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FAILING TO DELIVER: HIGHER  
EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN CHILE AND  
COLOMBIA

A BETWEEN CASE ANALYSIS

GABY VAN DE WAL  
JONATHAN LONDON  
Universiteit Leiden

## Table of contents

<b>List of abbreviations</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Literature review</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Neoliberalism</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Advantages of Public and private education</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Debate on higher education</b> .....	<b>7</b>
OECD and World Bank policy strategy .....	8
Academic capitalism .....	10
Elite reproduction.....	11
<b>Methodology and research design</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Chile</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Historical contextualization of Chile</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Higher education in Chile in the age of neoliberalism</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Assessing trends in Chilean higher education</b> .....	<b>20</b>
1. Autonomy from neoliberal states and global institutions .....	21
2. Academic capitalism.....	21
3. Elite reproduction .....	22
4. Higher education functions in favor the public good .....	22
<b>Concluding remarks</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Colombia</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Historical contextualization of Colombia</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Higher education of Colombia in the age of neoliberalism</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>Assessing trends in Colombian higher education</b> .....	<b>28</b>
1. Autonomy from the neoliberal state and global institutions.....	28
2. Academic capitalism.....	28
3. Elite reproduction .....	29
4. Higher education functions in favor the public good .....	29
<b>Concluding remarks</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Discussion</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>35</b>

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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HE- Higher education

HEI- Higher education institution

HES- Higher education system

IFI- International Financial Institution

IMF- International Monetary Fund

UN- United Nations

WC- Washington Consensus

## INTRODUCTION

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In recent years, many scholars have argued differently on the phenomenon of higher education within a given society and its role in the world-wide knowledge economy. Some argue that higher education institutions maintain and reproduce social inequality, whereas others argue that these institutions are an important channel for social mobility (Naidoo 2004, 457; World Bank 2011, 1). Thus, scholars have not yet identified the role of higher education systems as a global phenomenon.

Some serious concerns regarding the growing role of higher education in the world-wide knowledge economy, is that the neoliberalization of higher education is undermining higher education's contributions to the public good. This role of higher education historically has been seen as fostering economic development of nations and the provision of opportunities for individuals to promoting and harmonizing cultural diversity, political democracy and economic trade (Marginson 2010, 6963). Critics allege higher education institutions worldwide, but especially in Latin America have become or are becoming handmaidens of neoliberal institutions, including neoliberal states and such global institutions as the world bank or the OECD (Rose 2003, 67-68). Is this true? If neoliberalization of higher education is indeed happening, do neoliberal reforms promote more inclusive higher education responsive to labor market needs?

By addressing this research question, we can have a better understanding on the dynamics of higher education and their position within a society. This might give more insight on a regional level how these dynamics function, but it could also be an insight for the comparison with other developing regions.

To answer this question, I have developed four hypotheses that express the theoretical outcome of the research question. In my research, I will test these hypotheses on two countries, Colombia and Chile. For a more detailed explanation, I refer to the section methodology and research design.

The thesis will be outlined the following: firstly, there will be a literature review, that will analyze the most important concepts regarding private and public higher education and the debate regarding its role in society. Secondly, there will be a methodology and research design part that will explain the continuation of the thesis. Then there will be a case study focused on Chile and its higher education system. In this section, a historical contextualization will be given on Chile. It will also discuss the organization of its higher education system. Here, it will also assess the hypotheses on the Chilean higher education system. Next, there will be the second case study on Colombia in the same format as the case study on Chile. Afterwards, there will be a discussion that will evaluate the case studies and concluding remarks.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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This literature review will provide a small overview of the debate on neoliberalism and higher education, since these concepts are highly connected. The first section highlights the important debates on neoliberalism and its implications for education. The second section will provide the relation between neoliberalism and higher education, both public and private. It will also provide some of the advantages or disadvantages for entering either public or private education. The emergence of private education in the first place, was due to certain debates on the regulation of educational services by the market to become efficient (Fischman 2001, 3). The most important part of the literature review is the last section that touches upon the debate on the role of higher education within countries.

## NEOLIBERALISM

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Neoliberalism is a widely used term for a lot of phenomena of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however it can be commonly defined as *“economic, political and cultural movement that opposes states’ policies of welfare and that, as such, gives priority to the market in the regulation of the actor’s behavior”* (Narodowski and Moschetti 2015, 48). Towards the end of the 70s, states tended to adopt specific policies in the light of this neoliberal order. These policies were widely promoted by the IMF and the Worldbank (Narodowski and Moschetti 2015, 48; Klees 2008, 312).

Many scholars from different backgrounds have analyzed and written about neoliberalism. Within the field of global political economy, there are three major approaches with different ideas about the origins and implications of neoliberalism. Neoclassical scholars in this field argue that the emergence of the neoliberal era, for them more commonly known as The Washington Consensus, happened because of the collapse of Keynesianism in the 70s. The Keynesian approach is associated with state intervention and provision of basic services, such as state expenditure to foster economic growth and development. However, this led to a tremendous debt crisis in the 70s. As a reaction, market-based reforms were implemented (Fine and Saad-filho 2016, 689-690). The Washington Consensus will be discussed in the next section of the literature review.

More critical approaches to neoliberalism, argue that the emergence of neoliberalism and its implementation in today’s society is a political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites (Harvey 2005, 19). According to these approaches, the application of neoliberalism over the years has seen an increase in inequality and a restoration of the economic power of the upper class (Harvey 2005, 26).

The third approach to neoliberalism within global political economy, is the statist developmental approach, which argues that the state is the locus of developmental agency and that

their investment is central to developmental success. For it, the Keynesian approach would be indeed offering economic growth for the economy (Evans et al. 2017, 407).

