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Venezuelan higher education and national development

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VENEZUELAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Graduate School
University of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Inter-American Studies:
Educational and Counseling Psychology

by
Roy James Sorensen

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This thesis, written and submitted by

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FOREWORD

The author spent four years in Latin America--almost three of those years in Maracaibo, Venezuela (1962-1965). As a Student Affairs Grantee with the United States Information Agency and working out of the cultural America House, it was his duty to know the university scene, and especially its student leaders. Among other duties were the teaching and organizing of English classes within the university and assisting the American Embassy by providing student leaders to conference where prominent North American and Venezuelan educators would speak and offer an exchange of ideas regarding the contemporary university scene.

During that time it was his pleasure to become acquainted with the Director of the Planning Commission and Dean of the School of Architecture, Dr. Miguel Casas-Armengol, and his assistant, Dr. Alberto Mendoza, whose unyielding efforts served as an inspiration and impetus for this thesis.

CHAPTER I

HIGHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of the relationship between the societies of developing nations and their higher education institutions still constitutes a field that has been little explored. The majority of present day studies orient themselves about either socio-economic development per se or problems attached to the university. An attempt will be made here to point out some of the reciprocal relationships that exist generally in Latin American countries.

"Higher education" refers to education beyond secondary which include public or private universities, pedagogical, and politechnical institutes. The major emphasis will be centered about the university since it is the principal component and tradition of higher education and also a major impetus to socio-political events.

There is no attempt to compare these Latin American universities with those of more highly developed nations.

It may be pertinent to inquire if one can refer to "a Latin American university." In one sense one can note

there are certain generalities that would be common to the majority of Latin American universities. This does not mean that there is an emerging model or ideal for all Latin America. Certainly the different countries of the continent confront varied conditions that may require quite different solutions. Nevertheless, the origins of the universities were quite similar, and, in their history to the present, one can observe many similarities in structure, functions and problems.

"Developing nations" or the more negative, "underdeveloped nations" are seen as those countries which have good potential prospects for using more capital or more labor or more available natural or human resources, or all of these, to support its present population on a higher level of living. If its per capita income is already fairly high, it can support a larger population on the same level of living.

II. IDEAL FUNCTIONS OF LATIN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To successfully overcome underdevelopment, pluralistic societies obviously need and require various methods and devices. Even though the connection between development and education may not be precisely established, it is obvious that this embraces an important relationship which

in turn influences all the components of society -- social, economic, political, and cultural. Within the educational aggregate, higher education is dealing with human values and resources at the highest level. Quite often authorities in education define the object and purpose of the university as discovering the truth and divulging the same. The problem (if it is a problem) is that the truth changes from generation to generation. Each one comes equipped with its own truths that begin to be altered by the following generation. Professor Alberto Mendoza in his discussion of the university states that:

The vital (essential) drama of man is that he knows truths, but absolute truth escapes him. It's elusive The contemporary university searches for the truth for the benefit and enjoyment of man; it is anthropocentric.¹

Becoming more concrete and operative Mendoza continues:

Goals: They are objectives of another level. They are reachable aims. They are finalities that belong to the world of the concrete. For example, to succeed in the development of a nation, cooperating with the university that contributed to obtain its success are accessible goals. As far as being obtainable, goals are

¹Mendoza, Alberto. Imagen de la universidad contemporánea. Universidad del Zulia: Maracaibo, 1964. p. 5, (Translations are the author's).

by nature variable; they satisfy the finality, the goal disappears and is substituted by another, the goal is conquerable; it remains only as the unharmed object. . . . The selection of goals is dependent upon the university's capacity for service to the society that supports it. . . . For the contemporary university in the backward nations, the goal is to contribute in the measure of its strength to the annihilation of this social anomaly which is called underdevelopment.²

Then different institutions of high learning will correspond to different levels of development. It would be insane to believe that a rigid university model could be extended to all Latin American countries. Even within the same nation, different regions can justify having universities with important differences in spite of having similar goals and structures. The education which a university provides for its society must be unique, since each society has a unique course of development. All the details of operation need to be observed in relation to a university's concept of its role in its area.

Upon analyzing the relationships between the university and national development, Harold Benjamin establishes five levels of social and economic development and prescribes the role that the university must play as the leader in development. The university has a more critical role as the level of development moves higher. In addition, among the more highly developed nations, higher education influences a larger percentage of the people.

The purpose for which the university exists and the

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Harold R. W. Benjamin, Higher Education in the American Republics (McGraw - Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1965) p. 4.

manner in which the actions are carried out in the most appropriate way must be defined. These are the functions of the university. Important is the understanding that an institution has of its aims and the extent of its progress toward carrying out those aims. Harold Benjamin states:

The crucial measure of a university's distinction is how well it does in developing programs to improve the people's security, productivity, and cultivation within the limits set by its culture. All other measures are valid only to the extent that they reveal some fact⁴ of this primary sign of institutional quality.

One could affirm that the university universally has as its charge "the preservation and organization of present knowledge, its transmission to the new generations, the discovering of new knowledge and the development of the ability of utilizing them."⁵

In an attempt to be more specific and to generalize aims according to the needs of Latin American education, Miguel Casas-Armengol condenses the ideas and principal conclusions of the Latin university educators into the following:

1. Initiate scientific advancement and technical knowledge and introduce the techno-

⁴Ibid., p. 3.

⁵Miguel Casas-Armengol, "The University as a Social Force in the United States and Latin America." Stanford: Stanford University, 1965. (Mimeographed).

logical process necessary for men to be free and true master of his world.

2. Prepare leaders of high caliber capable of interpreting the ideas of their societies, define the aspirations of the populace, and plan and put into effect the methods and mechanisms that society will use to satisfy these aspirations.
3. Increment and insure the economic efficiency of the cities on a level necessary to guarantee their survival and the continuity of their material progress.
4. Contribute to making democratic principles a reality, increasing the channels of social mobility, and assuring equal opportunities for all so that every man can deservedly enjoy and benefit from a life that a civilized society can offer.
5. Develop the individual and his creative abilities, freedom, liberty, independence, and the physical and emotional aspects of his personality.
6. Study and point out the optimal educational organization of the different levels of teaching, e.g., primary, secondary.⁶

One can note the failure to specifically mention the rural as fitting into the above plan.

The channels by which the university accomplishes its goals attempts to reach its objectives obviously can

⁶Ibid., p. 13.

be manifold. Roberto Munizaga-Aguirre separates these channels according to whether the university is working inwards or outwards.⁷ A complete understanding of these channels then requires some attention be given to the formal as well as informal aspects of the structure of the university.

The channels of the university working inwardly are the following:

1. Teaching - This includes the basic formation and preparation of professionals, scientists, and technicians at appropriate levels.
2. Research - Both pure and applied research applies here; however, a major emphasis would be on the latter and especially would center on important problems of national development. Research and teaching must strongly integrate themselves.

The channels of the university working outward include the following:

1. University Extension - This is directed to the public and to the areas beyond the inclosures of the universities. This is a public service activity strongly aligned and founded upon the study of vital social and economic methods and problems planning for the training of professional technicians.
2. Consultant - The university provides scientific and technical advice to public and private institutions through research institutes and study centers.

⁷Roberto Munizaga-Aguirre, "La universidad y los problemas de la vida nacional," Política, 9:5, mayo, 1960, p. 38.

III. PRESENT DAY CONDITIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA

In quantitative terms, the American Republics provide an impressive array of higher educational facilities for relatively large segments of their populations. Harold Benjamin makes the following observations:

1. The numbers of students attending higher educational institutions for each 10,000 of the general population, hereafter called "enrollment ratios," correspond generally to the stages of national development (Benjamin defines these levels of development in his introduction).
2. The countries with higher enrollment ratios are increasing their provisions for university education more rapidly than those with lower enrollment ratios.
3. The countries with higher enrollment ratios have more completely developed elementary school systems, fewer illiterates, more adult education, and a larger proportion of their young people attending secondary schools than the countries with lower enrollment ratios.
4. Countries with lower enrollment ratios spend relatively more money on their universities and secure inferior results. The reasons are related to a whole complex of inefficiencies in operation. The higher educational institutions are too small to be efficient in many cases. The number of professorships is usually multiplied for political rather than for educational reasons.
5. Administrative leadership is lacking in countries with lower enrollment ratios simply because they are on the first and second levels of national development and do not train enough competent leaders. When they get a competent administrator, furthermore, built-in political devices keep

him from doing anything of consequence.⁸

However, higher enrollment ratios do not necessarily occur in nations with greater potential and developed wealth. There appears to be only an indirect relationship between the wealth of a country and the extent and quality of any of its educational efforts. There is a drive, a motivation behind the developed and material and human resources represented by wealth and education. This factor is difficult to assess. The drives and skills which develop the wealth of a country may be stimulated and caused by a good educational system. Harold Benjamin affirms that:

The factor of overwhelming weight in determining the scope and quality of higher education . . . in any country is the extent to which the people exercising power in the country believe in education . . . and the measure of their devotion to education as an instrument of national activities.

