managers are a source of bad management. As Simon (1967) had already pointed out, colleges and universities qualify professionals and are usually managed by amateurs. This is very true in the reality of Brazilian public universities, where the concept of democracy is used – or misused – to select academic leaders such as Presidents, Deans, and Department chairmen (MEYER JÚNIOR; LOPES, 2015). Therefore, special attention also has to be paid to the academic management of HEIs.

Nevertheless, whereas some demands can wait, others cannot, and this choice is a central challenge for university managers. As insightfully observed by Minogue (2008), the university of the twentieth century is obsolete. Bureaucratic structures, resistance to change and a stubborn determination to maintain the *status quo*, conditions that have survived into the early twenty-first century, have contributed to organizational inertia in universities.

Recent major difficulties, like those resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic (ALAALI, 2022; GOMES *et al.*, 2021; MEYER JÚNIOR; MURPHY; MEYER, 2022; OLIVEIRA; GOMES; BARCELLOS, 2020; THE ECONOMIST UNIT, 2020), have exposed the structural and behavioral weaknesses of HEIs around the world and especially in emerging countries. The context, characterized by deep uncertainty triggered a need for immediate changes and improvisation. At the same time, these alterations encountered resistance among academic managers and students.

In Brazil, as in other countries, the pandemic not only caught HEIs by surprise, but also widened a number of differences among them. Of these gaps, those related to the ability of these institutions to adapt, innovate and learn should be highlighted. These to promote public welfare and social rights having a significant impact on the country's future social and economic development.

A new reality is upon us and choices have to be made. After all, who is served by Brazilian universities? What changes are necessary and how can they be made?

The classic mission of HEIs is to educate, preparing people for life in society, with emphasis on knowledge, skills, values and democratic principles. These institutions qualify people to lead in the production sector (government and market). They also play a crucial role in society through studies and research. These concerns should be considered by all the various parties involved, be they representatives of government agencies, managers of HEIs, or professors and students, so that new solutions can be found and put into practice.

The purpose of this essay is to analyze the main challenges facing Brazilian HEIs, especially those resulting from the crisis caused by coronavirus. We focus on challenges such as quality of Education, funding and academic management as well as the importance of integration among them. To this end, we first explore some of the main changes these institutions have undergone over time. We also highlight some alternative paths for these challenges, focusing on key issues related to them. This is the heart of the paper.

## 2 Evolution of HEI: from the Church to the State

Universities, as we know them today, are very different from those that originated in eleventh century European monasteries. Although the specific sources of interference to the institutional autonomy of HEIs have evolved over time, they have been continuous. Always the three contenders have been the church, state and market. Understanding the pressures from these sources of influence is essential for better management of the current pressures Higher Education is facing today.

It was in the Late Middle Ages (1300-1500) that HEI first came to be recognized as universities<sup>1</sup>, because of their essential role in the accumulation of knowledge and, more notably, the development of science (THE ECONOMIST, 2018). However, for a long time, empirical science was condemned as a sacrilege; only after this did Education ultimately emerge as a responsibility of the state in the West.

Originally linked to the Catholic Church, educational institutions were authorized by papal bulls, while access to Higher Education was almost always restricted to the clergy, a privilege for a very few. From the fifth century on, the church became responsible for providing instruction to prepare the young who aspired to a religious life. Although the Education as a social right is attributed by some

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<sup>1</sup> Although the Universities of Bologna, Oxford and Paris were founded before the thirteenth century, some authors do not consider them to be defined as universities (RÜEGG, 2003).

to the French Revolution<sup>2</sup> (LOPES, 1981), its roots can initially be traced back to the Protestant Reformation.

Beginning in Germany in the sixteenth century as a religious reformist movement, the Reformation led on to parallel movements in several areas of society, including Education. The Church had been subject to growing complaints in the Mid-Middle Ages for its abuse of power, overt corruption and still other deviations. Martin Luther's stand against the absolute power of the Pope and practices adopted by the church was supported by royalty eager for greater political and economic autonomy. This reformist movement broadened to unimagined dimensions.

