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## **Transnational Institutions and Adult Learners in Mexico: The Case of Laureate International<sup>1</sup>**

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# 1. Transnational higher education: a growing trend

## 1.1 General trends that explain transnational higher education (THE) (Stockley, 2011; British Council, 2014)

Ample young population in developing countries

Increasing global student mobility

HE as a global market and the increase of private involvement in HE

Powerful international enterprises: Laureate, Apollo Global, Coursera.

Strategic alliances, partnerships and networks: Joint and double degrees

Student as customer

Moocs, Open Educational Resources (OER), online degrees

Collaborative networks of researchers

Growth and diversification of industry partnerships overseas

Educational hubs

Model of world-class universities and league table

Active role of international actors (UNESCO, WB, OECD) and active government strategies for internationalization

## 1.2 What is “transnational higher education” (TNHE)?

No single definition, but some consensus:

“...any higher education provision (including distance education programs) available in more than one country. Students are studying in a country (host country) different from the one in which the awarding institution is based (home country)...” “...mainly provided by institutions based in the world’s most highly developed countries...” (Bennet et al., 2010).

Other concepts refer the same: “cross-border”; “offshore” or “borderless education”.

All refer to the blurring of traditional HE borders (conceptual, disciplinary and geographic)

Different categories of transnational education:

Foreign organizations	Double degrees
Branch campuses	Franchise agreements
Twin programs	Distance Learning
Joint programs	

### **1.3 In Mexico, “transnational education” means “transnational owners”**

Commonly, at least four types of institutions provide transnational higher education:

- distance learning institutions or programs
- branches of foreign institutions
- franchises, and
- validations by foreign institutions

However, these four types of institutions are very rare in Mexico.

There is not an international provision of HE, except for a few online enterprises, a couple of branches of foreign private HEI, and one branch of an USA public HEI, which in Mexico is private (Arkansas State University).

Laureate and Apollo, big international corporations, bought local institutions, keeping in general the “local” educational model, introducing a handful novelties (models, curriculum, programs), interchange programs (in the same network), and double degrees.

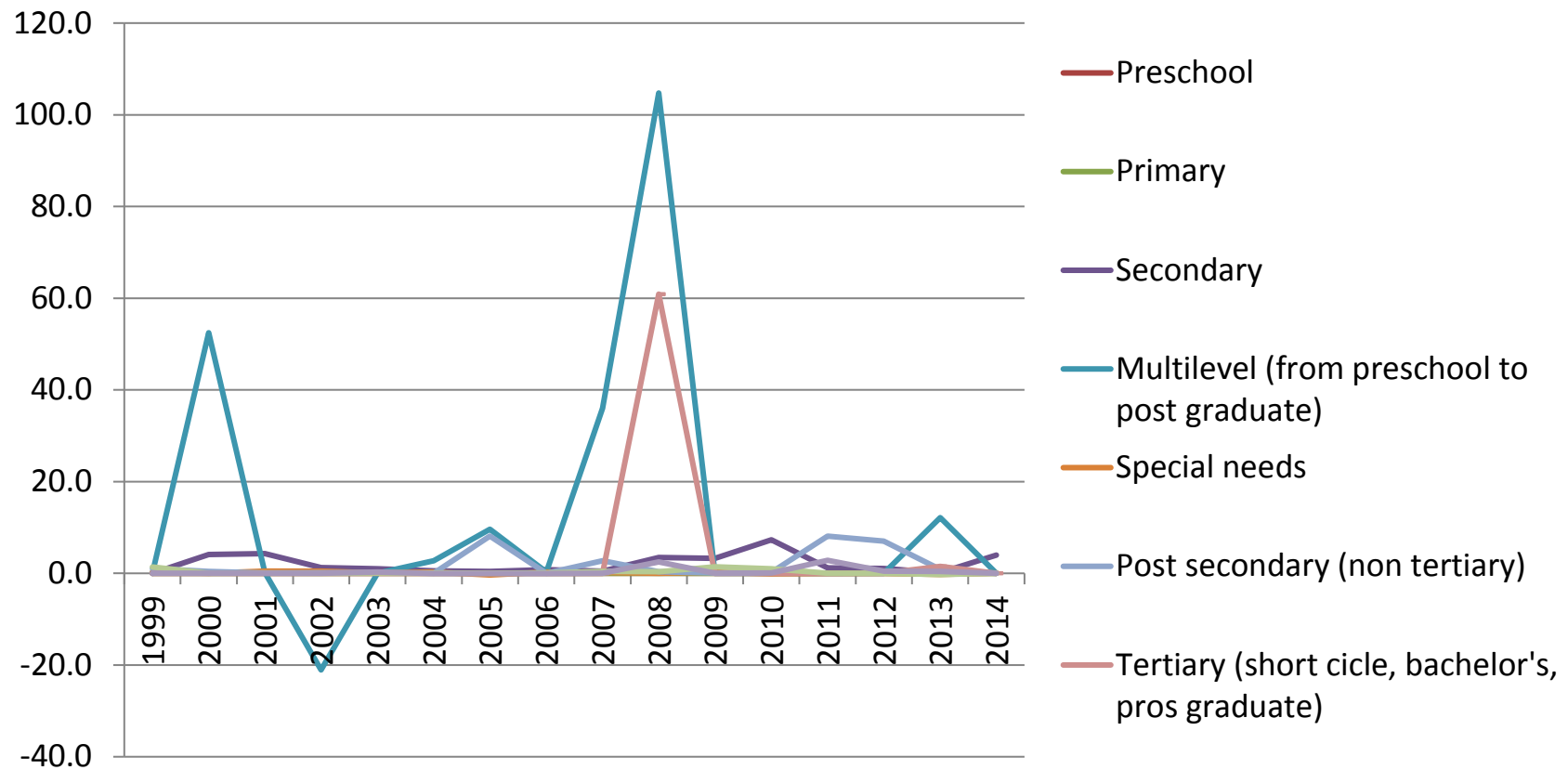
Private HE institutions tend to be much more adaptive to the market trends and fashions.