Some neoliberal policies that are being pursued are for example: cutting back governments budgets; privatization of government operations; ending of tariffs or other forms of protection; facilitating movement of foreign capital; emphasizing exports; and lowering worker protection through flexible labour markets (Klees 2008, 312). The educational field was one of the key sectors in which the neoliberal reforms could be implemented. The public budget constraint was the main justification for implementing these neoliberal policies in the educational field, as argued by the World Bank. The public sector has always had a budget constraint, however, within the neoliberal era, there was no option for governments to raise taxes to fund such public expenditure. Therefore, as argued by Klees, *“If the public sector could not increase taxes (or deficit spending), then the only way to get more money for a social service (e.g. education) is to take it from another government sector or to reallocate within a sector”* (2008, 318).

According to Klees, there are three directions in which neoliberal thinking has evolved in the educational field *“the increased use of some form of user fees; the privatization of more educational activities; and the direct connection of management and financing of education to measurable output”* (2008, 312). This opposed the traditional political lines of the state towards education, which used to be holding entirely the responsibility of the public sector. Thus, there has been a shift in the role of the state which became a contractor, monitor and evaluator of services delivered by a range of providers (Narodowski and Moschetti 2015, 48).

Therefore, the link between neoliberalism and privatization of education has been repeatedly proposed by several authors, for whom neoliberalism clearly transcends education and certainly shapes cultural and social patterns. It can be said that the increase in enrollment in private education has been repeatedly explained as a consequence of neoliberalism (Narodowski and Moschetti 2015, 50).

## ADVANTAGES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATION

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The main issue of the neoliberal reforms on education that has received more attention is about those policies that drive privatization. It has been argued that there are two forms of privatization in education. On the one hand, the exogenous privatization, thus the privatization of education with institutions offered by the private sector to provide educational services. On the other hand, the endogenous privatization, thus privatization in education, which entails importing ideas and practices from the private sector to make the public sector more business-like. This development has changed

and has reformed the educational morale as such, because education becomes commodified whereby education is regarded solely in terms of exchange value rather than its intrinsic worth or social purposes (Narodowski and Moschetti 2015, 49).

Within Latin America as a region, neoliberal reforms in the educational field found fertile soil, since traditional school systems were perceived as inefficient, inequitable, and results of poor quality (Narodowski and Moschetti 2015, 50). Along these lines, it has been argued that there are three dimensions in which neoliberalism has impacted educational policies of Latin America: *“in the political economy of education financing; in the interrelation between education and work; and in the creation of standards of international academic excellence with its influence on evaluation, curriculum, higher education and teacher training”* (Narodowski and Moschetti 2015, 50).

However, scholars have not yet agreed on whether entering private education brings a certain advantage or not. On the one hand, it is said that entering private education has a ‘private school advantage’ over entering public higher education (Fischman 2001, 4). This entails that entering a private school gives precise advantages in comparison to public education. Some of these advantages are higher graduation results, better performances on tests, safer schools, more opportunities for parents to participate, more access to highly motivated teachers (since motivation is based on efficiency and less bureaucratized hiring), more access to morally uplifting environments (Fischman 2001, 4).

On the other hand, some argue that private education performs better because of a more advantaged student body from birth and because it accepts less students with special needs and learning problems (Klees 2008, 319). Also, students on private institutions tend to perform better because of the contributions made by the family to allow the student to study at these institutions, or even the family background that already stimulate the output of such student rather than it being private education (Klees 2018, 320). In addition, *“a study looking at this question across ten Latin American countries found that private schools appeared better than public schools until you controlled for other differences – in particular, the fact that students attending private schools have a more advantaged peer group. After controlling for these differences, private and public school students performed equivalently”* (Klees 2008, 322). Logically, private education would perform better, but this does not mean that public education is poorer or of lesser quality than that of private institutions.

Privatization of higher education has also led to increased inequity and lowered efficiency. Especially, in developing countries, the privatization has led to poorer quality of the higher education and more certification mills rather than places of learning. Simultaneously, the privatization of higher education reduces the degree to which students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have access to quality education. As a result, the ones that do enter private institutions, will mostly arrive in low-quality private institutions. Thus, *“privatisation creates a more inefficient system by generating a*

*proliferation of low-quality institutions, by reducing public support for high quality institutions, and by creating a system that pays less attention to achieving the broad externalities ” (Klees 2008, 324).*

Therefore, the debates on neoliberalism, private and public education is still very alive. What clearly can be argued is that somehow the privatization of higher education has had implications on the opportunities for some students.

## DEBATE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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The debate on higher education has been a constant struggle over its definition and purpose globally (Denman 2005, 10). This section will discuss the main debate on the definition of higher education and also how higher education is ought to be organized according to different parties. The first part will discuss the historical overview of higher education. Next, there is a section focused on the view of higher education that is proposed by the OECD and the World Bank. Afterwards, the perspective of academic capitalism will be discussed. The last part will focus on explanations and debates regarding status and prestige in higher education.

Education started way before the common era (BCE), in which the profession of scholars, commonly philosophers and alchemists, pursued their life’s work in many different cultural contexts, often at great risk. At times, they were persecuted for their unconventional perspectives, or by those who sought profit from their knowledge and skills (Welch 1997, 323).

As a result of such dangerous situations, the Church in the Christian West attempted to protect masters and disciples, as they were called, during the rise of medieval Europe. In these times, the medieval university offered a uniform language of study of Latin and a uniform program of study for students with common religious credence. In contrast, in the Near East, emphasis on education seemed to be placed on collecting and documenting history. This is also the origin of the first early documented university, the University of Al-Azhar (c. 970 CE). In the Asian context, monastic education was considered as the true form of education. It was therefore highly influenced by the teachings of Buddha or Confucian ethics (Denman 2005, 11-12).

By the 1800s, the formally defined universities served as a territorial display of civilization-building with an emphasis at knowledge distribution as the manner of advancing the society-at-large. Territorial and cultural imperatives helped to shape the its structure until the Industrial Revolution. After the Industrial Revolution, with the liberalization of free trade and a liberal economy, there was a shift of emphasis from elite to mass education. This knowledge production, is said, to provide greater



economic security and living standards. This moment also marked the beginning for competition for power and prestige among universities (Denman 2005, 12).