Luther's proposals in Education ended the monopoly of the Catholic Church. In its place came compulsory and universal schooling (FITZER, 1971). Thus, a new system was born that spread all over Germany and was picked up by other countries as well. Large, state universities in Europe and the United States began to proliferate.

Some of these changes would only be implemented slowly, but were evidence of the shift of power from the church to two other important actors that would play a major role in the management of Higher Education thereafter: the state and the market. In the hands of the state, the management of Higher Education left some of the vices of the church behind. However, new challenges soon appeared, some persisting until now. This is the subject to which we will turn in the specific Brazilian context: new reality, new forms of Education, new kinds of institutions, and, above all, new challenges.

### **3 Higher Education in Brazil: a different history, similar goals**

Like many other countries, Brazil has a mixed Higher Education system, made up of public, community and private business components. However, the country lacks a university tradition, especially compared with Europe, North America and other Latin American countries<sup>3</sup> that opened universities long before (LEVY,

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the university principles (that it should be free, secular and compulsory) that comprise the right to Education being the fruits of the French Revolution (LOPES, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> The first university in Latin America was established in 1553 in Mexico, a Spanish colony.

1986). The first HEI<sup>4</sup> in Brazil were only established later, following the arrival of the Portuguese royal family in 1808.

Even so, the Brazilian ruling classes, who held power in those days, did not see any advantages in establishing universities. This meant that Higher Education developed very slowly until the proclamation of the republic in 1889. After all, the main objective of HEI was to ensure that professional Education remained under state control, in addition to affording social prestige. This model of Education under central government control only ended with the Constitution of the Republic in 1891. This change meant a legal opportunity for the private sector to create their own HEI.

The 1920s were marked by debates over the creation of universities based on the importance of their role as centers of knowledge no longer serving political interests (CHARLE; VERGER, 1996). At the time, Brazil began to adopt the model of the modern university, based on the three pillars of learning-research-extension<sup>5</sup>, following the trend of other parts of the world.

Ever since, Brazilian Higher Education has undergone significant changes in terms of nature, goals and structure. In the 1940s, the dispute over the control of Education between lay and Catholic leaderships led the Catholic Church to open its own private universities. Therefore, several public and private universities began to develop their academic structures by integrating Education and research. There was a focus on scientific production (MARTINS, 2009) by offering *stricto sensu* graduate courses. The modern university model adopted by some public and church HEIs, represented an important watershed for changes that would be fully perceived in the following decades, particularly after the University Reform in the 1970s.

Despite the rapid growth of public Higher Education from 1945 to 1965<sup>6</sup>, there was only a limited increase in public expenditure from new graduate programs and research capacity. The private sector tried to absorb the demand unmet by public universities, but could not. This led to increasing calls by a rising upper class for a reform of the Brazilian university system and more free places in universities (CHARLE; VERGER, 1996).

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<sup>4</sup> The Bahia School of Surgery was the first HEI established in Brazil, in 1808. The University of Rio de Janeiro, established in 1920, is considered a pioneer by offering a variety of courses from separate faculties. Its structure, however, was not representative of the "modern university".

<sup>5</sup> The first Brazilian university based on this model was the University of São Paulo (USP), founded in 1934.

<sup>6</sup> One of the motives was the federalization process of private and state institutions.

In response to such pressures, the military government, which came to power in 1964, promoted the 1968 University Reform. This was much influenced by the so-called American Higher Education model. While it professionalized the Brazilian public university system and made significant new investments in graduate courses and research, that was not the full effect. Reform also permitted later emergence of a private sector of Higher Education structured on models of for-profit Education companies in the USA (ALTBACH, 2005). The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 aided this process by allowing the creation and cancellation of courses and the relocation of sites without the need for approval from official agencies (autonomy principle).