In México, private HE has developed an ample variety of programs, including several ones that adjust or fit to the adult students’ needs.

## 2. Transnational higher education in México: some cases

Context of heavy foreign investments in education from 2007 to 2009.

**Graphic 1. Mexico. Direct foreign investment in education. 1999-2014**



Source: Secretaría de Economía. Flujos totales de IED hacia México por tipo de inversión, país de origen, sector económico y entidad federativa de destino (1999-2014).

**Big enterprises:**

- a) Laureate: University of Valley of Mexico (UVM) and Technological University of México (UNITEC).
- b) Apollo Global Inc. (Phoenix Univ.). Latin-American University (ULA).

**Medium enterprises**

- c) Foreign investment in local institutions;
- d) As a part of an online institution;

**Small firms**

- a) Small branch of an international institution;
- b) Branch of foreign online institution;
- c) Diploma mills, fraud mills

### **3.Laureate group in México. A story of success: growing, territorial expansion**

Laureate is a big international network of private academic institutions.

Concentrates more than 1,000,000 students

80 institutions in 29 countries

Offer hundreds of undergraduate, master's and doctoral degree programs in many fields

Every institution operates as its own unique brand

Some institutions (12/80) have high recognitions (accreditations, awards, prestigious partnerships, rankings) in their countries.

In Mexico Laureate brought 6 private HEI:

Universidad del Valle de México, (UVM) in 2000;

Universidad Hispanoamericana (very small and asimilated by UVM) in 2000;

Universidad de Desarrollo Profesional (UNIDEP) in 2007 (that was sold in 2013 to Nacer Global, a Mexican enterprise with 7 HEI and 68 branches).

Instituto de Cultura Superior Valle del Bravo de Reynosa, A.C. (UVB) in 2007;

Universidad Tecnológica de México (UNITEC) in 2008;

Universidad Pro Desarrollo (asimilated by UNITEC).

**Table 1. Mexico. Universities of Laureat International. 2014-2015.**

	<b>Branches/campus</b>	<b>Enrolment 2014</b>
Universidad Tecnológica de México (UNITEC)	9 (one on line)	50,970
Universidad del Valle de México (UVM)	37	65,057
Total	46	116,027

#### **4.UVM and UNITEC. Programs for adult students**

Higher education for adults in Mexico has had a precarious or non-existent supply.

However, institutions have open education programs that fit the needs of adult learners:

- Open and distance learning programs through technological platforms

- Programs that require little presence in classroom and can be completed in a short time

- Master programs.



UVM and UNITEC have implemented programs that address the adult learners' needs:

Executive modality:

Designed for 24 YO or more, who need a convenient schedule for labour compromises.

Students with work experience.

Same programs than traditional "licenciaturas"

Practical knowledge for work; professional practices; student experience

Flexible schedules

Recognition of prior learning

No mandatory quantity of courses per semester.

Nine hours of classes per week, at noon and Saturdays

Online courses

Combination of face-to-face, online and blended classes

3 or 4 year

On line modality, (5 stars of QS Stars)

For persons that need study at home or office, with self-learning capacity and discipline

Practical approach

3 diplomas during the program

Students decide the pace of study

Blackboard Learn platform

## 5. The success of the strategy of UVM and UNITEC

a) In general, adult student enrolments in private sector have had a little increase from 2010 to 2014.

From 277,612 to 291,010 students, 4.8% of growth.

b) However, adult learners' enrolments of Laureate in Mexico has had a huge increase.

From 14,114 in 2010 to 40,323 in 2014, 185.7% of growth.

c) In 2014, adult learners are 34.8% of total enrolments of Laureate institutions in MX

In all private sector are 25.7%; in public sector, 20.8%; in total enrolments, 22.3%.

