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EVALUATION IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS FROM THE AGENCY THEORY AND THE THEORY OF RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES

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Introduction: the objective of this paper is to explain through the agency theory and theory of resources and capacities as is the process of assessment in higher education institutions.

Materials and Methods: the methods used are the analytical and descriptive of the literature review on the issue of evaluation occurring in Institutions of Higher Education in México.

Results: the actors that are involved in the decision-making and the use that is giving the resources derived from repeatedly to practices that opportunistic diminishing the value that is given to the evaluation, in addition to the decrease in team work. After describing the background and delimitation of the problem, it is justified the aim of this paper which is to present an overview of how the evaluation process, the actors involved and conflicts that may arise as a result of that process.

Discussion and Conclusions: as a theoretical background of this paper, it is supported by the agency theory and the resource and capabilities theory both from the field of strategy. The main conclusion argues that the evaluation of Higher Education Institutions in México should be a tool to encourage continuous improvement. Self-evaluation becomes a key part of these processes, but this will be useful to the extent that stakeholders are aware of their actions, that there is a change of mentality less focused on control, money and the market, greater teamwork and knowledge generation applicable to the local context.

Keywords: educational quality; evaluation; university governance; resources; higher education

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ОЦЕНКА В ВУЗАХ: АНАЛИЗ С ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕМ ТЕОРИИ АГЕНТСКИХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ, ТЕОРИИ РЕСУРСОВ И ВОЗМОЖНОСТЕЙ

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Введение: статья посвящена анализу процесса оценивания в вузах посредством теории агентских отношений, теории ресурсов и возможностей. Описана теоретико-методологическая база, определена проблема, также обозначена цель работы – рассмотреть процесс оценивания, его участников и возможные конфликты, которые могут возникнуть в результате этого процесса.

Материалы и методы: в исследовании сделана попытка рассмотреть проблему оценки в учреждениях высшего образования Мексики с помощью метода аналитического и описательного обзора литературы. В качестве теоретической основы статьи использованы теория агентских отношений, теория ресурсов и возможностей.

Результаты исследования: в ходе проведенного исследования было выявлено, что организационные изменения заставляют менеджеров уделять больше внимания людям и ситуации. Процесс оценивания предполагает, что субъекты осознанно участвуют в названном процессе. По утверждению К. Эйзенхардта, теория агентских отношений возникает, когда собственники (руководители) начинают

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делегировать управленческие функции и принятия решений другим людям (агентам). Отношения, возникающие между обеими сторонами, будет определять направление организаций.

Обсуждение и заключения: сделан вывод о том, что оценка в вузах Мексики должна стать инструментом поощрения постоянного совершенствования. Самооценка становится ключевой частью этого процесса, с ее помощью заинтересованные стороны осознают свои действия и в результате менее ориентированы на контроль, деньги, рынок, а больше на работу в команде и генерацию знаний, соответствующих местным экономическим условиям. Теория агентских отношений позволяет анализировать как деятельность руководства вузов, так и сами организации, обсуждать и разрабатывать процессы оценивания, противостоять конъюнктурной практике, сложившейся в результате борьбы за власть и личные интересы. Кроме того, теория ресурсов и возможностей способствует пониманию использования выделяемых материальных и нематериальных ресурсов в процессе принятия решений, приводящих к достижению целей.

Ключевые слова: качество образования; оценка; управление вузом; ресурсы; высшее образование

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Introduction

The concept of organization is also considered synonymous with business, so that it can be said about a variety of types of organizations including educational institutions. Although each one of these differ from the purposes for which they exist, the members who compose and interests they serve. There are also points of convergence. Higher education institutions (HEI) as well as other organizations are guided by human action, have a culture of their own and are geared to meet the objectives. Given the new scenarios of competition among educational institutions there is a need to incorporate evaluation as a linked element to the loss of confidence of the State with regard to the social function of the HEIs putting at the center of the debate the quality of education they offer. That is when assessment policies arise while funding is enshrined in this process.

Understand how the HEIs function, requires an organizational analysis, also explains how implementing strategies to maintain educational quality. The agency theory can reflect on the governance of higher education institutions and how it operates in the management and performance that is given to the institution. Governance means the relationship between several participants to manage and evaluate the performance of institutions. Moreover, the theory based on the resources and capabilities is linked to agency theory and both help to understand how senior managers or directors exercise decision-making, in this particular case, the use of resources to

maintain and position the HEIs as successful organizations in the field of education.