The more backward a country is in government, finance, industry, commerce, agriculture, the arts, and professional and social services, the more inclined it is to look backward in higher education. The poorer the quality of its present programs, the more likely it is to magnify its traditions and attempt to adhere to traditional patterns in higher education.

⁸Benjamin, op. cit., pp. 197-199.

⁹Ibid., p. 200.

There are essentially two types of universities in Latin America. The vast majority are of the kind that prepares the student for the professions. Miguel Casas-Armengol uses the term Universidad Profesionalizante to describe the latter.¹⁰ This is the university composed of a federation of schools representative of the Napoleonic French tradition. They are often isolated towers of knowledge with little, if any, communication existing between them. In contrast to this type is the second, more experimental, class of university that has more recently appeared in some countries. The somewhat different structure of the experimental institutions often include basic common studies during the first two years, with a much greater emphasis on research and technology. They may be state universities, e.g., La Universidad de Oriente in Venezuela, Brasilia in Brazil, or private universities, e.g., Metropolitán in Venezuela, Del Valle in Colombia.

This classification refers principally to the university preparing for the professions, since the other type does not exist in sufficient numbers nor is there enough information which would permit any concrete evaluation.

¹⁰Casas-Armengol, op. cit., p. 15.

IV. UNIVERSITY INFLUENCES UPON THE DETERMINED
NECESSITIES OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The following are some of the principal areas where the Latin American university generally has not established an effective influence among the diverse sectors or components of national or regional development:

1. Lack of coordination with the different levels of education.
2. In spite of being essentially free to all, higher education still has not become democratized to the extent that it offers access to human talents in all the social classes.
3. The lack of defined goals--raison d'etre--while facing the growing demands of university education has produced improvised and hasty solutions which in the long run may produce social, economic, and academic repercussions. The improvisation of new schools or universities or the imposition of entrance restrictions have not seemed to obtain satisfactory results.
4. An unequal distribution of the results of university action in the different regions of the nation is apparent.
5. One can observe a lack of university leadership in national and regional goals along economic, social, educational, and political lines.
6. Inadequate relationship between the social and economic necessities of the nation and the results produced by the university is evident. An example would be the over abundance of lawyers and economists and the relative lack of agriculturists and veterinary doctors graduating from the universities. Also one can note the lack of university extension and information given to public and private enterprise.

7. Research on the vital problems relative to national, regional, and urban areas.
8. Quite often there is a strong and mutual antagonism between national government and the university which has important implications in the collaboration of the university in diverse aspects of national development.
9. The means and ends of the national political parties are carried out within the university's boundaries. The systematic study of political science and the theorization and conceptualization of ideological problems are relegated to a secondary level. Thus, the university loses the possibility of intellectually orienting political debate and generating the professional politicians necessary for the physical maturity of a society.

V. INTERNAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRESENT

DAY UNIVERSITY

The probable internal causes or conditions which determine or limit the university's effectiveness in influencing the different aspects of development is an important consideration.

First, the goals, duties, and programs of the universities and their various schools generally are undefined and unaligned with the necessities of national development. A great part of the education is involved with the preparation of traditional professions of a socially prestigious nature.

Second, there exists a confusion between the means

and the ends. "Co-government,"¹¹ free attendance, autonomy are means to guarantee that the university comply with its transcendental ends of service to the nation. Unfortunately, these have often produced harmful and defective conditions. For example, autonomy is interpreted in a mystical sense by Roberto Munizaga-Aguirre as:

. . . a physical intangibility for buildings and persons--the taboo of sacred confinements where in reality it has often become the refuge for the apathetic and the inept in a world involved in revision and change that rightfully demands an attitude of wakefulness and critique.¹²

Autonomy is utilized, then, as a lazy agreement to remove oneself from reality when it should be the indispensable condition for mediating problems.

The rigid structure of the university with very independent schools of strong professional emphasis does not adapt easily to new educational and scientific demands and restricts general cultural and humanistic formation. From the administrative standpoint it would seem this structure is not functional nor appropriate. Coupled with this is the fact that an inadequate process of communication exists among the many components of the uni-

¹¹In Latin America, this usually means that representative administrators, professors, students and alumni all govern the university through a University Council.

¹²Op. cit., p. 40.

versity--the governing boards, professors, students, and alumni--which has paralyzing results for many functions and important initiatives.

Third, teaching methods still primarily depend upon conferences and memorization with only a very passive participation of the student.

Fourth, the Latin American student is the unfortunate victim of some complex social, economic, and political forces that make it difficult to fully take advantage of and profit from the university academic environment. One can point out the lack of vocational and professional counseling, the rigidity of plans of study, the frequent interruptions of the academic program motivated by political activity, the frequent strikes and holidays.

Important is the fact that:

. . . the divergencies between short term and long term objectives are almost always resolved in favor of the former even when this action compromises fundamental aspects of the future of the university.¹³

The lack of appropriate planning which would draw out different alternatives and would compare short and long term effects is the probable course. As a result, university budgets often result in being improvised due to a lack of definition of needs. The major part of the

¹³Casas-Armengol, op. cit., p. 17.

budget is absorbed in teaching and the incomes are generally inadequate to handle the extraordinary growth during the last several years. Also the majority of the physical facilities are deficient, and more often than not, among the few universities that have the modern facilities, the equipment, and installations are completely below par.

And, finally, the schools within the university, because of certain academic and professional responsibilities, economic conditions, and the manner of recruiting and promotion, fix certain limits upon the directions in which a professor may move. Only recently have salaries risen sufficiently, and as a result, more professors are remaining on campus full-time. However, a majority only spend a few hours a week devoted to teaching. This helps to explain the void of professorial involvement in the problems of the universities.

VI. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES FOR LATIN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

It is obvious, then, that there would be some serious discrepancies if one were to compare the ideal functions of Latin American university education with actual conditions. The social, economic, and political changes are going to be even more pressing in future years. The university will not appreciably add to the development of society if it is in itself underdeveloped. A change is patently necessary--

a new "university reform" that would put asunder the activities and structures incompatible with new social demands.¹⁴ Routine and tradition expressed in rigid values and attitudes will always be the major obstacle to change. The overly conservative and unchangeable professors initially conceived as protection against the interference of dictatorial governments now operate somewhat like defense mechanisms fearing a displacement should any social change occur. There is also the pressure of new demands of added numbers of students that cause problems for a careful process of planning and organization. Finally, there are certain groups and intellectuals who believe that not until basic changes in social and political structures have been achieved can academic reforms be realized.¹⁵

¹⁴In Latin America, the term "University Reform" is connected with the revolution in educational processes that occurred in Argentina during the period 1918-1922. Argentina had enjoyed a democratic and representative political system--at least superficially--for some fifty years previous. Political parties functioned freely and labor was organized. The election of Hipólito Irigoyen theoretically marked the transfer of power of the elite to the middle classes. It was in this setting that, at the University of Córdoba, the student demand to include students and graduates in the university administration was successful. The influence throughout the continent was significant.

¹⁵Casas-Armengol, op. cit., p. 15.

Does not the university reflect the very society of which it is a part? Certainly the universities are not toys subject to forces over which no one has any control! Universities inherently supply (or should) the knowledge and development of the intelligence which then can influence the development of events. The university cannot be completely dominated by forces that it should and must understand and modify. Then it is the intellectual elite in the underdeveloped nations that must assume the leadership in understanding and modifying the role of the university. It is this group that must realize that in the underdeveloped nations the university must carry out a proportionately more important role in national development.