**Table 2. Mexico. 24 year old or more and total enrolments at Laureate institutions.**

	<b>2010-2011</b>		<b>2014-2015</b>	
	<b>24 YO or more</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>24 YO or more</b>	<b>Total</b>
UVM	8,529	49,542	21,970	65,057
%	17.2		33.8	
UNITEC	5,585	21,271	18,353	50,970
%	26.3		36.0	
Total Laureate	14,114	70,813	40,323	116,027
	19.9		34.8	
Total private sector	277,612	833,163	291,010	1,134,161
%	33.3		25.7	
Total public sector	155,866	1,826,653	501,235	2,414,278
%	8.5		20.8	
Grand Total	433,478	2,659,816	792,245	3,548,439
%	16.3		22.3	

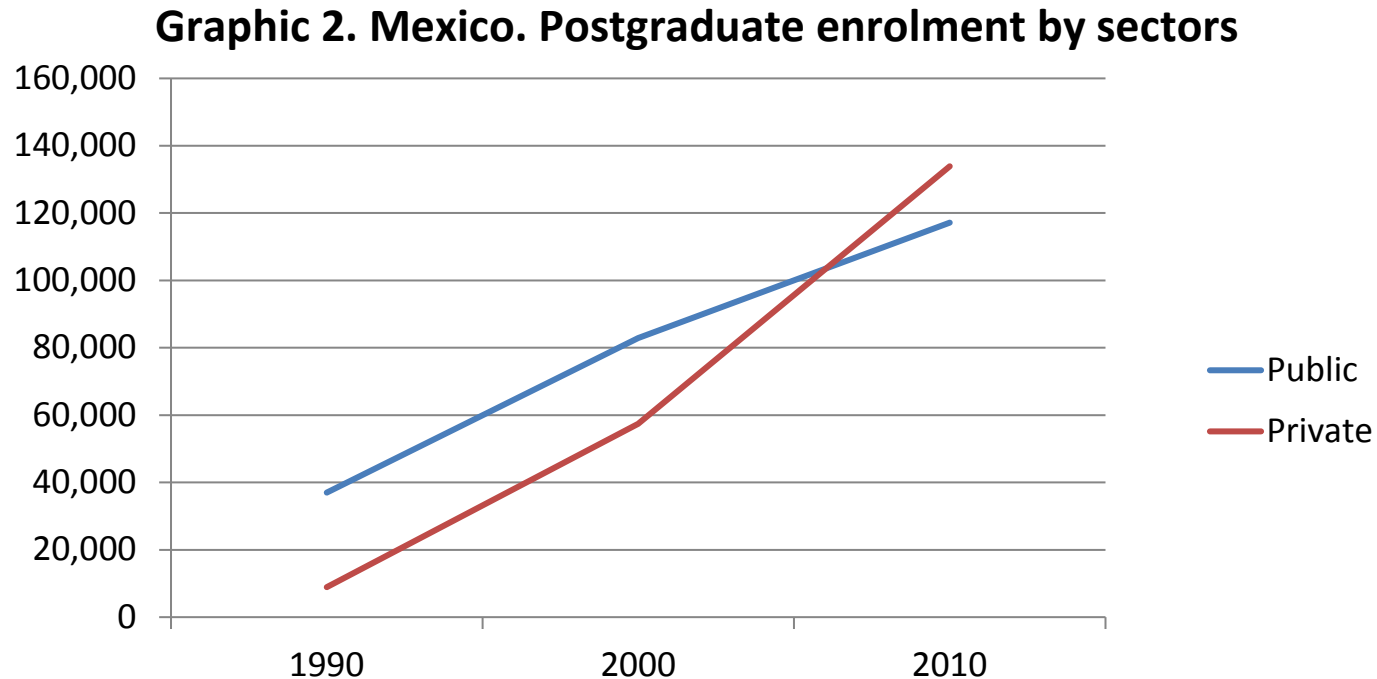
Source: ANUIES, 2010 and 2014.

## 6. Master's programs and Laureate International in Mexico

General context of big expansion of postgraduate programs

More than quarter million students attend postgraduate programs

Important growth in 1990's decade



Sources: 1990: SEP, UPEPE-DGPYP (2014); 2000 and 2010: based on data from SEP through Álvarez y Ortega (2011).

UVM and UNITEC have invested in Master degree programs, much more than the private sector as a whole.

Masters' Degree students in 2010 were 6,122 and in 2014 were 12,389, a growth of 102.4%. The private sector grew 64.1%

Laureate has not invested in Doctoral Programs.

## 7. Conclusions

Laureate international has invested heavily in the new market of adult students

Provision of programs specifically designed for adults

No international model, but adaptation of local competition environment

Capacity to change, “innovate” and grow.

Remarkable capacity for competency