In the current context, universities have become a quasi-marketplace with the transition to a business and customer-oriented kind of corporate management. This occurred mainly because universities need to adapt and respond to the demand of rapid increases in the market orientation of modern forms of government (national and inter-regional), serving to raise their economic profile as well to increase their economic and political accountability (Denman 2005, 13).

### OECD and World Bank policy strategy

The OECD and the World Bank are essential and crucial institutions that have shaped higher education tremendously over the past years. They are especially expert at providing a standardized recipe for education reforms in developing countries in return for loans to implement such reforms (Alexander 2001, 303).

The OECD is widely recognized for its influence over domestic policies, by promoting certain strategies and goals in different fields, including education. However, these strategies have shifted over time, depending on the correspondent global economic context (Hunter 2013, 708). In the late 1990s, the main theme of the OECD regarding higher education was focused on the demand-driven massification of higher education (HE), because several countries were facing challenges meeting this demand. This has to do with the fact that prior only a small part of the population could access HE. Though by the 1990s, HE experienced enrollment rates of almost 50% of the secondary school-leaving cohort (Hunter 2013, 710). One of the goals in this time was to improve the quality and efficiency of higher education and to improve the equality of access of higher education. These would help to make HE's more efficient in meeting the higher demand (Hunter 2013, 716).

In later reviews from the early 2000s, the main theme of the strategy of the OECD was focused on the globalized knowledge-based economy and the associated assumption that nations must expand their knowledge development and innovation capacity to be competitive and maintain economic growth. To achieve these goals, according to the OECD, HEIs need to become more competitive and need to reduce their relative reliance on public funds. It is argued that competition would increase the quality of the education given and that the more efficient and productive a HE is, the better it performs. By moving away from the reliance on public funds, students need to bare a substantial proportion of the costs (Hunter 2013, 714-716).

Just as the OECD, the World Bank has intensified its activities relating to education over the years, in forms of advocating for different education policies, but also by granting loans for different education projects (Bonal 2004, 649).

Currently, the World Bank advocates for a new learning strategy built on the premise that students are actually learning during their educational times, rather than just attending classes and not being prepared to actually participate in the market on a later basis (World Bank 2011, 25). This strategy is an expanded version of the official report that was done in 1995.

In the original report an emphasis was put on the efficiency and autonomy of HEI's, because public spending on education is constraining the budget of governments in place. As they argue, the returns for students in higher education is less than for other education levels, like primary and secondary education institutions. Therefore, public spending in higher education is less efficient and besides more constraining the public budget. As a result, to increase quality and efficiency HEI's should have other sources for incomes. The World Bank advocates for increasing tuition fees, and change student grants into student loans to cover the tuition fee and other expenses. It has been said that increasing tuition fees will increase efficiency, because the costs are less constraining and more emphasis can be put on the quality of the education since the costs are outsourced to the students themselves (World Bank 1995, 3-5 & 10).

One of the limitations of strategies of the World Bank and the OECD, is that both of these international organizations operate within a certain framework of assumptions that might be problematic. An assumption that seems indeed problematic, is the assumption that efficient HEI's of high quality require autonomy. Therefore, it indirectly claims that only private autonomous HEI's are efficient enough to provide good quality education. Another disputable assumption, that follows the former, is that the ones who benefit from HE should pay the most (Hunter 2013, 717).

In addition, it also implies that higher education can be marketized and commodified, since the World Bank and the OECD advocate for a more entrepreneurial and marketized view on to make HEI's more efficient and productive. Therefore, higher education is in a sense commodified and approached from a neoliberal perspective.

The assumptions mentioned above result problematic regarding higher education of developing countries, since not all of these countries have the resources to implement these policies from the World Bank and the OECD. Especially, the assumption that you only benefit the most of the HEI if you pay for your education, is not a situation that is reality for many people in some countries. Since some parts of a given society do not have all the financial means to pay for their education, this would imply that they can never develop themselves to become competitive in the domestic and international labor market.

Another assumption that is fairly problematic, is that higher social mobilization is assumed to be achieved by entering HEI's and completing a degree. Therefore, it is assumed that poverty can be reduced by expanding HE for all. On the contrary to the theory of Bourdieu, the World Bank and the OECD argue that social inequality can be reduced by having more higher education opportunities for all segments of society.

Nonetheless, the policies do indeed give insights on how higher education can be managed in countries that have a lot of resources available for increased competition and autonomous HEI's. Nevertheless, these resources are needed to lay the framework for such organization of higher education.

### Academic capitalism

Other scholars who do not agree with the policy strategies regarding higher education that the OECD and the World Bank propose, have a different approach to higher education. In their view, higher education is seen as a dynamic relation between the state, knowledge and the new economy. Slaughter and Rhoades developed the concept of 'academic capitalism', which focuses on networks- new circuits of knowledge and interstitial organizational emergence, and networks between the public and private sector, and extended managerial capacity- that link institutions as well as faculty administrators, academic professionals and students to the new economy (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, 15). As argued by Slaughter and Rhoades: *"Overall, we conceptualize colleges and universities as shifting from a public good knowledge/learning regime to an academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime"* (2004, 28).

Within the academic capitalist knowledge regime, knowledge privatization is valued as well as profit taking in which institutions, inventor faculty, and corporations have claims that come before those of the public. Thus, knowledge is construed as a private good, valued for creating streams of high-technology products that generate profit as they flow through global markets (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, 28).

Since universities are seen as the major source of alienable knowledge, they are in the process of establishing new relations with the global economy. This is mostly done through new investments, marketing and consumption behaviors on the part of members of the university community. In line with this view, the universities are highly contributing to the new economy, in which knowledge can be considered as a product or can be owned and marketed as products. This knowledge is often heavily technologized to later be sold to corporations and protected with trademarks and copyright protection (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, 15-17).