Next, the Latin American nations will continue to increase their university enrollments, not only absolutely, but relative to their populations--at least during the remainder of this century. Harold Benjamin states:

The total enrollment in 1960-61 of approximately 4.2 million students for a total population of 380 million will grow by 1970 to at least 7.5 million students for a population of 460 million. By 1980 the population of Latin America will probably be over 300 million and that of the United States will exceed 250 million. The number of students in higher educational institutions in 1980 in Latin America will rise to 2 million and in the United States will be at least 7.5 million.

In the next thirty years some of these countries will increase markedly the number of

their institutions of higher education. Each country in the hemisphere will have a higher average number of students per institution.¹⁶

One of the most significant moves that any or all of the institutions must face is that of educating sufficient numbers of professors. Many of the Latin American nations barely recognize such a need. Certainly it would seem that the present level of instruction and research will deteriorate unless graduate programs are increased and improved markedly in the next decades. Benjamin states:

Ten important graduate schools preparing an average annual cadre each of 100 holders of the doctorate in various fields would produce only 1,000 new professors per year, even if all those who earned the doctorate went into university teaching in Spanish America. In the next twenty years at least twice the number will be needed annually.¹⁷

There are optimistic signs that possibilities for change are indeed materializing. The important results of diverse state and private experimental universities show decided progress in several of the principal directions pointed out already.¹⁸ Secondly, there is an emergence of capable and active leaders in university reform in a majority of the Latin American countries. In the third place, the important quantity of Latin American

¹⁶Benjamin, op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 203.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 210.

students--especially graduates--in accredited universities of other lands in spite of the linguistic differences and of transportation and subsistence costs. The students must be oriented in their research and instruction toward Spanish American problems, however, and then perhaps they could carry these methods to their own countries, but with graduate research to serve Spanish American ends. Finally, increasing international cooperation on academic, scientific, and technical problems is bound to have an increasing effect on Latin higher learning institutions. The Organization of American States, International Bank of Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, private foundations, and aid in various forms from the universities in the more advanced nations are providing a constant flow of valuable ideas and experience.¹⁹

Possibly the more urgent of the directions of future change may include the following:

1. A categorical definition of a policy of higher education and of research. Clearly articulated with the necessities of development which is defined at the national level. This means a new conception of the duties of the university bound with the nation. This also means cooperation and association of all the centers of higher education. Autonomy need not be lost in any

¹⁹ Author's observations in Venezuela during the 1962-1965 period.

reorganization, but rather different and new meanings will be added to this peculiarly Latin development in higher education. Organizing the education of a nation more closely may and should reduce the costs of operating, making teaching a more effective democratic reality and providing a more rational use of intellectual resources.

2. A gradual change of the objectives and structures of the professionally oriented university in order to realize a greater diversity of programs. Also, the university could offer careers of shorter duration, e.g., nursing, social work, that are very necessary in Latin countries. And the quantity vs. quality problem could more easily be resolved.
3. Reorganization of the administrative system is a must. Under a dictatorship improvement in university administration is often only sporadic. When a dictatorship is overthrown it takes the university some time to recover administratively. The new rector, for example, may now be elected by the university assembly instead of appointed by the executive power. To improve administration of higher education, Harold Benjamin suggests:

. . . conferences of administrators within particular countries or regions, where common problems can be studied by men who are well acquainted with one another's difficulties. . . .²⁰
4. Utilizing the experience of other national or foreign organizations, new institutes or universities can be created, headed by forward thinking leaders.
5. A periodical self-evaluation of each university and the whole educational system is needed.
6. A diversification of financial income is needed. The university cannot be solely dependent upon the central government for its income. Investment for profit is vital to the university.

²⁰Benjamin, op. cit., p. 210.

7. The introduction of new methods of teaching and modern educational technology with an aim at reducing existing costs and bettering the quality of instruction.
8. The implantation of an educational planning organism of a permanent nature is of necessity an integral part of any change.
9. For psychological and social reasons, the active participation of the student body is advantageous as a dynamic force to conquer resistance to change and channeling youthful energy towards this idealistic end.
10. A modification of political activism among professors and students may well come about as the university becomes intimately connected with the problems of society coupled with progressive academic improvement.

Whatever processes of change that occur in the Latin universities must necessarily involve the active participation of power groups whether of a formal or informal nature.

CHAPTER II

LATIN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AND SOCIETY

Ricardo Arias studied the relationship between the university and society during the republican period of Latin America.¹ He explained three stages that are helpful in explaining and understanding the Latin American universities. The first stage, "bureaucratic dependency," exists where the university depends administratively upon the educational organism of the state. Arias calls the second stage "diverging autonomy" as the university obtains its autonomy from the state, but only at the price of removing itself from the social reality of the day. Two professional factors determine the ability (as distinct from willingness) of an educational system to move from one stage to a higher one. They are, the level of general education of the teachers of the system and the amount and kind of training they have received. This type of autonomy has had some positive influences compared to the former situation, but has resulted in some negative tendencies aforementioned.

¹Ricardo Arias Calderón, "La situación de la universidad en América Latina," Presente, 8:21, noviembre - diciembre, 1966.

The majority of the Venezuelan universities would then be at this stage; that is, where the university is principally at the service of the members of the professions, in that there exists the exaggerated emphasis on producing professionals. One finds the term, "professionalizing university" among the literature of Latin American higher educational planners when referring to this situation. University administrators have attempted to prevent this situation from becoming worse by adding research activities, cultural extensions, and social action to the educational climate.² Miguel Casas-Armengol, Dean, School of Architecture at Zulia, firmly believes these foregoing activities are:

. . . inconsequential in themselves and among the body of . . . professors, and in the long run do not have any influence in the change of the university spirit nor in the effective action of the university in its society.³

The third stage Arias calls "community integration" where the university must realize the correlation between society, the populace and the university, and the intellectual spirit. This integration requires autonomy and

²See Chapter IV regarding these developments at the University of Zulia, Maracaibo, Venezuela.

³Miguel Casas-Armengol, "Visión integral de la educación superior venezolana" (Maracaibo: Universidad del Zulia, 1967), p. 5. (mimeographed).

and freedom, since beyond the creative obligations to society the university must accomplish transcendental and universal goals superior to common, local, and temporal problems. The three problems of added population and social and scientific advances have caused problems in universities throughout the world. Indeed, though, it is and will be the developing countries where necessities of change and modernization are proportionately urgent, do we observe the universities suffering from more severe and complex crisis. In actuality, the developing countries have the greater rates of population increases. Significantly, the desire to learn and to attain greater social and economic mobility, or rather, the right and privilege to be educated, takes in an ever-growing part of the population. And, finally, as is well known, we are confronting a constant avalanche of new knowledge along scientific and technical lines.

Investment in the universities is no longer being thought of strictly as a social cost, but rather an investment in formation of human capital through which the capacities of the population as producers and consumers are stimulated. Harbison and Myers (1964), explain their concepts concerning the development of human resources:

[it] is the process of increasing the knowledge, skills and capacity of all persons in a society. In economic terms it can be described

as the accumulation of human capital and its effective investment in the development of an economy. In political terms, the development of human resources prepares the public for a mature participation in the political processes, especially as citizens in a democracy. From the social cultural point of view, the development of human resources helps the citizens live more complete and varied lives and less tied to tradition. In humanity, the process of development of⁴ human resources opens the door for modernization.

Harbison and Myers point out that human resources at the highest levels are those which most directly influence the integral and harmonious development of a nation through its several stages; however, it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that the university is at the service of the national interest. Also, since the university reflects the social and cultural milieu, it must be capable of exercising a vigorous leadership along economic, scientific, social, political, cultural, and technological lines.

It may be pertinent here, then, to mention that national development takes into account not only education and its interrelationship with economic and social development, but also the production of ideas and technological inventions constitute a part of the economy which are just as vital. It has seemed that investment in higher education in Venezuela has been, strictly speaking, a social

⁴Frederick Harbison and Charles A. Myers, Education, Manpower, and Economic Development (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 2.

expense and vaguely defined. Latin America in general, seems to be slow in facing the fact that the development of human resources is a process of increasing the knowledge, abilities, and capacities of all persons within a society--perhaps never fulfilled, but a well planned on-going, live struggle. This could be described in several ways: (1) economically, it is the accumulation of human capital and its effective investment in economic development; (2) politically, the development of human resources prepares the populace for a mature participation in the political process--especially as active participants within a democracy; and, (3) socially and culturally, the development of human resources helps the citizenry to lead a more complete and varied life, less dependent upon the rigors of tradition. Simply put, the development of human resources opens the door for modernization.