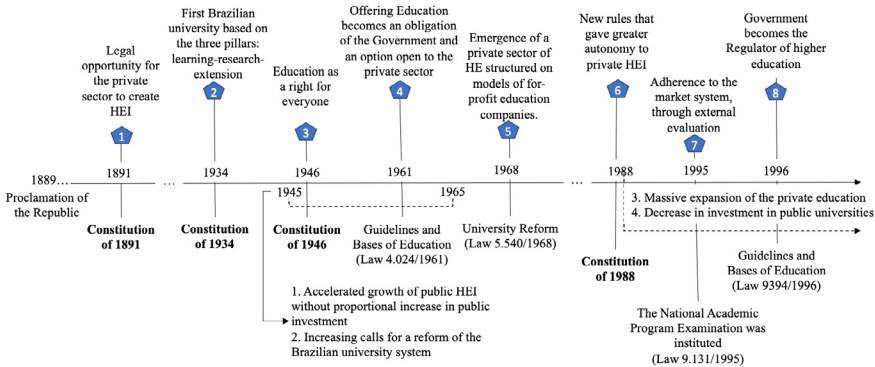
The creation of the National Academic Program Examination, in 1995, represented the adoption of the market system by instituting an external evaluation mechanism. Ever since, undergraduate courses have come to be classified by their grade, giving potential clients the possibility of considering the classification of courses when making their choice. In 1996, in turn, the approval by the Federal Legislative branch of power of the Law of Directives and Bases of Education introduced new changes, in addition to the regular evaluation of undergraduate courses as well as of the HEI itself (QUEIROZ *et al.*, 2013). As a result, the major development in the expansion of Brazilian Higher Education in the 1990s was the private sector (SOUZA, 1991), making this component more competitive and responsive to growing demand.

While the private sector of Higher Education was expanding its operations in Brazil, public Higher Education was slowing because of the economic crisis of the nineties. Since then, new public universities have only been created in specific conditions, such as in geographic regions unattractive to the private sector (SOBRAL, 2000). New rigid conditions imposed by the legislation to create and organize universities led the private sector of Higher Education to create instead university centers which did not require them to pursue all three basic functions of universities: teaching, research and services (QUEIROZ *et al.*, 2013).

After a period of tighter purse strings, in the early years of the twenty-first century, under President Lula, the Brazilian government began investing in initiatives directed to revitalizing public universities and making access to Higher Education more democratic (MOREIRA, MOREIRA; SOARES, 2018; SOUZA, 1991). Although relevant, these initiatives have not been accompanied by an increase in the investment required by HEIs over the last decades.

The principal challenge in the 21st century is the unequal competition among HEIs and the quality of Education provided. The main legal frameworks responsible for structural changes in Brazilian Higher Education, as well as for the competitive pattern perceived over the last century, are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1** - Evolution of legal changes in Brazilian Higher Education



Source: Authors (2022)

The new scenario triggered by the highlighted changes began to require all HEIs, whether for-profit or non-profit in nature, to find adequate strategies to deal with an increasingly competitive context. These issues require reflection on the role of the government since most universities - which concentrate research and, therefore, are much more costly - are public and suffer from mismanagement, as well as the scarcity of resources.

## 4 From secular institutions to mass Education

Expansion of Higher Education combined with the civic state's inability to meet this demand impelled private for-profit institutions all over the world. Although they had no history or long traditions, these centers carved out a profitable niche by affording easier access and new forms of student financing (MINOGUE, 2008). Consequently, this component has grown exponentially through partnerships with private companies, as well as by mergers and acquisitions (CASTRO, 2003).

The spread of these practices has contributed to the massification of Higher Education around the world (PARKER; JARY, 1995). Ritzer (1993) referred to this



practice as the ‘McDonaldization of Higher Education’ due to the excessive focus on the efficiency, measurement, predictability and control on the part of for-profit learning institutions. Based on the characteristics of the fast-food industry, this analogy may be summarized by the expressions “have it your way” and “picking up your order, bussing your table” (MARGOLIS, 2004, p. 368). Consequently, this new market profile posed a much greater challenge to traditional universities, forcing them to become more diverse, more global and much more competitive (RAMALEY, 2014; THE ECONOMIST, 2018). Accustomed to evolution over centuries, universities around the world now had to become more flexible if they wished to survive.