Moreover, by capitalizing the knowledge gained at universities, these have also increased ties with corporations in the way the university is structured. University managers tend to adopt managerial

organization that is often used in corporations and to apply this on universities structures. Especially consumption capital is an important feature of the new structure of universities. Universities offer increased opportunities for consumption, ranging from luxury dormitories to mini-malls in student unions and the use of technologically sophisticated corporate products.

As a result, the dynamic relation between corporations and universities makes universities as test beds for new products, or students participating in modifying or improving the products. Concluding the academic capitalist university is a site where desire and consumption are fused, creating technology-savvy consumers whose purchases fuel the new economy (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, 19-20).

The development of the neoliberal state in the early 1990s has officially turned students into consumers of higher education, since funding of HEI is now provided by students themselves rather than institutions. This is also enabled by the shift from student grants to student loans, in combination with an increase of tuition fees to fund all the consumption capital used in universities (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, 22).

As argued above, academic capitalism has a negative connotation and is rather pessimistic about the development of higher education and view that this new approach to higher education might be problematic. The insight of this concept is that it flips the education strategies offered by the World Bank and OECD around and notes the same development, but within a critical framework rather than affirming the strategies proposed by the OECD and the World Bank. However, a limitation of this framework is that it does not touch upon whether this concept is actually disadvantaging the public society, since they criticize the academic capitalist regimes used by HEI's. They neither explain whether there are other patterns of higher education developments and if this can be applied to both public and private higher education. Another criticism to this concept is that within the book the authors have mainly focused on western higher education institutions and states for evidence, thus making their contribution considerably Eurocentric.

### Elite reproduction

The third view that will be discussed in this debate section, is a more constructivist view in which power, status and identity play a tremendous role in the existence of HEI's and how they operate within a given society (Marginson 2011, 31; Pitman 2015, 283; Pitman and Vidovich 2012, 764). The main theory in this view is developed by Bourdieu, that reveals the functioning of higher education through the concepts of 'field', 'capital' and 'habitus'. Within this framework, social formations are structured around a complex combination of social fields in which various forms of power circulate (Naidoo 2004, 457-458).

Ultimately, higher education institutions are a powerful contributor to the reproduction of social inequality, because of the notions of field, capital and habitus. Field and habitus are both ways of making meaning of and within a social system; they essentially differ in that fields are an externalized form of meaning, whereas habitus is internalized (Pitman and Vidovich 2012, 763). A field is a structured social space with a shared set of rules, hierarchies and relations, such as the field of higher education, even universities themselves. The actors within a specific field share a habitus, which is a system of disposition or tendencies to act in a similar manner. However, whilst a habitus is shared, it is not consistently equal for every actor in that specific field (Pitman and Vidovich 2012, 764). As a result, different actors with different habitus' struggle for the domination within the specific field, and thus being in a permanent conflict (Pitman and Vidovich 2012, 764; Naidoo 2004, 458).

This permanent struggle between different agents results in position-taking, in which the agents have series of strategies to improve the agents' dominance in that specific field, based upon their own habitus, the habitus of their shared field, and their current position and disposition within the field. This is often determined in large part by the amount of capital a certain agent possesses, which can be economic (such as tangible resources of wealth), social (networks or influence one has) or cultural capital (advantages acquired by a certain social position) (Pitman and Vidovich 2012, 764).

In the field of higher education two types of cultural capital can be distinguished: academic capital and intellectual capital. The former is linked to the power over the instruments of reproduction of the university body, whereas the latter, is linked to scientific authority or intellectual renown. Later, Bourdieu has identified a third cultural capital, which he called symbolic capital. Symbolic capital entails the prestige and recognition, or even qualifications as another form of cultural capital. The third type is highly important in maintaining legitimacy of agents and conceals power relations within a specific field (Pitman and Vidovich 2012, 764).

These power relations are especially visible in the field of HE, because they reveals the hidden intentions and motivations expressed by HEI's and they expose the hierarchies of knowledge that has become a subject of power (Pitman and Vidovich 2012, 764). The field of higher education is indeed a hierarchical system of knowledge that can be displayed across two levels. On the one hand, on a vertical level, power is exercised due to different levels of qualification frameworks, in which for example a postgraduate qualification has greater status than a bachelor's degree. On the other hand, there is a situational level, where knowledge production is related to the location, in this case the university. Since intellectual discovery is not an universal good, knowledge production is concentrated to a few players with the most resources, which in this case are the universities that hold the most prestige (Pitman and Vidovich 2012, 764-765;Marginson 2011, 32).

Another visible aspect of the power relations within the field of higher education institutions, is that due to position-taking, the universities designate those endowed with cultural capital, which is

generally inherited as a result of social origin. This establishes a close correspondence between the social classification that entry the university and the social classification that exit a HEI, which in the long term increases social inequality (Naidoo 2004, 459).

This framework has some assumptions that makes it a useful insight into the dynamics of higher education. One of these assumptions is that higher education is not the necessary approach to mobilize within a society. On the contrary, the approach the OECD and the World Bank pursue, assume that higher education is indeed a fair process in which social mobilization can occur.

Even though argued differently by vision of the World Bank and the OECD, HEI's are indeed reflections of society and not excluded from political, economic and social developments in a society.

However, what is still missing in this theory, is whether it can also be applied to within universities and whether that might be different, since the given field is much smaller than the whole field of higher education. It neither elaborates on how this position-taking might occur, besides depending on status. Would it imply that the winning habitus would be the rector magnificus in place? Moreover, it does not explain how economic capital can be used to win larger influence in position-taking. Would this entail bribing to gain influence?