Adequate planning could produce a certain equilibrium between the number and kinds of university graduates and the demands of the Venezuelan society. Due to the long time needed to develop human resources, educational planning demands long term goals. For instance, for a sufficient number of engineers for the nation by 1980, study plans must be defined in the secondary schools during the early 1970's. Venezuela's needs must be estimated for perhaps at least ten to twenty years in

advance. The planning should allow continuous checking so that corrections can be effected when necessary in the on-going planning process.

A proposed methodology in the educational planning could define the following:

1. Number and kinds of graduates required each year.
2. Number of professors and researchers needed.
3. Physical facilities required and their geographical distribution.
4. Quality of educational programs and recommendations for their betterment. This would include methods of instruction and organization of the curricula.
5. Capital investment and expenses required to carry out the foregoing.
6. A long term goal program for expansion and betterment perhaps covering the period 1970-1980.
7. Admissions policy and educational counseling.

At the same time it must be remembered that educational planning should satisfy the needs of the individual for his own growth and development as well as resolving the needs of the society. In a society that respects individual needs, the foregoing objective is served by providing an education which is accessible to all citizens independent of socio-economic class, and in accordance with individual desires and capabilities. Secondly, to resolve the necessities of society, industry, as well as public institutions, must be provided with people who have the necessary

educational requirements and aptitudes. Undoubtedly then, education simultaneously serves individual and societal needs and ends.

For Latin American societies the most vital and urgent task is the acceleration of development. The universities cannot remain isolated, indifferent, or timid or ignorant of the challenge. These countries have been underdeveloped because their people have been underdeveloped. The progress of a society depends upon the increasing technical capacity of the population, the efficiency of the administrators, of business enterprises, and the advances of science and technology. Productivity is dependent upon the population, natural resources (and the relationship between the population and the natural resources) and the social structure of a nation.

Obviously, the preparation of human resources takes much more time than the preparation and execution of economic plans. There are factors--psychological factors--that have caused great progress in certain societies and stagnation in others. One could call it a "psychology of development."⁵

An adequate provision of education at all levels

⁵David C. McClelland, The Achieving Society (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1961), pp. 11-19.

seems the necessary condition for political stability, and if one may project, the latter appears quite necessary for national development.⁶ Scientific and technological advances and also social change have caused the traditional concepts of education to be severely changed. Formal education can not now end at certain levels as it so often has in Latin America's past. Now more than ever, it must be thought of as an on-going process.

One would not believe that the centralized governments in Latin America would allow their national universities to sink to a position where they do not provide human resources to the political decision-making sector of society. If the national university does not participate in setting the tone and the goals for higher education, a centralized government engaged in responsible national planning will experience difficulty in achieving its goals and presumably will lose part of its control over the kind of human product in which it is investing. Middle-class students in the national and larger state universities seem to perceive this situation.⁷ They

⁶David Abernathy and Trevor Coombe, "Education and Politics in Developing Countries," Harvard Educational Review, 35:49, Summer, 1965.

⁷From Conversations with Dr. Casas-Armengol, and Alberto Mendoza, of University of Zulia Planning Commission, 1964.

believe, however, that private universities are being supported by those who wish to encourage an educational system conducive to the retention of influence and power by the present or old elite groups. It may be that this is the reason for the negativism toward academic reform in the national university--reforms that would make it more difficult to obtain a degree, the all-important symbol which raises the student's status and that of his family within the social structure. Unfortunately, for the Latin Americans these academic and curricular reforms are the ones needed to provide the specialized skills necessary for effective national development.

Undoubtedly, future national politics may be influenced in some part by the present struggle of students supporting university reform which evolved from the 1918 Argentine educational revolution and those wishing and working for more rigorous training to meet national needs for economic development. Latin America accepts the proposition that the political ideologies of a society should be developed in a university.⁷

I. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND THE UNIVERSITY

Only in recent times has education been thought of as

⁸Francisco Miró Quesada, "The University South and North: The University and Society," Américas, 12:3, December, 1960.

an important investment for development, change, and modernization. In the past, education was considered rather a conservative institution dedicated principally to preserve and transmit the culture by means of socializing the new generation. It appears national education, development, and politics have important relationships that certainly need to be analyzed more deeply and systematically.

Pye and Verba (1965) have presented some interesting concepts and methodology--the "Political Culture" and "Political Development." The political culture of a society consists in its systems of beliefs, expressive symbols, and values that define the situation in which political action has a place. It constitutes an integral part of the culture and refers itself not only to what is happening in the world of politics, but to that which people believe to perceive about it. No society has a uniform "political culture"; one can point out for example the culture of the elite and the culture of the masses.⁹

Political socialization refers to the process by which individuals acquire attitudes and feelings about the political system and the rate that corresponds to it. This includes the following: (1) that which one believes or

⁹Lucian W. Pye and Sydney Verba (eds.), Political Culture and Political Development (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 3-27.

knows about the system; (2) the feeling towards the system comprising loyalty and civic duty; and, (3) the feeling of political competency which refers to the role one carries out or could carry out in the system.¹⁰

Whether education in itself tends to make men good citizens is highly debatable, but it facilitates the way for being one. In a developing country such as Venezuela, the educational institution influences more the socialization of youth than do other social institutions. The opposite occurs in countries of a predominately rural structure.¹¹

Some of the aspects of political socialization in Venezuelan higher education can be pointed out. First, in the direction of political orientation, the university, during the last decade, has had to be national and democratic and within access of students from all the social classes of the nation, even though they are represented in disproportionate numbers. In this way, it has complied with an important integrating function and has facilitated social and economic movement to some extent. Unfortunately, the rapidity of this growth, coupled with the lack of objectives, plans, and coordination have produced some negative effects among the faculty members as well as other

¹⁰Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹Ibid., p. 23.

important activities of the university. From the point of view of political orientation, the university has shown a more professional preoccupation than ideological. The intense political activity that develops reflects the power conflicts among the many national political parties that attempt to control the university and put it at the service of the parties' ends.

The conflictive characteristics of this type of political activity create continuous and grave interferences for academic tasks, impede the development of an authentic political-social formation of the student, and finally makes it very difficult for the university to contribute to the definition and education of political ideas for society. There is a political affirmation on the part of some political leaders that the university is only a microcosm of the society, and consequently they feel justified in not bettering the university's lot until a total transformation of the political and social structures of the nation is a fact.¹² Nothing has been found in the literature to support this affirmation. The university in developing countries centers in a large part about the intelligencia and is accustomed to wait for the intelli-

¹²Miguel Casas-Armengol, "Educación superior y desarrollo en Latino América" (Stanford: Stanford University, 1966), p. 15. (Mimeographed).

gencia for a position of advancement and leadership that contributes to the process of change and modernization of the society.

It is hard to discern how deeply the influence of the university culture goes in the formation of political attitudes of students. These may have already been formulated in the high school. It seems that the political activists make up a relatively small percentage of the student population who, by virtue of the experience and resources of their respective political parties, succeed in polarizing the backing of larger groups (probably essentially neutral or indifferent or independent) during the periods of voting. The high percentage of abstention during student elections is indeed significant.¹³ Also one could point out that few university graduates actively participate in national politics.¹⁴

In the history of the Venezuelan university one can observe different periods of leaders and their relationships with the institution. During the Generation of '28 when university students made up the country's only educated forces, motivated and capable of perceiving the

¹³David Spencer (ed.), Student Politics in Latin America (Washington: U.S. National Student Association, 1965), pp. 105-112.

¹⁴Ibid.

necessity of social and political change, they played an important role in the founding of the different political parties.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the active student in politics seems to depend strongly on the directives coming from their respective party commands.¹⁶

Progressive eras seem to have common elements, even though they may have been different in many features of goals, practices, and results. These periods are characterized by dedicated leaders who have put themselves in the forefront of the campaigns to reach any goal. The universities of Latin America are engaged in educating the leaders for this age in ever-increasing numbers. A driving spirit is the element needed to put these countries into effective action. A look into the past and present of higher education may be needed to put into perspective the driving spirit, if any, of today's era.

¹⁵John D. Martz, "Venezuela's Generation of '28: The Genesis of Political Democracy," Journal of Inter-American Studies, 16:1, January, 1964.

¹⁶Spencer, op. cit., pp. 105-112.