In Brazil, this profile of the Higher Education sector, more businesslike and more competitive, has been a reality since the late twentieth century (see Figure 1). Proof of this can be seen in the significant increase in the number of private institutions compared with public ones. The private sector grew by 87.1% from 2009 to 2019, compared to an increase of 32.4% in the public sector (INEP, 2020).

Within the private sector, this rapid expansion rate was due to new faculties or schools. In 2019, there were 2,608 HEI in Brazil (302 public and 2,306 private), of which 79.6% were faculties or schools and only 7.6%, universities (INEP, 2020). Although much greater in number, the private faculties hosted only 19% of students enrolled in graduate programs, while universities hosted 52.2% during the same period. Between 2009 and 2019, the number of students in the private sector rose by 47.3%, and by 36.5% in the public sector (INEP, 2020). Therefore, there is now a stabilizing process underway, to which demographic change and limited economic resources contribute (INEP, 2020).

The changes in the Brazilian Higher Education sector thus have been varied and diverse, depending on the nature of the institution. Private institutions are facing demands to rethink their strategies to ensure their survival in the competitive market. Many first-rate universities have established exchange partnerships. For smaller units, however, such practices are impossible.

On the other hand, 198, or 54.5% of all the universities in the country, are public (INEP, 2020), which means that most of the scientific research conducted in the country has been funded by the state. While this initiative has meant greater access to Education and research, it has also made universities increasingly dependent on the public purse and its limited investment policy (MOREIRA; MOREIRA; SORAES, 2018).

In this context, challenges are growing and the performance of HEIs will increasingly depend upon how well they are managed. Every HEI has a similar organizational structure. All have a central administration with an academic and financial board of directors, managed by a chancellor, who is aided by a vice-chancellor and deans in areas such as undergraduate studies, graduate programs, administration and student welfare. However, they differ in how they choose their managers and the origin of their resources, with significant implications for the quality of management and performance (CASTRO, 2003; SIMON, 1957).

Leaders of public HEIs are chosen through consultations with the academic community or appointed directly by the public administration. Most of the managers are professors with training in diverse fields of knowledge, but not necessarily as managers (MEYER JÚNIOR; LOPES, 2015). Challenged with fulfilling their social mission and achieving sustainability, the leaders of communal institutions are appointed by their sponsors. The managers of private business institutions, in turn, are market executives selected based on more objective criteria such as experience, financial performance and achievement of goals. In fact, none of these models seem to have the characteristics expected of professional academic managers.

Another characteristic of Brazilian public institutions is related to their limited funding sources. Different from public Higher Education, the main source of funds for private institutions are tuition and fees paid by students. Donations are not a common practice in Brazilian Higher Education, differing from other countries, particularly in the USA, where there is a historic culture of private endowments and tax incentives for donation by individuals. When they attempt to meet increasing costs through higher monthly fees, private HEIs take on new challenges, but in a scenario of unequal competition when compared to public HEIs. Despite this, private HEIs have a smaller and more efficient structure, a much more professionalized management and, in many of them, quality levels that are much lower than those found in public and private universities. That is, the same rules permit different institutions to behave very differently.

A challenge for policy-makers and university managers is to create a Higher Education system that reconciles so many parallel and competing demands and, at the same time, maintains the quality of Higher Education. How can the current management model of public Education institutions be improved to better meet the new demands from the environment, balancing quality and

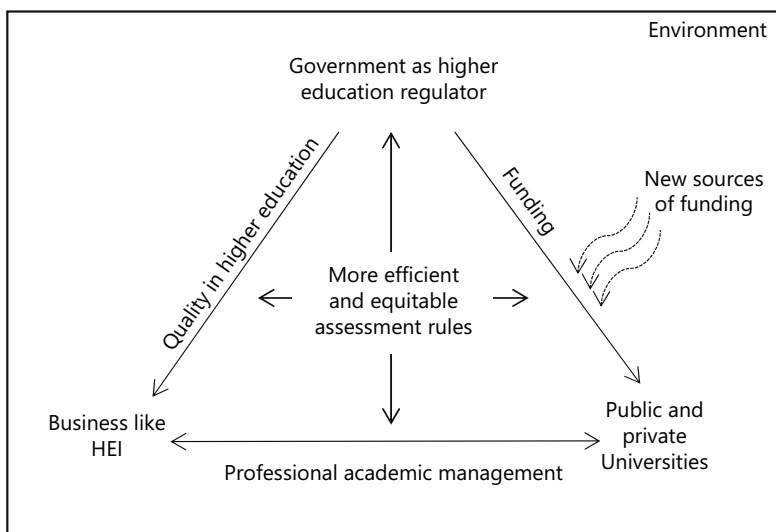
sustainability? Should similar conditions of competition between universities and other HEIs be guaranteed?