This literature review has sought to identify different brands of theories that have a different view on higher education. Interestingly, is that the view of the World Bank and the OECD results positive on higher education and that it might function as a way for social mobility within a given society. The other two theories are rather negative on how HEI's do not provide opportunities for all, but is influenced by external factors, making these institutions a playing field of certain economic and political developments within a society. The overreaching theme between the theories discussed is whether HEI's are somehow autonomous to certain influences from neoliberal reforms that are being promoted in the political economy.

Therefore, the thesis will research whether neoliberal reforms promote more inclusive higher education responsive to labor market needs. According to the different literature discussed above, the following theoretical outcomes are expected in regard to the research question:

*H1: HEI's are independent autonomous institutions from neoliberal states and global institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD.*

*H2: HEI's are institutions that depend their existence on the collaboration with corporations to create a capitalist knowledge regime.*

H3: *HEI's are dependent on the position-taking of the elite within that institutions to continue their existence and create higher inequality.*

H4: *HEI's are institutions that function in favor of the public good.*

## METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

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For this thesis, I will analyze if neoliberal reforms do promote more inclusive higher education responsive to labor market needs. From the literature review, I expect four different outcomes when examining the case studies:

H1: *HEI's are independent autonomous institutions from neoliberal states and global institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD.*

H2: *HEI's are institutions that depend their existence on the collaboration with corporations to create a capitalist knowledge regime.*

H3: *HEI's are dependent on the position-taking of the elite within that institutions to continue their existence and create higher inequality.*

H4: *HEI's are institutions that function in favor of the public good.*

To explore these hypotheses, I will use two case studies; Chile and Colombia. Most of the literature has focused on western countries as case studies for their theories (Marginson 2011, 23; Pitman and Vidovich 2012, 761). Therefore, I want to examine whether these theories are also applicable in other regions of the world. I have chosen two Latin American countries, for the sake of comparison.

The choice of Chile and Colombia is justified by the fact that both countries have developed a well-functioning educational field in comparison to other countries in Latin America. Chile it has shown impressive numbers regarding its economy over the years and it is the first Latin-American country to enter the OECD group. In addition, within the region, Chile has been an exceptional example for other countries on many different sectors of society. As argued by the OECD: "*Chile is, in many ways, an economic success story*" (2017, 37) in terms of, declining poverty rates, economic growth, job creation and big investment in human capital. It is especially argued that its education is flourishing, making Chile the regional leader on the field of education (OECD 2017, 37). However, others argue that Chile's educational system is not delivering the necessary results as it should be (Espinoza 2008, 270).

Colombia, because as mentioned above, is producing a very international and professional workforce, more than other Latin-American countries. The country is thus playing an important role in delivering well-educated professionals in fields such as medicine, law, agronomy, engineering and much

more. These professionals are prepared for international research and the programs offered by Colombian universities seem to be of high quality (Franco 1991, 163-164).

For both Colombia and Chile, I choose to examine the general trend in higher education systems, rather than analyzing some universities in depth. The reason to do so has to do with scope and time limits of this thesis, making it unfeasible to give an in depth assessment of these institutions.

To explore H1, I will research whether the universities are independent financially or politically influenced by the neoliberal states and other global institutions as the OECD and the World Bank. If these higher education systems are indeed dependent, I expect to see that they are influenced by either the neoliberal state or global institutions. The evidence that support this hypothesis, is whether due to budget changes or policy measures, these higher education systems have to comply according to these measures. If they do not comply, this means that they have indeed a certain autonomy to choose whether the neoliberal state, or global institutions might instruct them to do so.

To explore H2, I will research if the academic capitalist concept is visible in the higher education system. If this indeed is true, I expect a marketization approach to higher education in any manner and that knowledge that is produced in these higher education systems is considered as a product. The null hypothesis will be that the commercialization approach is not present in these higher education systems and that these systems seem to operate to favor the public good.

To explore H3, I will research what the influence might be of elites within a certain university and how this reproduce inequality in the long run. This can be done through the prestige that a university enjoys (so maybe an elitist reputation). I expect to see a certain screening process or data that suggest that only certain parts of the population are able to enter these higher education systems. More specifically that there is a certain preference for certain students to enter higher prestige institutions, that in the long run will reproduce inequality by recreating the same elite group. The null hypothesis would be that there is no difference in the enrollment of students in different institutions, that all the students are treated equally and that there are no differences in socioeconomic background or geographic origin.

To explore H4, I will expect to see no difference in access and quality in higher education systems. To support this hypothesis, evidence will show no difference in geographic or socioeconomic background in the enrollment of students in the higher education system. In a manner of speaking, the null hypothesis is that there are differences in access or quality for students from different geographic and socioeconomic background.

For the sake of clarity, higher education institutions can refer to universities, though they may also be defined as colleges or other institutes with courses for adult training.



It should be taken into consideration that this thesis is limited in a few ways. The first is that this thesis is written within a certain social, political and economic context that might influence the objectivity of the thesis. Another limitation is that due to the scope of the thesis, it is not possible to examine some institutions in depth. Therefore, I would rather focus on the general trend within higher education systems in Chile and Colombia. With more resources and time, it would be possible to analyze more universities, from different countries, to come to a solid conclusion. However, that is not the case unfortunately.

## CHILE

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This chapter will discuss the first case study on Chile. The chapter is organized as the following: firstly a small historical contextualization on the history of higher education systems in Chile and other relevant periods in the country is presented. Then, the second section will focus on the organization of the higher education system. Finally, the four hypotheses that are mentioned in the literature review will be assessed.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF CHILE

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Chile has been a model country for its economic and political performance within the region. As the OECD argues: *“Chile is Latin America’s most successful economy and enjoys great natural wealth. Over recent years the country has made progress not only in economic development, but also in educational reforms”* (2010, 17). Due to its historical development, it could develop its educational system the way it is today. An important event in Chilean history was the shift from a military dictatorship to again back to democracy, which has played a major role in the development of Chile in later stages.