CHAPTER III

AN INTROSPECTIVE VIEW OF VENEZUELAN HIGHER EDUCATION

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Venezuelan colonial university in its inception, and much like the other universities of Hispanic America, was founded principally for the service of the Church and consequently was controlled by the same. The most important task of the university was the preparation of priests, although medicine, law, theology, and some liberal arts were taught. Access to the university was made available only to a small number of the highest social class in the colony.

The aristocratic families who, during colonial times identified their noble titles with the possession of vast extensions of land, in a sense substituted these titles for university degrees after the Wars of Independence. This can be readily explained. The colonial phase of Latin American history left strong feelings regarding the value of a title. Titles of nobility, originating on the Iberian Peninsula, were linked to huge land grants from the King. There is, then, an identification of titles with financial power in the hands of a few privileged families. The resultant social change after the Wars of Independence and of this

century abolished titles and many monopolies. Rudolph Atcon (1966) explains:

Thus, originally well-to-do families found themselves cut off the land, with a great deal of tradition and almost no money to back it up. This condition of genteel poverty--similar to the U.S. South at the turn of the century--led to a search for new means and new forms to satisfy pent-up emotions and maintain prestige even in the new city culture. The vehicle they discovered was the university.

They still had the connections, the knowledge and some resources to demand and get a higher education. And through the university, through the professional schools, and professional diplomas, a title could be acquired in substitution of the lost. The right to and exercise of a profession also guaranteed income, but that was the lesser consideration. For, the professional diploma served both as a key to all dominant positions in civil service and as an effective block to close these same opportunities to all non-holders of such a title. A new oligarchy was thus established based on the university degree.

The influence of the Spanish university upon the educational setting of the New World was significant. It may be important to acknowledge some of the important features of Spanish higher education prior to the discovery of America, not used as a detailed analytic comparison but rather to recognize that Venezuelan developments certainly reflected educational thought and practice in Spain and perhaps provide a perspective in

¹Rudolph P. Atcon, The Latin American University (Bogotá: ECO Revista de la Cultura de Occidente, 1966), p. 26.

understanding education in Venezuela today.

Sixteenth-century Spain was in the midst of its Golden Age--unquestionably a pinnacle in the human efforts of the arts, sciences, literature, exploration, and in education. Certainly many peoples and cultures had contributed to the upsurge in the forming of Spanish culture and its institutions:

To the Roman and Visigoth interest in education had been added a very strong influence for formal schools by the coming of the Sephardic Jews. The subsequent arrival of the Mohammedans in the 8th Century brought to Spain ideas and practice in education from afar; and it also brought there the complete works of the writers of Greece's Golden Age. Very early after the Moslem invasion, copying centers were established in Spain, where scholars from many parts of Europe came to study and copy the Greek works. All of these events gave impetus to education and to advanced educational thoughts.

Considering the importance of Arabic to the Mohammedan, of Hebrew to the Jew, and of Latin and Spanish to the Christian, it is not surprising that the significance of language to education was a matter of particular concern and it is understandable, then, why the first Spanish grammar was written so early (1492) by Nebrija. It is understandable, too, why the first great European champion of the use of the vernacular for basic education should have been Juan Luis Vives, who was born in 1492.

The University of Salamanca, founded early in the 13th Century, was one of the great universities of the Middle Ages. . . . All of these institutions contributed mightily in preparing the men of the Golden Age and in furnishing the thinkers--clergy, government

officials, and teachers--for the New World.²

It seems the best educational efforts of Spain could be seen in Peru and New Spain.³ The Spaniards established a school (1523) for Indians immediately after the overthrow of the Aztec Empire in 1521, in which the instruction was in the language of the pupils.

For more than 60 years after the discovery of Venezuela, the only education offered its inhabitants was in the rudimentary efforts of the missions. It was not until 1560 that the first school was established in Coro. This school, and subsequent educational efforts of the clergy, limited its curriculum to the study of Spanish grammar, morals, and the rudiments of Latin. Such education was offered to those of the privileged class.

The first civilian school in Caracas was established in 1591. In 1592, permission was obtained from the Crown to establish a seminary with classes in philosophy, theology and grammar.

In 1721, Philip V gave his permission for the establishment of a university in Caracas. By 1810, the university enrolled 400 students. Advanced education

²George I. Sánchez, Development of Education in Venezuela, Office of Education, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Bulletin No. 7 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 13.

elsewhere in Venezuela was limited to professional schools in the largest towns, notably Mérida and Maracaibo. These professional schools had a very narrow scholastic curriculum also--theology, medicine, canon law, philosophy, and grammar.

Venezuela lagged far behind New Spain and Peru as an attractive and valuable colony of Spain. The mainland of Venezuela was inhospitable, the Indians rebellious, and gold of El Dorado was not forthcoming. This may explain the slow development of education in the colony.

Historically, the professional schools in Venezuela date back to the 17th and 18th centuries. Established in the colonial days, most of them founded by Jesuits, they were isolated schools of professional training. Their development pattern predicated the incorporation of three or more such schools under the nominal heading of a "university."

The largest and most important of the universities is La Universidad Central de Venezuela, founded in 1725 in Caracas. The next oldest is La Universidad de los Andes in Mérida, founded as a Catholic College in 1790 and converted into a university. The third principal national university is La Universidad del Zulia. This university was founded in the late 19th century, but it was closed soon afterwards. It was reopened by the López Contreras

administration in 1936, then closed again, and reopened in 1947. La Universidad de Carabobo was established in Valencia in 1958. La Universidad de Oriente, made up of schools located in several parts of the eastern region of Venezuela, was established in 1959. The newer universities go through a period of organization during which they are dependencies of the Ministry of Education, before acquiring autonomy.

Two private universities were established in Caracas in 1953. La Universidad Católica Andrés Bello under the leadership of the Jesuits and a non-church-connected university, Santa María.

In 1966 the central government established La Universidad de Caracas apart from the national university system. It is controlled and operated by the central government.

The Venezuelan independence produced vast changes in the University. The medieval school was replaced by the French model and this influence has lasted to the present day in the majority of the Venezuelan universities. The French type of organization was developed during the French Revolution as a substitute for the traditional university which was closed by the government. In the then newly-evolved university, government officials practically had exclusive charge of teaching the new,

more liberal professions. Herewith, the university became a service of the state, and it was characterized by a rigid division into professional schools, each of which was completely independent. But in spite of the change in model, the Venezuelan university continued to serve almost exclusively, small aristocratic groups of the social, economic, and political structure.

The University Reform Movement initiated in Córdoba, Argentina in 1918, did not succeed in modifying significantly the traditional structure and orientation of the Venezuelan university in spite of the importance of its objectives. The more important consequences of the movement were the establishment of co-government, (that is, student and faculty control and direction of the university) and university autonomy, both of which soon were deformed, changed, and/or misconstrued by interest groups of the dictatorial regime at the particular moment. In Venezuela, due to the long period of dictatorial regimes, the influence of the Córdoba Movement or of the post-war social and scientific revolutions only began to be noted clearly after the political change of 1958.⁴ Nevertheless, since 1928, one could note that the

⁴Miguel Casas-Armengol, "Visión integral de la educación superior venezolana," (Stanford: Stanford University, 1966), p. 3. (Mimeographed).

Córdoba Movement determined the establishment of a tradition upon which the idealistic students based the political and social problems of the country.⁵ Because of the long dictatorships, Venezuela had few groups sufficiently organized, motivated, and educated to perceive and point out the necessity of political and social changes. The students were the natural group to fulfill this role. Certain professors and intellectuals outside the universities undoubtedly were an element of influence on the political activity of the Latin American university student. Also, it should be pointed out that a social conscience was developing as more or the middle class elements were reaching the university.

II. THE PRESENT

Venezuela has had some vigorous planning in the last decade--especially along economic lines. However, the lack of coordination between national development and those of the state and private universities is poignantly evident. There even seems to be a lack of coordination between the various universities. They do meet rather sporadically to discuss the apportionment of the national budget and to attempt to unify the curricula of the several universities. It seems more than likely that

⁵Ibid.

these infrequent activities are a result of the traditional rigid structure, the bent of professionalization, and a limited idea of university autonomy.

All universities in Venezuela come under the regulation of the Ley de Universidades (National University Regulations) adopted by the Council of Ministers on December 5, 1958. This decree sets forth the organization and administration of the national universities, and establishes the authority of the government to regulate the operation of private universities. This law stipulates that not less than 1½ per cent of the national budget must be assigned to the national universities, and the distribution of these funds is determined by the National Council of Universities. The government may make additions to the budgets of the individual schools. There are no initial tuition charges in the public university.