## 5 Challenges and alternative paths for Brazilian HEI

Some challenges faced by the Brazilian higher educational system are also a reality in other emerging countries (HARARI, 2018). There is a long way for Brazil to go to achieve the higher educational levels of the USA, Japan, France, South Korea just to name a few. To embark on this path, changes that ensure quality in Education are crucial. In turn, higher levels of quality depend on an increase in the sources of funding and, consequently, professional academic management that can effectively integrate all of these factors.

The relationship between quality in Education, funding and professional academic management in the performance of the Brazilian Higher Education sector is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2** - Determining factors in the improvement of Higher Education in Brazil



Source: Authors (2022)

Below, we highlight some alternative paths for each of the key factors: quality of Higher Education, new sources of funding and professional academic management.

## 6 Quality of Higher Education

Higher levels of socioeconomic development requires more and better Education. The quality of Education grew at lesser rates than desired – and necessary, just as gains in regular productivity advances elsewhere lagged.

Most *stricto sensu* graduate programs and research conducted by Brazilian public universities will continue to exist, but will need to adapt better to the new demands of the market. With the growing size of public institutions, a larger number of persons was needed to supervise. However, the retirement of faculty and administrative staff in these institutions, has not been replaced due to a policy of reduced public spending. As a result, there was less attention to teaching by senior faculty and greater need for temporary staff, whose experience and professional quality varied considerably.

Regarding community institutions, mostly represented in Brazil by smaller size universities, the major challenge is reconciling the basic institutional mission with remaining economically and financially sustainable. Maintaining a tradition of excellence in teaching at community institutions suggests that these will grow less in the coming years.

In turn, the for-profit institutions are ‘new creatures’ in the Brazilian Higher Education sector. Their goal is clear: they are an Education business whose *raison d’être* is to make a profit for their owners and shareholders. In this context, Higher Education is a product to be sold, like a commodity, and students are the customers for the services they provide (MINOGUE, 2008; THE ECONOMIST, 2018). Many of these for-profit institutions could be viewed as diploma factories, all focusing on professional Education and issuing diplomas as certificates of knowledge acquisition. While community institutions make limited profits due to the high cost of maintaining their university structure, the lean structure of for-profit institutions with large classes contribute to profitable results. They also enjoy additional gain from certifying and selling credentials. However, they are not teaching the job skills demanded by the labour market causing frustration to their graduates.

Incorporation of quality as a social value enables citizens and consumers to insist upon their rights. An old maxim already says that ‘what is not measured properly is difficult to manage’. There is a need for assessment practices that recognize the differentiated characteristics among diverse HEIs. Measurement of knowledge gained by students throughout the course, regardless of level, is essential. This ‘before and after’ could represent a pressure to improve quality.

Hopefully, unlike the coronavirus pandemic, online Education is here to stay. This is what appears to be a convenient Education option for groups across countries and universities, and which was not previously considered by most students. This new practice will also require massive investment and, above all, new evaluation methods that strive for high quality.

## **7 New sources of funding**

The expansion of Brazilian Higher Education in particular depends on the adoption of new sources of funding in addition to the current ones: public resources and tuition fees. Brazil rapidly expanded its educational system in the years after the Real Plan, which began in 1994. With smaller demographic change, inflation curtailed, and economic growth greater and more continuous, resources per student improved (FISHLOW, 2011). Brazilian legislation to expand public pre-school facilities broadened, and the percentage of the population receiving training in secondary school consistently grew. Much expansion of public, private and communal facilities occurred, as federal and state governmental plans emphasized the importance of better facilities to remedy the regular inability of poor students to advance (McCOWAN, 2007). Despite the investments, Education in Brazil still lagged behind other Latin American countries.