Background and definition of the problem

According to Fernandez from the national crisis in economic matters there is a restriction of public funding for the social sectors, including the universities [1]. The demand generated a strong diversification of university and non-university HEIs. During the 1990s it was generated in most of the Latin American concerns over the issue of university quality, so they were creating agencies for evaluation and accreditation.

In the agency theory alluded to corporate governance. In this case, it speaks of university governance, which according to Casanova and Rodriguez provides descriptive and analytical ability to integrate the variety of processes that are articulated in the management exercise of the university [2, p. 15]. In other words, it covers the relationships between the different actors and agents that influence the decisions that they drive to the institutions.

The agents that make university governance in the HEIs are operating strategies to have quality in each of their activities, and at the same time continue to get funding. The success that have agents in implementing strategies will be determined by the ability of these possess when designing the organizational structure, evaluate the performance of staff, and the consolidation of the culture of the organization. B. Sander [3] systematized four criteria that reflect



the historical development of educational administration, and explicitly illustrate the great influence of the currents arising from business management in practice and analysis of education:

1. Profitability, nourished by so-called scientific management.
2. Performance based on the current human relationships.
3. Adaptability, founded in the current organizational development
4. Relevance, which is related to the social sciences and cultural.

The changes generated in the HEIs, such as educational expansion, diversification of institutions and overcrowding, highlight the introduction of the issues of evaluation and quality improvement. Alongside, this requires managers to recognize the institution strategic management as a measure which will facilitate managing the use of the physical and human resources to achieve its objectives.

The fact of the multiplication of interventions in the forms of financing, accreditation, certification and evaluation is accompanied by the creation of new specialized fields of planning and development associated to the mission, vision, transparency and accountability. The assessment in higher education is directly linked to the achievement of results, so that their performance is associated with federal and state rules prohibiting, encouraging or rewarding certain behaviors and organizational measures.

According to J. G. Vargas-Hernandez, E. Guerra Garcia and Bojorquez [4] for the implementation of the strategy, managers should consider the organizational structure, which determines how the objectives are set and how resources are allocated. Grouping tasks and functions as well as assigning authority and responsibility are elements that constitute the organizational structure. Another consideration that must be made is how they monitor and evaluate assigned activities. In that sense we speak of a strategic control system that lets know if the objectives are met.

From another angle, organizational culture is defined as the set of values, beliefs and shared by people and groups that

make up a company that controls the way in which these interact with each other and with customer's attitudes [4, p. 173]. In strategic planning the key elements that contribute to the generation of that culture are the mission, vision and values. In the case of higher education institutions competing with one industry, education, the emphasis is on the quality and efficiency that give each of their services: teaching, research, extension and binding and be constantly innovating and have a positive attitude to the candidates and the academic community, achieving a competitive advantage.

At first, evaluation focused students, after the program, up to the institutional assessment, that according to Martínez [5] aims to provide rigorous, valid, reliable and evaluative information about an institution or educational program to enable those responsible to take appropriate decisions regarding their maintenance, removal or improvement, increase awareness of the main problems, mobilize collective awareness about important issues, identify areas of inefficiency and assess the impact of certain decisions or policies.

In a brief tour of how emerge assessment policies in higher education, Villaseñor [6] tells us that three points are identified. The first one (1990–1996) is associated with the implementation of policy evaluation stage that was linked to academic quality in terms of predefined results and performance of the institutions. The role played by the State is as evaluator and remote monitoring.

A second point is associated to strengthen policy evaluation (1996–2000), where there is a more accurate notion and concept of academic quality. There is a tendency to quality assurance, although still in quantitative terms, as they begin to request proof of quality also happens to be the state auditor evaluator. According to Villaseñor [6]. The social role of evaluation-accreditation at the end of the decade was reinforced to be a more effective tool to transform higher education institutions in organizations serving



the knowledge economy [6, p. 28]. All these changes have generated greater competitiveness among stakeholders, as individuals seek to maximize their personal benefit.

The third moment of the assessment is linked to policies of quality assurance (2000–2002). The starting point is the planning directed to operating rules and supervision of the Ministry of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP), policies focus mainly on Institutional Strengthening Integral Program (PIFI) in that becomes a measure for obtaining funding through the revision of consolidation of academic bodies, updating the plans and curricula, retention, graduating and the tracking rates of graduates among others.

