

North – South cooperation in the Mexican Academic System: need for diversification and pressures for interculturality

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Some definitions

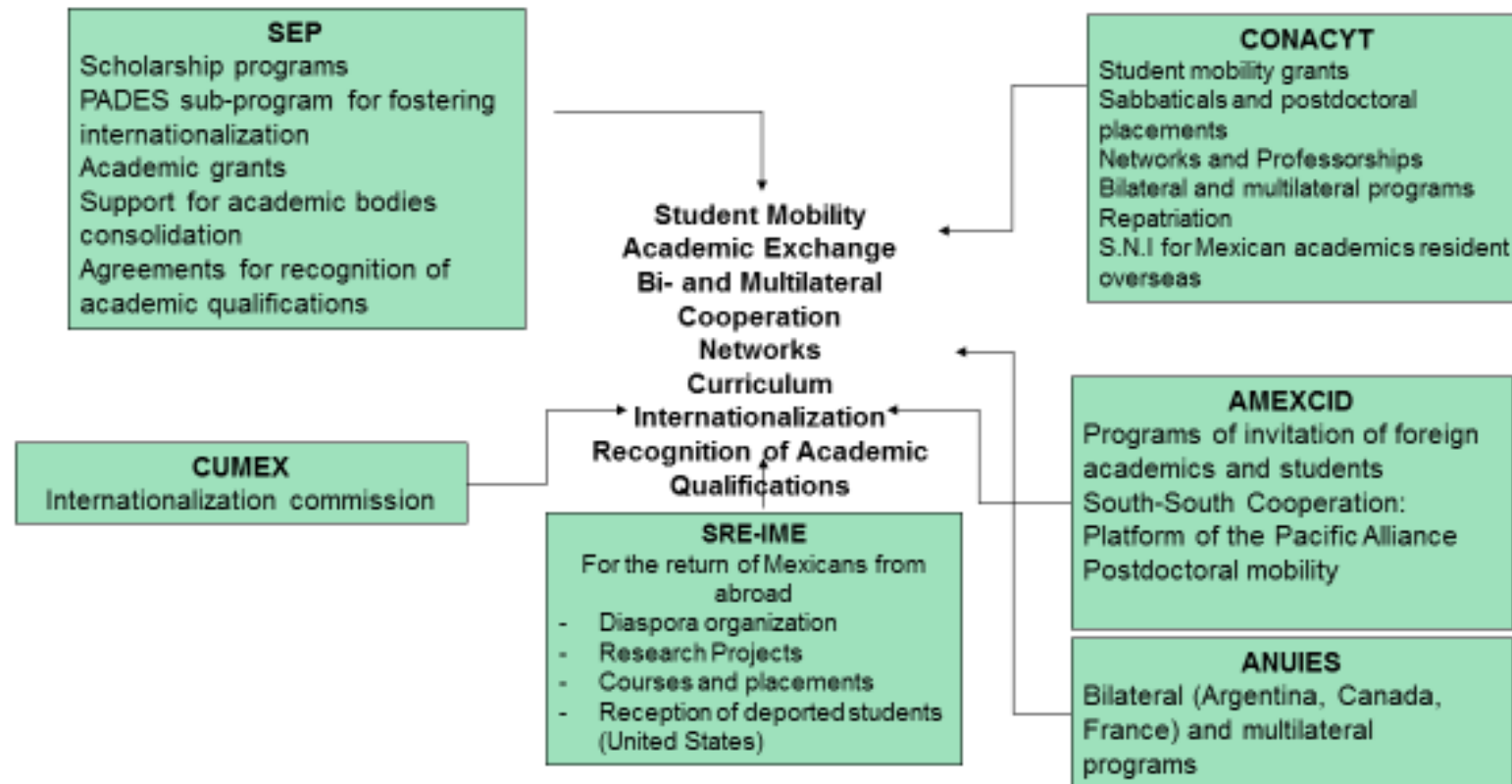
- ▶ Academic cooperation is part of an internationalisation of Higher Education process. Territorial map of cooperation is defined by political decisions, institutional traditions, academic areas but also by national migration's decisions (Canada Mexico) and social issues (security). It stands on a complex process of design and implementation.
- ▶ It covers a large set of activities: student mobility, academic exchanges, international scientists recruitment, transnational research and international publications, networks, regional assurance quality system.
- ▶ Academic cooperation has been described by specialists in a quantitative perspective, in a national framework where data are bad and insufficient (with exception of student mobility because of UIS-UNESCO and OECD stats, mainly)
- ▶ It has been criticized by research nuclei in terms of neo colonialism, subalternity process and academic globalization.
- ▶ It is now analyzed as an “unknown object” for intercultural debate