The Ley de Universidades grants to the national universities complete autonomy which gives administrative control to faculty, students, and graduates. The highest authority is exercised by a University Council composed of a Rector, Vice-rector, the Secretary, by the deans of the several faculties, a delegate of the Ministry of Education, a delegate elected by the graduates, and three delegates elected by the student body. The highest

administrative officers, who must meet certain qualifications, are elected by the vote of the faculty, students, and graduates in specified proportions. The same general procedure is set up for the management of the several colleges or institutes. To coordinate the work of the public and private universities in Venezuela, the decree establishes a National Council of Universities. This council, presided over by the Minister of Education, has representation from each university through their rector, one dean for each university, and one student from each university.⁶

Unfortunately, the universities have not initiated studies related to high-level human resources which would constitute a fundamental element for the planning of higher educational institutions. The experimental universities (de Oriente and Santa María) are moving in some interesting directions, but they tend to isolate themselves from the national university system.

Meanwhile, the universities are producing an overabundance of professionals in certain limited areas contributing to increasing the educated unemployed. This could adversely affect the levels of quality among these professionals. In these specific areas stated, it may create some social and political tensions. Coupled with

⁶From notes on university organization while in Venezuela.

this problem, is the fact that the universities are not training the kinds of professionals that the society needs, nor enough, due to the lack of well-defined goals and the lack of cooperation with national development plans. (One can point out a paradoxical situation in which the university is adversely contributing to the national development by increasing the volume of the educated unemployed). A disproportionate number of professionals remain in the capital city. Few are located in the hinterlands or rural areas of the country. In spite of the fact of the forward speed of the Venezuelan economy, the dynamic strength of the economy has come from imported capital and technicians.⁷

The year 1958 marked an important milestone in the evolution of the Venezuelan university. The change in the political climate seemed to have strongly influenced the cultural and social components of the society in spite of some economic problems that appeared later. The new government paid special attention to education and the Venezuelan university attracted many students, both young and old, who in the past could not have thought to

⁷ Frank Bonilla and José A. Silva Michelena (eds.), A Strategy for Research on Social Policy. The Politics of Change in Venezuela (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1967), p. 27.

continue their studies. The government began to see education as a channel that facilitated social and economic mobility. The proportionately small middle class was probably the favored group with this new "open door policy" of freedom and educational encouragement, but the growing affluence of members of the urban lower class can be seen entering the Schools of Education, Agronomy, and Engineering in the various universities.⁸

The Venezuelan university was unprepared to handle the great numbers wishing entry. There were problems of physical expansion, and a lack of foresightedness of future and imminent problems inherent in this unplanned-for expansion. But beyond this quantitative increase in students, the university also had to confront new and changing demands of society, all of which necessitated a reorganization of the teaching staff, new impetus to research, university extension, and technical and scientific assistance. Faced with such overwhelming demands, important as well as complex, the university principally threw its resources upon the training of the non-degreed university staff, consequently limiting the development of other activities.⁹ An examination of the

⁸Observations and conversations with The University of Zulia professors.

⁹From notes in conversation with Dr. Miguel Casas-Armengol.

budgets of the universities of the country well corroborate this. The university was attempting to face the profound social, scientific, and cultural changes of this century with a university institutional structure that existed in the 19th century, and, of course, which had very different situations to handle. Coupled with this, is the fact that the great quantities of students have influenced adversely the quality of the instruction.

III. CHARACTERISTICS AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRESENT DAY PROBLEMS AND ACTUALITIES

For some years, the University of Zulia (also called LUZ or Zulia) has found it increasingly more difficult to succeed in harmonizing the tremendous institutional expansion with the quantity of national government finance. This situation resulted in a crisis in 1967 when the disparity between available funds and necessary expenditures reached an all time high. The national government remained firm in its refusal to grant additional funds.¹⁰

Recently, the new rector of LUZ, D.J. M. Delgado Ocando, declared that the budget assigned by the national

¹⁰Casas-Armengol, "Visión," op. cit., p. 12.

government is insufficient to cover the university costs in 1969. The university is confronting an enrollment of 12,624 students.¹¹

This economic problem as can be seen in many aspects of university life has created a critical and somewhat disquieting situation between the university and the government. This economic problem created a situation where the perspective on the many other fundamental problems is becoming obscured. Miguel Casas-Armengol (1967) states:

Actually, the university and the national government, not working together nor separately, have not ever been able of conceiving, defining, or implanting a development program taking advantage of the institutions of higher learning with regional and national goals in mind.¹²

Some mention should be made here regarding the financing of the university. The concept of democracy in education understood as "open doors" for all has changed with free public higher education, which has continually been a serious financial problem of the national government. Practically all the economic resources for the functioning of the universities comes from the national government. The future appears to be even more critical

¹¹News item in La Universidad del Zulia, 31 de enero 1969.

¹²Casas-Armengol, "Visión," op. cit., p. 19.

in these regards since, in addition to the cumulative problem, it is quite logical to expect the per capita cost of educating students to rise. Especially would this be true if the present trend of increases of students in scientific and technical careers continues to rise. Of course, the financing of higher education competes with other basic necessities in the national budget.

Insufficient data exists to objectively compare the real operational costs and productivity by function or department in each university. Nevertheless, one can observe the high rate of dropouts and student failure. In general terms, of each 100 students that begin a university career, no more than fifteen to twenty complete it.¹³ The time period for obtaining the degree is approximately five to seven years depending upon the school. This is very expensive in operational costs and is reflected in the academic performance due to the large number of disinterested students who continue to pursue the studies of a professional career program. To have an exact idea of the real costs, it is necessary to charge the cost of the graduate, and above and beyond normal

¹³Universidad del Zulia, Segundo congreso pedagógico venezolano. (Maracaibo: Facultad de Humanidades y Educación, 1967), p. 11.

expenses, the cost of students who do not graduate.

The growth of the Venezuelan university has indeed been extremely rapid in a relatively short span of time. In 1961, according to the OAS, the increase in enrollment for the five following years would be at least 211%.¹⁴ (The next closest country estimate in Latin America was 95% increase). It was estimated that for 1967, this tendency would reach even higher levels.¹⁵

The University of Zulia, as an example, had 700 students in 1957 and climbed to 7,400 in 1967.¹⁶ Preparing for the 1968 year, LUZ was facing a pre-registration of first year students numbering 4,200. There are a number of reasons for this accelerated increase:

1. The creation and expansion of national and private liceos (high schools) that primarily prepare for university training.¹⁷
2. Social attitudes and values which cause certain low regard for technical and non-university careers, exaggerating the importance of a university education.

¹⁴International Yearbook of Education and UNESCO, Educational Developments in 1965-1966, 28:396-7.

¹⁵Dirección de Cultura, "La explosividad del crecimiento escolar," La revista de La Universidad del Zulia, 7:28, octubre - diciembre, 1964.

¹⁶News item in La Universidad del Zulia, 31 de enero, 1969.

¹⁷Universidad del Zulia. Segundo Congreso, op. cit., p. 27.

3. A lack of vocational and professional counseling to point out the many and varied career opportunities. There is a definite lack of adequate incentives for non-university careers.
4. A political and social process exists which has increased the aspirations of numerous groups of the citizenry (especially urban), towards the goal of greater social and economic mobility through the use of university degrees.
5. A rigidity of educational plans impeding the diversification of the different educational levels.
6. Better facilities of access to the university because of some new careers, night courses, and free education.

The University of Zulia is not prepared for this extraordinary increase in student population with its somewhat archaic, rigid, and isolated structure, without planning adequate programs to face the new social demands and to realize the necessary institutional and innovative reforms. Consequently, the increase in enrollment is absorbed principally by the courses already in existence. During the last decade, numerous attempts have been made to formulate a plan for a more ample university, but the results have not been satisfactory.¹⁸ The majority of the directive bodies have been absorbed by immediate

¹⁸ Casas-Armengol, Miguel, Misión y acción de la Universidad del Zulia (Maracaibo; Universidad del Zulia, 1964).

problems putting off long range goals. Long range goals for Zulia only recently have been set down, but unfortunately their recommendations exercise little influence on important decisions.¹⁹ For example, one can note there still does not exist a definite admissions policy in order to resolve the problems of the vast numbers of incoming students; that is, is the University of Zulia going to admit anyone who comes to its doors or should admission depend upon the physical capacity of LUZ?²⁰

The isolated Ivory Tower character of the structure of LUZ, the work and labors of the administrative bodies, professors, researchers, and students for obvious reasons, do not lend themselves towards important change within the university environment. The schools and institutes are separate units lacking a cohesive element. Each school tends to set up its own services, with the resultant multiplicity of departments, laboratories, and libraries in the same university, when of course such services should be general. Autonomy carried to extremes by the several schools closes the road to intercommunication, and to the rational use of professors, laboratories, and space. Duplication of effort and

¹⁹Casas-Armengol, "Visión," op. cit., p. 13.