That said Ibarra [7] notes that the evaluation system increases the drivability and government control over institutions, academics and students. The shared discourse focuses on quality management as a means to obtain financing, while actors are more concerned with meeting certain indicators that lead to institutional simulation practices, neglecting what is truly valuable for the useful. In an effort to be the best and position in the top rankings, higher education institutions must deal with opportunistic practices that may arise as a result of the conflicts associated with information asymmetries in obtaining financing.

Justification

The study of the IES within a framework of strategic management allows analyzing specifically how they apply their strategies in the daily task of maintaining its educational quality. Seen from the agency theory and the theory of resources and capacities, HEIs face challenges involving the management of uncertainty, opportunistic practices and good use of resources. The aim of this paper is to present an overview of how the evaluation process, the actors involved and conflicts that may arise as a result of that process.

Theoretical framework

The use of the resources and capabilities are distinctive features in each one of the organizations. According to M. Peng [8] resources are defined as real or tangible assets (those who can see and quantify) and intangible (those that are hard to see and quantify). These resources are used by a firm to choose and implement their strategies. B. Wernerfelt suggests that the most important tools to dominate the market are strongly related to the resources of the company in terms of strengths and weaknesses [9]. A useful tool in the strategic planning of organizations is the SWOT matrix, where internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) by way of diagnostic analyzes and allow institutions compared to others in the same industry for see in what ways they can improve.

The evaluation of the IES has become a controversial topic while its impact on the substantial activities of universities has been affected. E. R. House defines evaluation as an informed judgment, value judgment or recommendation which in turn qualifies and/or categorizes is comparative in nature and is based from standards, criteria, abstract principles and particular cases [10]. Being a complex issue, assessments do not always happen the same way and not turn out to be of good quality, because sometimes the evaluators are just trying to meet the sponsor (the state, the institution, etc.).

Opportunistic practices in assessment processes affect the quality of institutions. Opportunistic means that the actor is guided by his or her own interests and acts under the logic of instrumental rationality, affecting their objectivity in the evaluation. In addition, one of the main characteristics of organizations is that they are guided by the efforts of managers and administrators, and its intention is to avoid such practices at all costs. These should maintain ties of cooperation, be well organized and have confidence in the partners involved as to conduct assessment involving multiple actors are required.



According to Varela [11] evaluation should be a system designed to improve and streamline the operation of the higher education system, reducing or avoiding bureaucratic bodies. But, unfortunately scholars have played a role as directors or managers to devote to filling out forms, also that belonging to the National System of Researchers (SNI) generates competition and pressure between them, creating environments of tense no collaborative work.

The evaluation is a potentially political or politicized activity and not easy to assure a consensus, basically generating various evaluation programs National Research System (SNI), National Commission on Higher Assessment (CONAEVA) Evaluation Committee Higher Education (CIEES), National Center for Higher Education Assessment (CENEVAL) Professional Improvement Program (PROMEP). These and other evaluation programs are extensions of control that today have to limit the “autonomy” of the various stakeholders, hence the need to balance the evaluation forms. It is needed this qualitative part that allows the processing, exploiting the quantitative results in permanent change goals.

Successes and perverse effects of evaluation in the HEIs

Developments that have taken evaluative processes in the HEIs have happened at different times and for similar purposes as noted. The successes of the evaluation according to Ibarra (2009) are: enabled the mobilization of the institutions breaking inertia and promoting change, allowed a more participatory and realistic planning, facilitated greater coordination between the

various evaluation programs, allowed the extraordinary access to financial resources to develop academic projects that otherwise would not materialized; and it sets clear and measurable indicators.

From the point of view of the theory of resources, D. Toro [12] mentions that the resources that companies have, their unique capabilities and core competencies should help them create their differentiation strategies programs, actions and projects and the products or services they give to society. HEIs have a great responsibility in the training of professionals to provide practical knowledge to society. As a result, their efforts to maintain educational quality are doubled while the evaluation process serves as a regulator.

Although evaluation comes with plausible ideal of improving the quality of the HEIs, the perverse effects that arise as a result of it will not wait, as in the case of some consequences identified in the census tests, evidence of deceptive marketing schools, mostly of private support seeking to attract students. The impoverishment of the curriculum stems from the tendency of many teachers to teach for testing neglecting fundamental aspects that will not be evaluated and rejection of students against education focused on preparing for the test, among others.