Characteristics of North-South academic cooperation scheme in Mexico

- ▶ Academic collaboration in Mexico mostly follows a traditional pattern of North-South cooperation (with the United States (US), basically, and some central countries in Europe)
- ▶ Major trends: diversification of cooperation activities as a consequence of regional and national specialization of external cooperation (student mobility with United States, joint degrees with France, dual training with Germany) but reactive adaptation of the receptor's needs to the donor's purposes.
- ▶ Emergent trends: marketization as growing aspect of international academic cooperation (language training, mainly English, assurance quality, provision of mobility and professional practices (AEISEC) or editorial services for scientific's paper publication).

Doing academic cooperation. Who's who in a multiple players scenario?

Areas of impact of federal government agencies and associations from internationalizing universities, Mexico 2017



The academic dependency from United States

- ▶ Since the 1950s, US foundations played a very important role in Mexican academic field and agenda research: Rockefeller (Agriculture), MacArthur, Kellog (Health) or Ford Foundation (Social Science) funded innovative thematic research projects, disciplinary consolidation processes and sharing of skills and knowledge initiatives in key developmental areas.
- ▶ In terms of student mobility, in 2014, of the 4,825 CONACYT postgraduate scholarship holders, 29.3% go to the United States (Patlani 2014: 50). The proportion of outgoing Mexican students (51.8%) in US was higher than the medium percentages of LAC students (33%) and of global international students (19.5%) (UNESCO, 2016). Mexico was the 10th leading place of origin of international students coming to the US. The polarization of student mobility to US is a social and cultural phenomenon, as well or more than a political priority of CONACYT.
- ▶ In terms of overall incoming mobility, Mexico received 4445 students from United States (Open Doors, 2016). That's not a peer-to-peer exchange.
- ▶ US Student's are the most important group in incoming students in Mexico, in a national perspective, but:
 - ▶ How much of them are part of a second generation mexican migrants?
 - ▶ How much of them are learning spanish for some weeks and how much are long term students?
 - ▶ How much are returnees or dreamers?

LAC as a counterpart?

- ▶ From the Third World period until the eighties of XX Century, Mexico received, as a result of political asylum tradition, academics from South America (Argentina, Chile, Brazil Uruguay, Colombia) and Central America (Guatemala and Salvador). They were supporting projects of regional cooperation and have fed a constant flow of ideas and people inside the region from any decades now.).
- ▶ Anyway, academic cooperation with Latin America was going down from the nineties, because of political priorities linked with North America Higher Education Space or Market and now because of the age of LAC scientist. Because of demographic reasons, the role of LAC as an origin place of foreign scientists to Mexico is going down.
- ▶ Mexico failed, despite its complex system of quality assurance, in presenting itself as an interesting option for other LAC countries which developed ambitious scholarship programs for students and university professors (e.g., Brazil and Ecuador)

Europe: European Union or european countries?

- ▶ North-South Cooperation with Europe was mainly established with Spain, France and Germany or/and in the framework of European projects
- ▶ It allows to introduce new topics in research and political agenda (Puentes for internationalization indicators or RECOLATIN for recognition of credits) and was traditionally linked with the training of scientists in intergenerational mobility framework
- ▶ Mexican emergent academic cooperations are very linked with intellectual schools (psychology and sociology in UAM with France), new organizational schemes (Germany/Japan) and the provision of courses in english (Sweden)

South East Asia as a new region of cooperation?

- ▶ Academic cooperation focused on Japan, China and Korea, by tradition and because of current context
- ▶ Important changes: from an academic cooperation based on area studies to one based in disciplinary fields of common interest
- ▶ Some innovative practices: Hidalgo - Korea Knowledge Sharing Program, international research activities for bachelor students in bilateral networks and short term mobility frameworks (U.Guanajuato/Japan), tailor made programs for ingoing mobility (learning spanish and Mexican culture UIA/Japan), Korean language learning at UANL, Confucius institutes.
- ▶ Drivers for Mexican-Asian cooperation? External agencies, governmental mexican programs, students or transnational consortia located in some regions (North Borders/Bajio/Mexico city)
- ▶ Cost problems, communication barriers, geographical distance, lack of reciprocity in student and academic flows and intercultural difficulties. In sum, mutual understanding and reciprocity are to be built.

Africa: nothing (or very few) happens....