²⁰Ibid.

expense is inevitable, and as a result, teaching and research suffer considerably. Each school has its own governing council and other authorities, and fairly often there are conflicts between the school and the University Council. The lack of overall objectives, then, jeopardizes the fulfilment of academic objectives.

University autonomy has been constantly interfered with to the point of reducing it to a simple representative symbol. The lack of economic independence has worked against autonomy at LUZ. The government is obviously a strong pressure group upon the university as well as political parties and other interest factions which cut short the freedom of the university through election of authorities, professors, researchers and administrators who in turn actually determine the academic requirements of LUZ.

There is obvious confusion regarding the goals of university autonomy, considering it an end in itself, when, in truth, it is a means through which the university serves science, culture, and national development with effective independence: a responsibility of the institution must be apparent to the social reality which surrounds it. It has impeded incentives for change, reform, and plans directed realistically towards the necessities of the country.

At the national level, the universities were perceived some time ago to function towards national goals. Actually, the National Council of Universities in its 26th reunion December 12, 1962 recorded:

The rectors of national universities are agreed that the development of university education must respond to an integral and coordinated plan rigorously studied concomitantly with the supreme interest of the Venezuelan nation and given the direct repercussion of a future expansion of the national universities in the coming budgets. The immediate establishment of a number of permanent projects with qualified technicians who will dedicate themselves to the basic task of university planning is of the utmost importance.²¹

Nevertheless, to date neither the universities nor the government have shown much interest in specifying and carrying out an important and urgent task.

There is little importance given to the National Council of Universities. This governing body has been limited principally to coordinating plans of study of the several professional disciplines and to meeting sporadically to make out insufficient budgetary decisions.

This lack of organization and the uncoordinated growth of Venezuelan higher education, are at least partially responsible for three other categories of weakness:

1. The University has failed to keep pace with the social and economic evolution of the

²¹Ibid., p. 14.

Venezuelan nation, and it has made little effort to promote the "new" professions needed for accelerating development. Although there is a critical shortage of trained high-level manpower, the universities continue to emphasize the traditional professions (many which are neutral towards development) and have failed to train enough persons capable of leadership or to contribute to the mobility of society.²²

2. Another weakness of the system consists in the teaching body and its working conditions. Full-time teachers are an exception. The universities have a long tradition of teachers for whom lecturing is an activity marginal to their real jobs. The situation regarding university teachers will not improve until full-time teaching posts become the rule. Only then will it be possible for the faculty to have proper preparation for teaching and for carrying out certain essential academic functions such as student counseling, tutoring, and especially, systematic research.
3. Finally, it should be noted that several Venezuelan universities make no provision for post-graduate studies.²³ This situation results not only from the lack of funds, but also from the basic tradition of Venezuelan university life, in which the university developed out of professional schools. The result is the absence of a genuine scientific atmosphere and the exodus to Europe or the United States of those who are most gifted for research.

²²Harold R.W. Benjamin, "Higher Education in Latin America," Phi Delta Kappa, 45:4, January, 1964, p. 32.

²³Observations during Venezuelan residence.

The main shortcoming then, is in the lack of proper organization.

The democratic governments of the last decade in Venezuela have given a great quantitative push in education at many levels. This impulse has been especially noticeable in the high school program where, almost exclusively, the students are channeled toward formal university education. This rapid expansion is overwhelming to those on the planning committees.

The "Plan of the Nation," which defines and orients the governmental processes for obtaining the goals of national development, seems to have shown great superficiality in considering the role of the universities in national development. Actually, it ignored the fact that the Venezuelan university was not a consolidated institution: that it was actually undergoing great changes and as a result its functions and necessities brought forth some rather strange conditions. The major part of the projects under the "Plan of the Nation" appear removed from reality. No where in the plan is there an identification of the necessities of national and regional development that should be attended to by the universities.²⁴ In the last decade, the government has

²⁴M.F. Hassan, "The Second Four Year Plan of Venezuela," Journal of Inter-American Studies, 9:296-320, April, 1967.

established a defined criterion in relationship to higher education, which can be shown by the following characteristics:

1. The creation of experimental universities (Universidades de Oriente and Lara and recently La Universidad de Caracas), directed and controlled by the Ministry of Education.²⁵
2. The opening of new polytechnical and pedagogical institutes also under the education ministry.²⁶
3. The above institutions have a centralized organization completely separated from the national universities.²⁷
4. A growing priority of the designated budgets of these governmental institutions of higher learning.
5. Inadequate use of the National Council of Universities—allowing it only elementary coordination operations and converting it to dependency more to the service of the Ministry than to the university. This condition has been made easier by the interest demonstrated by the national universities towards the National Council of Universities. There are probably a number of reasons that can explain the foregoing; it would seem that inconformity over direction and development of the national universities as well as the fact that it is virtually impossible to influence the national universities due to their autonomy are apparent reasons. Also there seems to be a lack of continuity in the process

²⁵International Bureau of Education and UNESCO, International Yearbook of Education (Geneva: International Bureau of Education, 1960-68)

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

of educational planning. Actually, the Central Government Educational Planning Commission (EDUPLAN), to date has not studied the planning of higher education and it has very tenuous relation with the National Council of Universities.²⁸ Finally there is always some political ideological and active opposition on the part of some certain university factions. These then have in some way influenced the government in its actions.

A great deal of careful and intelligent work will have to be invested and tirelessly pursued to set straight what appears an almost impossible situation. Certainly a lack of competence, communication, responsibility and concern cannot continue to exist. Broadening opportunities for larger numbers to enter the universities must bring about a certain dilution of former values. Values must be carefully reexamined, defined, and whenever necessary, new ones must be established which may prove more adequate to contemporary needs and more conducive to the elimination or prevention of incompetence in all its varied forms. Recommendations then, for a New University Reform are the vital issues to be discussed, explored, and implemented.

²⁸Casas-Armengol, "Visión," op. cit., p. 7.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. CONCLUSIONS

There certainly have been no scarcity of developments at the University of Zulia during the last ten years; however, to objectively evaluate the effectiveness and/or worth of the building program, research activities, administrative, professorial, and worker changes and improvements would be no easy task. If one were to attempt to assess the influence of these activities upon regional or national improvements and developments, the task would be obviously more complicated.

In 1958 the building sites for LUZ were already inadequate. The Ministry of Education with the approval of the President, don Rómulo Betancourt, donated the Octavio Hernández Vocational Center to house the School of Humanities and Education. Rushed remodeling in existing buildings was carried out in order to install other new schools. The Student Resident Hall had to be converted into an Administration Building and the students living in private residences were subsidized by the university. The School of Veterinary Science, the last School to be created, had to begin its operations in

the old hangers of the Grano de Oro Airport.

There were sufficient stimuli at this time to undertake the vast project of planning the new University City. The first decision was to negotiate the sale of the Humanities Building to the Ministry of Housing for the enlargement of the port area. The University of Zulia received 3 million bolívares (approximately US\$1,800,000) which was designated for the beginning of the project. Vice Admiral Wolfgang Larrazabal (past interim President of Venezuela) donated 800 hectares for the University City.² President don Rómulo Betancourt approved the initial investment, and in the name of the national government, made the commitment of supporting the building program of the university. Dr. Leopoldo Sucre Figarella, Minister of Public Works was the master organizer of the project. On October 1, 1968, the first stage of the new University City was inaugurated.

The hope remains that when this very expensive University City is at long last completed, the traditional structures of the autonomous and unintegrated schools

¹The two campuses of LUZ were separated by six miles of city. The Schools of Law, Economics, and Humanities and Education were located in the port area.