All types of HEI are in a constant search for financial resources. Those principally come from business interests, eager for academic programs that could prepare candidates for future employment. Currently, complementary funding alternatives have evolved through relationships abroad. Foreign universities even charge different fees for specific groups, varying because of student's income level or the major they choose.

Likewise, partnerships with the production sector, especially in research can contribute to improved facilities. The main hurdles to overcome are related with the bureaucracy of the Brazilian public machine, which makes the financial management of public universities extremely difficult. Various legal restrictions still limit and even hinder a win-win relationship between public HEIs and the private sector.

The pandemic crisis can accelerate decisions that promote necessary changes in the Education investment model. The business model adopted by some HEIs, especially those that are already under financial pressure, may also undergo more permanent changes.

## 8 Professional academic management

The recent scenario reveals a context of unequal competition between public and private HEI in their structures, products, management and quality in Education. Managerial capabilities in particular have not progressed as much as one would hope.

One of the reasons for the expansion of for-profit facilities came as a consequence of creation of larger units, where professional managers were able to deal with an array of legal strictures and changing national rules. The reference model for managing such for-profit entities is inspired by the business sector.

Proper academic management will require new skills for HEIs managers especially in the case of public universities where amateur professorial management predominates (MEYER JÚNIOR; LOPES, 2015). Furthermore, this type of approach – where the most voted is politically acceptable – in addition to perpetuating problems, makes changes superficial, time-consuming and strongly political. As already highlighted by Rosovsky (1993) this approach represents a misconception of democracy that does not work in armies, families and schools. The nature and complexity of universities requires that management be meritocratic rather than democratic. Persisting in this approach has further aggravated the quality of academic work and also the performance of public universities.

The path of change for public universities depends upon selection of managers based on their administrative skills and abilities. There must also be adoption of incentives and rewards for institutions whose management most adequately fulfils administrative, social and quality objectives. This is a first step to enhance the power of public managers.

## 9 What to expect from now on?

Universities must promote restructuring and renewal, seeking a new form of academic management in order to improve their capacity to respond to the challenges imposed by new demographics, as well as new economic and social contexts, as well as technological developments within a new dynamic and unforeseen environment.

This is the right moment to restructure legislation for the country's HEIs, as well as implant new evaluation mechanisms. Since 2020, the coronavirus disease has afflicted the world (GOMES *et al.*, 2021; THE ECONOMIST UNIT, 2021).

Virtually all countries have felt its consequences. A common one has been a need to devise a new system of Education ranging from the very young to those in graduate schools.

Central to this goal has been transmission of remote Education by computer and cell phone. There had earlier been many experiments attempting to introduce this new technology selectively. Now the requirement was much more rigorous: immediacy and universality. Neither occurred within Higher Education, no matter how substantial the effort made to do so.

It is also time to rethink the academic structure and search for more diversified segments and forms of organizing the curriculum with flexibility to attract not only traditional young students but also adults working in the market. In this respect, it is an important opportunity to stimulate learning to think by focusing on teaching skills that are valued in the market and encouraging entrepreneurial Education.

The unforeseen demands of the pandemic have required HEI to change their teaching model in record time. While larger units tried to generalize internet programming of courses, many faculties had limited experience and could not quickly learn. Meanwhile, many smaller private institutions typically had greater problems. Poorer students were at a considerable disadvantage because they lacked adequate training and technological access to the new system. Changes in the future provision of Education can benefit all over the world if that experiment is studied and applied.

Elsewhere, results were more positive where prior computer experience was generalized and student access was better. More faculty allowed students access to available lectures, and maintained additional access through office hours.

What the pandemic first permitted was access to a more modern method of sharing information (CASTIONI, *et al.*, 2021). Future dividends in management of HEI may accrue, if such innovation can continue.