In the 1960s, the global political shift toward the left in the cold war context was also evident in Chilean politics. The Chilean socialist party saw its support grow under the leadership of Salvador Allende and the party evolved into a unity of the left. This was related to a decline in support for right parties, due to a massive migration flow from rural to urban areas with voters that used to vote for right traditional parties representing Chilean oligarchic interests. Consequently, this changed when many people migrated from the rural parts of the country to cities (Siavelis 2017, 148).

In 1964, the president elections with Eduardo Frei from the central Christian Democratic Party meant a turning point in Chilean history, since it was the first time that an election was won with 56,1

percent. It used to be common in Chilean politics that due to its majority party system, the game of winning three-thirds was the maximum votes one could possibly win. The PDC could, therefore, rule without having to form a coalition with other parties, which used to be the norm for decades in Chilean politics (Siavelis 2017, 149). As argued by Siavelis: *“The PDC was convinced that its appeal lay in its centrist purity and unwillingness to strike particularistic deals, blazing a new and modern trail in Chilean politics”* (2017, 149).

This new view, however, meant the breakdown of democracy in Chile, since the centrist view of the PDC had difficulties bridging the ideological divides between the left and right. As a result, it was hard to push through reforms, because no majorities were found in both houses of congress. On top of that, the administration had to face serious inflationary pressures, which created economic instability and uncertainty in Chile (Siavelis 2017, 149).

Despite the economic instabilities and uncertainty, the PDC was convinced that it could remain in power and that could again gain a majority status for the sequent elections in 1970. However, the results of the elections surprised many, since Allende won with 36.2 percent, the PDC candidate Tomic with 27.8 percent and the right candidate Alessandri with 34.9 percent. It was the first time that a Marxist president was popularly and democratically elected. This resulted in a political crisis that held Chile in its grip, mainly because of the combination of a weak PDC candidate and a deeply divided produced country under the leadership of a Marxist president.

With a lot of resistance from the right and center parties, the CIA stepped in launching a clandestine propaganda campaign urging members of congress to select Alessandri over Allende. Nonetheless, the members of congress wanted to respect Chile’s constitutional tradition to appear as defenders of democracy, ratifying Allende’s election by 153 out of the 200 members in congress (Siavelis 2017, 150).

The administration of Allende was fraught with many difficulties. By 1972, Allende’s position was a difficult one, ruling a country with a runaway inflation and one that was extremely polarized. Since Allende represented only a third of the population, meaning more Chileans voting against him rather than for him, it made it extremely hard for Allende to get a majority in congress. After he nationalized US-owned copper mines, the relations with the United States were tensioned and proved to be fatal two years later (Siavelis 2017, 151).

In 1973, after the economic and political unrest that prevailed in the country, the military exercised a coup d’état, making an end to Chile’s tradition of democracy. However, it is still unclear whether the coup was also supported and backed by the CIA, that in a Cold War context, was seemingly worried about the election of Allende that could create a chain reaction in Latin America. It is neither clear whether Allende was killed in this coup or that he committed suicide, before the military reached

the presidential palace. Nonetheless, this event had major consequences for the country (Siavelis 2017, 152).

The general consensus was that the military coup would only remain in power for a few months and restore order in the country and then return to the barracks, resulting in a general support for the military junta under the leadership of Augusto Pinochet (Siavelis 2017, 152). However, the junta stayed in power for almost 17 years, transforming the country completely. Aside from the human rights abuses that the government enacted to eradicate the threat of the left, the junta engaged the Chilean economy in one of the most significant monetarist and liberal free-market experiments in the world.

The policy makers relied on the so-called Chicago Boys, a set of technocrats and economists influenced and taught by Milton Friedman, that were advocating for monetarist restructuring programs, cuts in government spending, privatization, remove price controls and tariffs opening the economy for international competitiveness. However, these economic reforms and shock therapy sent the Chilean economy into a tailspin, experiencing high levels of unemployment, a contraction of the economy with negative growth and the bankruptcies of many firms that used to be protected before the reforms were implemented.

Nonetheless, in the late 1970s the economy started to recover and experienced growth rates between 6 and 8 % a year between 1977 and 1981. This period is also known as 'the Chilean economic miracle', and it saw a diversification of the economy, setting the scene for the economic performance of the country today (Siavelis 2017, 153).

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## HIGHER EDUCATION IN CHILE IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERALISM

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In 1981, the government of Pinochet implemented a reform which affected all social sectors, like education, health and social security. This entailed mainly large cuts in budget, transforming the social safety nets of the government to almost non-existent. This also meant a transformation of Chilean education, privatizing education institutions (Siavelis 2017, 153; Espinoza 2008, 271).

By that time, the military junta changed the constitution, that not only transformed the political system, but it also had major consequences for the education system of Chile. Prior to the constitutions reform, the Chilean higher education system consisted of eight publicly funded universities. Two of those were publicly controlled and the other six were privately controlled (Siavelis 2017, 155).

After the implementation of the 1981 reform, the higher education system was diversified and privatized into three components, namely universities, professional institutes and technical training centers transforming the state-controlled education system into a free-market system (Gregorutti et al. 2016, 138; Espinoza and Gonzalez 2013, 200). Consequently, two important legal distinctions were

made among tertiary institutions: *“while universities (public or private) must be non-profit organizations, non-university institutions can be for-profit”* (Gregorutti et al. 2016, 138).

The educational reform allowed a significant enrollment growth in higher education, mainly in the new private institutions. The total enrollment increased from 119.000 students in 1980 to 900.000 in 2010, which represents a growth of 656% (see figure 1). Enrollment in new private institutions represented 70.4% of total enrolment. The number of institutions also increased from 8 institutions in 1980 to 177 higher education institutions in 2010 (Gregorutti et al. 2016, 138-139; Espinoza 2017, 181).