Contextual framework

One of the key issues of agency theory is the problem that arises in the relations between principals and agents, i. e. senior officers and boards of directors. The following table illustrates broadly the forms of government in the Mexican HEIs.



Таблица 1. **Формы правления в мексиканских вузах**
Table 1. Broadly the forms of government in the Mexican HEIs

Government / Виды правления	Elite democracy / Элитарная демократия	Hierarchy-bureaucrasy / Иерархическая бюрократия	Oligarchy entrepreneurial or religious / Бизнес, религиозные организации	Academic Oligarchy / Академическая олигархия	Bureaucratic oligarchy / Бюрократическая олигархия
1	2	3	4	5	6
INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY / Институциональные полномочия	Shared between different bodies / Разделены между различными организациями	Falls on a person who derives his power from a delegation of the federal executive / Ответственность возложена на человека, назначенного федеральной исполнительной властью	Rests with a small group of people, most of them outside the institution but with economic and academic interests in it / Ответственность возложена на небольшую группу людей, большинство из которых находятся вне учреждения, но связаны с ним экономическими и научными интересами	Rests with a small group but whose key feature is that these are people with high academic standards and recognition / Ответственность возложена на небольшую группу лиц, имеющих высокий академический статус и признание	Rests with a small group of people representing the federal government, the state government and the employers of a certain locality or region / Ответственность возложена на группу лиц, представляющих федеральное правительство, правительство штата и работодателей определенной местности или региона
DECISION MAKING / Принятие решений	Focused on institutional development / Ориентировано на институциональное развитие	Focused on the different modalities (industrial, agricultural, forestry) / Ориентировано на различные модули (промышленные, сельскохозяйственное, лесное хозяйство)	Based on market criteria / На основании рыночных критериев	Guided by the development of knowledge in certain areas / Ориентировано на развитие знаний в определенных областях	According to the needs of a professional market / В соответствии с потребностями профессионального рынка
COLLEGIAL BODIES INTERNAL / Внутренний коллегиальный орган	Decisive / Решающий	Advisory / Консультативный	Advisory / Консультативный	Advisory – Autonomy of internal advice (academic) / Консультативный – Автономный внутренний совет (академический)	Decisive / Решающий



1	2	3	4	5	6
EXAMPLES OF INSTITUTIONS WITH THIS FORM OF GOVERNMENT / Примеры учреждений с этой формой управления	Autonomous public universities / Автономные государственные университеты	The National Polytechnic Institute Технологические институты	Private / Частные	Centers SEP CONACyT / Центры SEP CONACyT	Technological universities Higher Technological Institutes / Технологические университеты, Высшие технологические институты
FINANCING / Финансирование	Federal and State governments / Федеральное правительство и правительства штата	Depend academic, financial and organizational of a central entity / В зависимости от академических, финансовых и организационных центральных субъектов	Own resources / Собственные ресурсы	Federal government / Федеральное правительство	Federal government, state government and private sector / Федеральное правительство штата и частный сектор
LEGAL PERSONALITY / Правосубъектность	Decentralized bodies / Децентрализованные органы	Decentralized agencies / Децентрализованные учреждения	Civil associations / Гражданские объединения	Associations and civil society, decentralized organizations / Ассоциации и гражданское общество, децентрализованные организации	Decentralized state agencies / Децентрализованные государственные учреждения
GOVERNMENT BODIES It specifies who (person or group of people) have legitimate authority to make decisions and in which areas / Органы управления – кто (лицо или группа лиц) имеет законное право принимать решения и в каких областях. The university councils (political, academic) / Университетские советы (политические, академические органы) The boards of government (prime role: to appoint the rector) / Палаты правительства (основная роль – назначение ректора) The governing (faculties: administrative, representative, executive and "initiative") / Руководство (факультеты: административные, представительные, исполнительные и инициативные) Source: Own elaboration based on [13] Составлено по: [13]					



Analysis of results

The organizational changes resulting from the automation of tasks and functions made a shift from a rigid to a flexible manner. Such processes generated managers to focus more on people and situations. The assessment also implies that actors know and engage in activities that entails. According to K. Eisenhardt [14] agency theory arises when the owners (principals) begin to delegate the managerial functions and decision making to other individuals (agents). The relationship arising between both agents will determine the direction of organizations.