## **10 Final comments**

Current reality shows the need for continuing to restructure HEI in Brazil and other parts of the world. The system has undergone many changes over time and, once again, is facing changes to ensure that their original function is not corrupted by an unbridled drive for profit within the sector.

Actually, reform is being imposed on Brazilian HEIs, especially universities. This involves improving the way decisions are made, how academic managers are selected, and seeking new sources of funding. This is a time for substantial changes underway including curricula, and teaching methods. Human, technological, professional and ethical qualifications are now receiving greater attention.

Educational institutions, especially public universities, move forward slowly through small initiatives and adaptations. This is seen as a response of HEIs to the demands of the environment combine their mission and the larger interests of those these institutions serve. By paying closer attention to these aspects, HEIs will be able to identify opportunities better, and respond by offering quality and accessible services.

While the market now appears to determine the rules, the state should return to its important role as guardian of the legislation regulating the country's Higher Education sector and as direct manager of the public universities. Existing regulation is obsolete. Public universities, although overburdened and with an outdated physical and technological structure, still retain a strong tradition of teaching and research.

How valuable is the development of knowledge and excellence in research? Some countries have been able to develop and have access to the COVID-19 vaccines quickly. That directly shows the importance of developing knowledge and investing in research and technology to resolve important issues.

The environment is increasingly uncertain and large changes will occur. HEIs must respond with agility and competence to pressures and demands, offering quality services to the new society of the twenty-first century. Managing HEI continues to be a great challenge to administrators who try.

We conclude with two final observations. First is the understanding that Education institutions are complex organizations and traditional managerial models do not contribute to the improvement of their performance. Second, management is not an end in itself. By adding real value to decisions and actions, educational institutions can make a difference.



## **Ensino Superior no Brasil: retrospectiva, desafios atuais e perspectivas**

### **Resumo**

*A Educação Superior tem se tornado uma área cada vez mais competitiva e o conhecimento, sua essência, uma commodity global. Como resultado, universidades em todo o mundo têm sido pressionadas a responder às crescentes novas demandas de forma rápida, dinâmica e criativa. No contexto brasileiro, a superação dos desafios vivenciados pelas instituições de Ensino Superior demanda um significativo esforço de adaptação e de mudança, principalmente por parte de universidades públicas. Nesse ensaio, analisamos os principais desafios das instituições de Ensino Superior brasileiras, especialmente, os decorrentes da crise do Coronavírus. Focamos em desafios como qualidade do Ensino Superior, financiamento e gestão acadêmica. Para tanto, exploramos algumas das principais mudanças que instituições de Ensino Superior têm sofrido ao longo do tempo. Destacamos, também, alguns caminhos alternativos para esses desafios, incluindo reflexões sobre oportunidades disponíveis no período pós-pandemia.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Faculdades e Universidades. Administração Universitária. Financiamento da Educação. Qualidade educacional.*

## **Educación Superior en Brasil: retrospectiva, desafíos actuales y mirando hacia el futuro**

### **Resumen**

*La Educación Superior se ha convertido en un área cada vez más competitiva y el conocimiento, en su esencia, una mercancía global. Como resultado, las universidades de todo el mundo han estado bajo presión para responder a las crecientes nuevas demandas de forma rápida, dinámica y creativa. En el contexto brasileño, superar los desafíos que enfrentan las instituciones de Educación Superior exige un importante esfuerzo de adaptación y cambio, especialmente por parte de las universidades públicas. En este ensayo analizamos los principales desafíos de las instituciones de Educación Superior brasileñas, especialmente, potenciadas por la crisis generada por el Coronavirus. Nos enfocamos en desafíos como la calidad de la Educación Superior, la financiación, la gestión académica. Para ello, exploramos algunos de los principales cambios que han tenido estas instituciones a lo largo del tiempo. También destacamos algunos caminos alternativos para esos desafíos, incluidas reflexiones sobre las oportunidades disponibles en el período posterior a la pandemia.*

**Palabras clave:** *Facultades y Universidades. Administración Universitaria. Financiación de la Educación. Calidad Educativa.*

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