The transformation of the higher education system in Chile was influenced by the neoliberal economic policies that were implemented by economic technocrats. Based upon this neoliberal perspective, the Chicago Boys sought to achieve two goals regarding the institutional funding of higher education policy. The first goal was to transfer some costs of higher education to students or their families, and the second goal was to encourage competition between higher education institutions in determining the allocation of public resources (Espinoza 2008, 272).

These goals for the organization of funding of these higher education systems explain the privatization and commercialization process that occurred in the higher education systems in Chile. Both private and public tertiary institutions sought to attract funds from other sources, generally private, since the subsidies that they received from the government were minimal. These included raising tuition fees, income from services that entail for example technology transfer provided to private companies, loans from private banks and fundraising campaigns (see figure 2) (Gregorutti et al. 2016, 140-142; Espinoza and Gonzalez 2013, 200).

As a result of this shift in funding for both public and private higher education systems, it created a commercialization of these systems to attract funding. As Gregorutti et al. argue: *“This shift in funding emphasis meant that higher education institutions, even the publicly funded, which until 1981 had relied primarily on government allocations, had to devote more time and resources to ‘marketing’ their programmes to students, who as ‘consumers’ might have access to government scholarships and loans (in addition to family resources) to pay for their tuition”* (2016, 142).

The trend toward domestic marketisation is even stronger for two more reasons. First, not all higher education institutions are eligible to receive institutional funding and, thus, the non-eligible institutions have to rely to a greater extent on tuition fees as the main source of income. Secondly, all post-secondary institutions are eligible for an indirect public funding program, that was created in 1981 to either encourage institutions to compete and attract the ‘best’ students as measured by their admission scores or reward institutions that are already recruiting such students. Consequently, the Chilean higher education system has adopted an aggressive marketing and business procedures to ensure the necessary resources to operate and compete for the best students (Gregorutti et al. 2016, 142-143; Ledesma 2014, 144).

This commercialization approach to attract the best students, however, has not encouraged equal access to the system (see figure 3). Due to high tuition fees, access expanded disproportionately among high school students coming from middle- and upper-income families. Currently one in six students come from the poorest quintile, while four in six come from the richest quintile, showing that private higher education has not closed the gap, and might even perpetuated it (Gregorutti et al. 2016, 149).

Another problem that has arisen due to the transformation of this system, some of its constituting elements of the system have started to show serious signs of exhaustion particularly aspects related to quality and financing issues. As a result, there is a growing number of graduates who cannot afford to pay their debts for paying the tuition fees, creating an important source of pressure for the economic stability of the country (Ledesma 2014, 144).

Due to the legislation that was created by the reform in 1981 and it prohibits for-profit universities, there are certain loopholes in the system that allow private entrepreneurs to profit from education, making education a reasonably lucrative business (Gregorutti et al. 2016, 143). When looking at figure 4, it becomes apparent that from the 50 universities created after 1980, almost 50% is owned by business owners and 20% is owned by politicians that can be linked to the Pinochet government. This is also an indication on how these institutions are managed, since a business owner is more likely to have a more business approach to the management of such an institution. Whereas, politicians linked to the Pinochet government are more likely to focus on status and prestige.

Since the higher education system has been privatized with the reform, education was opened to foreign investors. The reforms were followed by significant private investment from corporations such as Laureate and the Apollo group that have purchased private universities in Chile like Universidad Viña del Mar, Universidad Andres Bello, Universidad de Las Américas Chile, Instituto Profesional AIEP, IACC Profesional institute and Universidad de artes, ciencias y comunicación that are shared on the stock market (Gregorutti et al. 2016, 150; Bellei et al. 2014, 432-433; Laureate, n.d. ; Apollo Education group, n.d.).

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## ASSESSING TRENDS IN CHILEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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When having addressed the higher education systems in Chile and its development, we can now focus on examining the four hypotheses on the higher education system in Chile. The hypotheses were the following:

H1: *HEI's are independent autonomous institutions from neoliberal states and global institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD.*

H2: *HEI's are institutions that depend their existence on the collaboration with corporations to create a capitalist knowledge regime.*

H3: *HEI's are dependent on the position-taking of the elite within that institutions to continue their existence and create higher inequality.*

H4: *HEI's are institutions that function in favor of the public good.*

### 1. Autonomy from neoliberal states and global institutions

When assessing this hypothesis on the case of the higher education system of Chile, it becomes apparent that it has limited support, since the higher education system is definitely influenced by the Washington Consensus that affected the policies of the Chicago Boys. As a result, the reform in 1981 created the neoliberal framework in which the higher education system has to operate in.

It created a foundation in which the higher education system needs to adapt itself financially and structurally. Due to the influence of the neoliberal state and global institutions, the higher education system's budget was reduced, creating the need of finding other ways to supplement the missing flows of revenues to continue to exist. These are, consequently, found in different private stakeholders, such as the students themselves.

### 2. Academic capitalism

When assessing this hypothesis, there is considerably more support and evidence for commercializing the knowledge gained at higher education institutions. Due to the privatization of the education systems and the reduction of public subsidies and resources from the government, the higher education system has to rely on other forms of resources and other manners to increase domestic revenues. The only fund that is available from the government for universities is dedicated to the institutions that attract the best students. As a result, higher education systems are treating the students as consumers of their programs and are marketizing their programs to attract the best students. This is a business approach to promote studies to students, even more so because they are seen as consumers of these study programs.

Furthermore, another way to raise revenues is to raise tuition fees for students. Again, students are seen as consumers that benefit from attending universities and other higher education institutions, is therefore, the legitimate person to pay for its education. However, since not everybody is blessed with a wealthy family, many students from lower to middle socioeconomic background, need student loans to afford and pay for the tuition fees of institutions. This has become a lucrative business for private investors, and as a result, many private institutions have emerged to respond to this demand.