As pointed out by E. Fama and M. Jensen [15] the main reason why agency problems persist are asymmetries of information between principals and agents. In terms of evaluation, as is pointed out, the tendency to opportunistic practices can be an indication of simulation practices not only affects the organization but also the reputation of the evaluators. The emphasis of this theory according to C. Daily, D. Dalton and A. Cannella [16] is associated with two factors: firstly, it is a very simple theory, in which large companies are reduced to two participants, managers and shareholders, and interests of each are supposed to be clear and consistent. Second, the notion of human beings is that they are willing to sacrifice personal interests for the interests of others.

In the realm of HEIs, basic management functions allow them to maintain an adequate rate of which is directed towards. It is necessary to carry out a planning that determines which results are to be achieved and establish appropriate strategies for their achievement. In a second time, it should organize how the proposed results will be achieved. It will be necessary to identify the division of tasks and functions to each individual or groups within the organization.

In the same process, leadership plays a vital role, since the function of those who lead and motivate members of the organization influence how articulate efforts and objectives are achieved. At the same time, there will be strategic control systems to check whether they have achieved the

expected results through it may identify performance deviations and take corrective measures to be channeled in achieving the objectives.

In a critical analysis of Ibarra [17] on the university defines this as an invented reality, the regulations would be the foundation, the coordination system which gives structure, leaving aside the essence of the actors, the teaching as such, and there needs to demonstrate that it meets the challenges. It is forgotten the substantive role of the university to respond to social problems and all is imagined by numbers and indicators.

Undoubtedly, the control exercised by senior managers in the organization has to do with the kind of results that are generated, since managers are who are responsible for joint teamwork and decide who occupy strategic positions. Precisely Zajac and Westphal [18] note that the power that managers have in relation to the decision to elect board members, considering such factors as reputation, expertise or sympathy that the manager has, leads to strengthening his leadership.

From that stage, it is required more efforts among stakeholders to be shared, which are fighting for the generation of knowledge created by multidisciplinary teams so that teamwork is strengthened and that researchers do not become lonely players. Undoubtedly, the negotiations will also function as a regulator of the rules in the institution.

Conclusions

The major challenges facing higher education institutions with respect to evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance revolve around generating knowledge applicable to local contexts, adopting regulatory policies that can minimize the risks of low educational offerings quality (private sector, mostly), encourage the active participation of academic actors (teachers, students) on the conceptualization of the quality joint assessment processes with improvement concepts, autonomy and academic freedom.

The decisions made within institutions of higher education are framed first by



the historicity of them, the organization and each particular structure, as well as the “dependency” of government funding based on the joint knowledge generation. These elements are closely related to the “games” of power that are “cooked”, mainly within universities intermittently when making decisions that set the course of the university way.

The agency theory enables to analyze from the university government how the HEIs organize, discuss and develop assessment processes, facing opportunistic practices and complex environments involving actors in few cooperative ties due to power struggles and personal interests. Moreover, the theory of resources and capabilities facilitates understanding the use given to the tangible and intangible resources in making decisions that lead to achieving the objectives.

Moreover, it is necessary that education as a public good and students as subjects of law should be resumed, in that sense. Latapí [19] reflects on the quality of education, alluding to four traits, character, intelligence, feelings and freedom associated with the social function of the university to train professionals with integrity and consistent with what they say and do, acquire general

knowledge but also those specialized for specific tasks, training in values (tolerance, justice, equity), the cultivation of the imagination and empathy, as well as allow students to feel free to reach their goals and make sense of the role they play in society, without focusing only on obtaining economic or recognition of merit.

Similarly, the evaluation should be a tool to encourage continuous improvement. Self-evaluation becomes a key part of these processes, but this will be useful to the extent that stakeholders are aware of their actions, that there is a change of mentality less focused on control, money and the market, greater teamwork and knowledge generation applicable to the local context.

Evaluation is not an automatic process, not because it is evaluated is improved. Obtaining greater financial resources does not raise the quality, i. e. assess is a process that involves seriousness, objectivity and the capacity to make decisions according to the results. An important element to consider in the evaluation process is the “interest”, i. e., the ends that people raised in the evaluation are vital to include the interests of all concerned groups of program or policy and use the power as a mean to balance and participation of members.

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