²One hectare is equal to 2.47 acres.

will not be transferred along with book, chalk, and curriculum from the 19th century building to the new site. One would like to think that activities are molded to constructions and not vice versa. This means that academic and scientific output become a function of architectural whim and circumstance, all because there are no objective studies, no technical plans, no sense of urgency or responsibility. Indications are that, in spite of very strong opposition to change, Dr. Miguel Casas-Armengol and Alberto Mendoza of the LUZ Planning Commission, gained sympathetic listeners and friends among the professors, administrators, and prominent national figures. The University of Zulia has not experienced the explosive political history of the last decade as has Central University in Caracas, and, as a result, where Central University continues to fail, Zulia planners for university change untiringly push forward.³

Retiring Rector Dr. Antonio Borjas-Romero seemed proud of the establishment of eight research institutes and thirteen study centers "created" during his ten-year

³Two comments are pertinent here. First, the number of caraqueño students who flee Central University to attend Zulia is significant and second, Dr. Casas-Armengol is completing a doctorate in National and Educational Planning at Stanford University, Palo Alto.

stay at LUZ.⁴ There does not seem to be any single concept that defines what an institute should do or be. Generally, it is conceived as an organization built around one central theme of study, scholarship, or research. Some of the institutes offer training, but it seems it is a high-level in-service training of already qualified individuals who have proven themselves and whose numbers are always rather restricted. It would seem no easy matter to "create" an institute in the prevailing scheme of things, given that in their socio-academic consciousness Latin Americans seem to have no use for university units other than the Facultades (Schools). One could conjecture whether the promotion of an institute was simply somebody's mere desire and it is hoped that they do not represent a study on how to transform in no time flat a useful organization into an overstuffed, under-productive bureaucracy! Whether the institute serves only the personal prestige of a few university oligarchs without giving real service to the community is open to

⁴Kasmera Biological Station, Orthodontic Research, Industrial Hygiene, Clinical Research, Applied Calculus, Technological Institute, Economic Research, Agricultural Research, Humanistic Research, Experimental Surgery, Criminological Research, Applied Linguistics and Translations, Cinematography, Literary Studies, Philosophical Studies, Biological Research, Educational Counseling, Audio Visual Center, Astronomical Research, Vocational Counseling, Electric Center, and School of Bioanalysis.

question. Freedom of scientific research should be the vital function of the institutes, but only once overall planning and orientation have been formulated by a qualified group, and society has decided to provide the financial means because the project is directed toward the satisfaction of a felt need.

There have been a number of administrative, professional, and worker associations and benefits created and organized during the ten year period.⁵ Happily, most of these are the result of the political system itself--a democratic republic. One unhappy aspect regarding the employment of non-professional employees is that because LUZ pays relatively poor salaries (consequently hiring individuals with lesser qualifications) and the intricacies involved in the employment of these workers, it is practically impossible to dismiss the incompetent ones. In addition, it has been observed that many of the secretaries and administrative employees are related in some way to a faculty member and/or governmental politician.

⁵The University Press, Personnel Department, Administrative Planning Committee, Electoral Commission, Internal Comptroller, Association of Professors, Workers' Union, Salary Scheduling Committee, Sabbatical Year, Collective Life Insurance and a Savings Association, Construction and Maintenance Division, The Venezuelan Association of Friends of LUZ, and a recreational beach for personnel of LUZ.

An impediment to competitive progress in university teaching is that all professors and university personnel are considered to be civil servants. The concept of equating teaching responsibilities with civil service procedure seems intrinsically wrong. The professor must have freedom, initiative, and imagination to deal with the known and the unknown. A civil servant does not initiate policy on his own, but rather he is the executor of a policy laid down from above.

Among the professorial staff, the concept of the chair (cátedra), coupled with civil service notion, would appear to preclude the development of a real university career. When a chair becomes vacant due to retirement or death of its previous owner, standard practice at the University of Zulia has been to call for a competitive examination to find a successor. A man may prepare himself for years with the hope of a possible vacancy in his field at some university. He writes a book and then submits it as a thesis at the proper time and place. Once a candidate has won this position for life and since no one can remove him (unless he resigns of his free will) academic or scientific excellence may not have anything to do with his continued presence in the university. Once made catedrático, the professor does not have to worry much about teaching and research, and is quite free to pursue

a professional or political career.⁶ La Universidad de Oriente in Cumaná has abolished the idea of the cátedra, is maintaining closer communication among the various Schools, and has even appointed a Dean of Students--an unheard-of post within the Venezuelan higher educational complex.⁷ However, the influence of the Cultural Section of the American Embassy and prominent North American and German educators have been a real and significant force.⁸

Zulia must confront and overcome a number of pressing problems in order to become a vital influence in regional and national development. The abrupt and exaggerated increase in student population coupled with new socio-economic developments within the Venezuelan society have been apart from or in spite of the university. LUZ is not making the structural and university-oriented value changes. It still remains a too conservative organization for the betterment of the Venezuelan society.

⁶Seemingly, and possibly thanks to the Planning Commission at LUZ, the pressures on making the cátedra a responsible position are apparent.

⁷From notes during the author's residence in Venezuela.

⁸Ibid.

Certainly the University of Zulia can only be a positive factor for development in the sense that she adjust to the necessities of the Venezuelan nation. The governmental factions of national planning have not established a point of reference from which Zulia may move with the requirements of the nation, nor have they taken into account the special characteristics that a university requires within a rapidly developing country. Obviously, the necessities of Venezuelan development means the cooperation of all the institutions of higher learning as well as research institutes and all these coordinated with the "Plan of the Nation." In addition, the lack of an authentic autonomy has stood in the way of progress and the betterment of LUZ, and the abuse of party politics has also been a factor which has obstructed the process of modernization reform. And finally, a great lack of enrollment standards and counseling services prove prohibitive to Zulia.

The present economic problem of the University of Zulia is derived from the accelerated growth, the lack of coordination and efficiency in operation, few concrete plans, little diversification of revenues, and the recent governmental preference in financing its own institutions of higher learning. One can project that this situation will be aggravated in the future since the

growth tendency of LUZ is not compatible with the administering of national funds. Obviously carefully worked-out short term and long term plans are urgent for the abatement of the foregoing problems.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Short Range Goals:

1. A clear and justifiable study and definition of the minimum budgetary needs, indispensable for the normal operations of the universities in the immediate future.
2. An integral examination of the present day university and its future directions.
3. A promotion campaign designed to modify attitudes and values favorable for reform and university modernization.
4. A vigorous and continuous study made up of participants within, as well as outside of the university environment to define the role of the university in regional and national development and to justify the growing budgetary needs, both past and present.
5. Definition of immediate plans in order that those that are considered positive and urgent be carried out quickly.
6. A study of high level human⁹ resources that Venezuela needs. CORDIPLAN⁹ and the universities seem the logical organizations to undertake this project.

B. Medium and Long Range Goals:

1. The creation of a national administrative committee in charge of coordinating and

⁹Commission for the coordination of all private and governmental development plans.

planning all activities, institutions of higher learning and research. It should be directly organized with EDUPLAN and CORDIPLAN.

2. The preparation of a national plan of higher education and research with the goal of establishing a point of reference necessary for organizing and directing the growth of higher education. The creation of new universities, pedagogical institutes, polytechnical institutes, schools, and departments would depend upon the justification that they had within the plan. This would prevent the appearance of disorganized development which characterizes many existing institutions.
3. Restructure of the National Council of Universities with the goal of converting it into a dynamic organism which would be in charge of coordinating and planning at the national level, standardizing statistics, establishing levels of academic excellence, integrating international aid, coordinating research, and bettering administrative services.
4. The planning of diverse ways and means that would permit the optimum use of resources and the diversification of economic income.
5. Study of legal reforms necessary for facilitating the modernization of higher education and the achievement of economic apportionments more adequate for the requirements of the Venezuelan nation in higher education.

It is difficult to assess the exact relation between education and economic growth, and of the importance which should be given to education in an overall economic plan. Some look upon education as a particularly long term investment and lay greater stress on productive medium term investments. Others think that people need

only be educated for development to take place. But one thing is certain; the proportion of the Gross National Product or of the national budget that is devoted to education in Latin America is far smaller than in the developed countries, and certainly far too small in relation to economic and social needs. Given a certain amount of resources and the need to create a basis for sustained economic growth, what are the criteria that should determine, in the short and long run, the amount or resources devoted to education? This is perhaps the most important question to which Latin American educators and administrators must seek an answer if education, and indeed the economy in general, are to be planned in the light of fuller knowledge.

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