- ▶ Outcoming or incoming student mobility:_ “Africa does not reach a significant percentage (just 30 students), confirming the scant interest that Mexico holds for this region and... that Africa holds for our country” (Patlani, 2014:51).
- ▶ Some interest by the way of triangular cooperation: Afrodesc initiative between Mexico, France and the Caribbean Colombia, headed by IRD (France)
- ▶ Centers and networks specializing in African studies are few. College of Mexico's CEAA has an African studies area and teaching languages programs. Researchers dispersed over a number of private and public Mexican HEIs (COLMEX, CIDE, University of the Americas, Ibero-American University, University of Monterrey, Flacso, UNAM, UAM) belong to an interdisciplinary network for research on Latin America and the Arab World (RIMAAL). AMEXCID, in January 2017, launched a program named “exporting Mexican technical expertise to Africa” in some focus areas and countries and UNAM created a multidisciplinary program on Asia and Africa
- ▶ Exceptional case: international Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT, inaugurated in Mexico in 1966) goes back to a cooperation agreement in 1943 between the Mexican Government and the Rockefeller Foundation aimed at raising agricultural production. Today, CIMMYT is involved in projects with twenty African countries, with offices in Ethiopia, Kenya and Zimbabwe plus an alliance in Mozambique.

Some general comments

- ▶ Pattern of dependence on Mexican institutions from the North for educating national scientific elites is a cultural trend. In January 2017, international academics (Mexicans and foreign born graduated abroad), members of the National System of Researchers (SNI) graduated abroad were trained chiefly in the US, Spain, France, Germany and the UK.
- ▶ The political interest of the Mexican government to recover leadership in Higher Education field in Latin America and compliance with the numerous international and multilateral trade agreements it has signed, creates some openings for South-South cooperation (SSC) and triangular cooperation (TC).

AMEXCID and SSC

As a result, Mexican government signed the Joint UNESCO/CRES Declaration (Colombia, 2008) and engaged to develop SSC in higher education (Espacio Latino-americano y Caribeño de la Educación Superior -ENLACES). At national scale, it enacted the Law on International Cooperation for Development, in April 2011. It assigned the Mexican Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID), a decentralized office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE), to coordinate SSC and TC initiatives in strategic areas, including those under the purview of universities.

AMEXCID was in charge of academic and economic cooperation with Central America, in terms of triangular cooperation, bilateral assistance for research projects and professional training in strategic areas as a consequence of Plan Puebla Panama. In Higher education field, its objectives are to foster capacities for development and joint research on regional problems (Migration/maras). It support also the Pacific Academic Mobility Platform, between Colombia, Chile, Peru and Mexico, postgraduate scholarships in science and engineering from the OAS (with a quota of 17% for Central Americans), 300 for Haiti

New developments

- ▶ Academic migration of Mexican scientist and PHD academic was growing quickly in the past decades.
- ▶ From January 2017, Mexican HEI confronts deep pressures, because of the promulgation of new migration laws. They can provoke an important return migration to Mexico, because of decay of scholarships, cancellation of resident permits and progression of deportation orders. If Trump administrations entrap *Dreamers Program*, Mexican HEI will be tackled to a inflow of returnees from United States. They will have to deal with organizational issues (reception conditions, capacities of mentoring for returnees, recognition of credits) and intercultural. Paying sufficient attention to youth people, removed for theirs studies - many more culturally American than mexican, with different learning culture, sense of national belonging and attitudes, is a very complicated scenario for HEI that are not, in fact, very sensitive and experienced in the managing of cultural diversity.
- ▶ Geostrategic differentiation of mobility patterns is a crucial issue. To success in promoting it, Mexican HEI have enhancing its cooperation with Spain, France and Germany, boosting LAC initiatives with selected counterparts (Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Cuba) and reinforcing cooperation with Asian and some Arab countries, in CSS and TC frameworks.

Final remarks

- ▶ Mexico has to deal with the institutional problematics of endo-colonialism, mainly in relation with academic evaluation mechanisms and financial resources allocation. It is much more easy to capitalize scientific prestige and funds for research and mobility in schemes of cooperation with North countries than of CSS and TC collaboration.
- ▶ It would be necessary to design a strategy to improve the scope and the efficiency of CSS and TC. Both can provide solutions to the excessive concentration and South-North dependency
- ▶ It is important to takes into account emerging debates on the possibilities of “the South” and the “Global South” to foster poles of disciplinary excellence in training and research, by the way of strategic investments in centers of excellence, at national and macro regional levels.
- ▶ The current context poses challenges in terms of institutional governance, educational cooperation and capacity for learning significant lessons. It can be, at the same time, an enabler for innovation, exploring complementarities as a way to escape from the dominant scheme of asymmetric cooperation and to create new knowledge and mobility networks, more sustainable and less asymmetric.