Another commercialization approach that is used in the higher education systems in Chile is that because of the privatization, some private universities are bought by private investors such as

Apollo Education Group and Laureate. These shares are sold on the stock market afterwards. This clearly shows that knowledge is considered as a product that can provide profit flows for these private stakeholders. Therefore, these institutions need to perform and raise profits for its shareholders that influences the domestic income of these institutions.

As a result of the transformation of the higher education systems, as argued by Rodriguez-Ponce et al.: *"It is the market that through competition regulates the quality and relevance of the higher education system and its members"* (authors own translation) (2015, 331). This indeed supports the idea that higher education is managed in a business competition way in which knowledge is seen as a product, and that it on the long run creates a capitalist knowledge regime, rather than favoring the public good with an equal access to higher education.

### 3. Elite reproduction

When assessing this hypothesis, there is relative support for the the position-taking of the elite and elite reproduction in higher education, though this can be seen as a result of the academic capitalist development the higher education system is experiencing. The marketization process of higher education systems to attract the best student to receive funds from the government, has caused institutions to be very selective in the screening process of new students. Especially their performance in high school is extremely important for admission to higher education systems.

However, since these institutions are more likely to attract the ones that had the best education and performed best, it is likely that they are admitting more students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Also, prestige is playing a large role to attract the best students. This became apparent in figure 2, in which 45% of students in 1998, is from the highest SES quintile, and only 4,4 % from the lowest SES quintile. This is very problematic since it shows that inequality might increase due to the uneven distribution of equity of the admission of students.

### 4. Higher education functions in favor the public good

When assessing this hypothesis, there seems to be no support that the higher education system of Chile functions in the favor of the public good, granting a good quality or access to all type of institutions. Since there is a certain elite reproduction in the elite institutions by having extreme screening processes, the access is, thus, not equal for all types of students.

In addition, because study programs are marketized to attract the best students, the equal access to higher education becomes distorted. These institutions only want the best performing students, rather than the average student, which does not favor the public good and grants access to all students.

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

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Having applied the four hypotheses on the higher education system of Chile, it becomes clear that H1 does not fit in the context of the Chilean higher education institutions since these institutions are still dependent of the influence of the neoliberal state and global institutions.

H2 is more likely to fit the profile of Chilean the higher education system. Due to the privatization, institutions are relying more on a business management approach that will bring more revenues to make sure that these institutions continue to exist.

H3 is applicable for the context of the Chilean higher education, nonetheless it is a result of the development of the capitalist knowledge regime that is created after the 1981 reform. Since the marketization and commercialization of higher education led to the implementation of heavy screening processes in which only the best students are attracted, this is a result of higher inequality in Chilean society between the more richer part and lower-middle income part of society that is able to access higher education.

H4 is not very much the case in the context of the Chilean higher education system, since especially the access is not equal for all students. There are certain preferences for types of students when accessing the higher education system, and thus, making the higher education system not functioning in favor of the public good that grants equal access and quality.

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## COLOMBIA

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This chapter will discuss the second case study on Colombia. The chapter is organized as the following: firstly a small historical contextualization on the history of higher education systems in Colombia and other relevant periods in the country is presented. Then, the second section will focus on the organization of the higher education system. Finally, the four hypotheses mentioned in the literature review will be assessed.

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### HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF COLOMBIA

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Regarding the historical contextualization of Colombia, a few elements are important to discuss. Firstly, the fact that Colombia's history is based on much violence between political parties that has shaped the country's path. Indeed, from 1946, the country suffered from a particularly bloody war between the liberal and conservative parties, also known as La Violencia, that only ended in the 1960s.



La Violencia has been especially important for the historical development of the country and its higher education system (Kline 2017, 176).

Before addressing La Violencia, it should be noted that since the independence of Colombia, power struggles have existed over a long time between the liberal and the conservative parties. The liberal party favored free trade and a more restricted role of the Church according to ideas that were based from the Enlightenment, whereas the conservatives advocated for a more traditionalist society with a protectionist economy, a central government, and a more present role of the Church in society. Both parties represented themselves as the opposite of the other party, creating a dichotomy in society. This worsened the divide among members and voters of both parties. Since both parties could not agree on the proper role of the Church, power went back and forth changing the constitution according to their ideology when one got in power (Kline 2017, 176; Rehm 2014, 28).

Additionally, the use of violence in politics in the name of political parties has also been very common since Colombia's independence. As a result, political competition has never been limited to peaceful means. In combination with the societal and political divide between the liberal and conservative parties, it laid the foundation for what later was known as La Violencia (Kline 2017, 176).

In this period of La Violencia, three different phases can be identified. The first phase is concerned regarding the assassination of Jorge Gaitan that resulted in a war between the liberal and conservative parties in 1948. During the fifties, the second phase was characterized as a conflict due to economic and depoliticized reasons. As a result, a military dictatorship took over the country. It was only after the fall of this military dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla that restored the National Front and made an end to the hostilities of both the parties. The third phase of La Violencia is characterized by violence of Los Bandoleros, that later united themselves into the FARC (Schuster 2009, 11).

The military dictatorship started out as an attempt to restore order in the country, with measures that included a pardon and amnesty for political prisoners and restoring the freedom of press. Also, the military government started series of public-works project, improved the credit system for smaller farmers and started an organization that gave clothing and food to poor people. Rojas Pinilla was inspired and patterned himself as Perón in Argentina.

At the beginning of his dictatorship, members of the elite fraction of both parties welcomed Rojas Pinilla, which lasted several years. Although, by the end of his dictatorship, press censorship returned heavily, and most organized groups were opposed to Rojas Pinilla.

By 1957, the leaders of the parties were planning a coalition government, to oust Rojas Pinilla after he announced that he was planning on changing the constitution. In 1958, the coalition was in power, being the most formal and longest coalition that had existed in Colombian political history, known as the National Front. The National Front was an agreement between the liberals and conservative to share power equally by alternating presidency. The agreement lasted for sixteen years

until 1974 and during the presidency of the one party, all the other parties or political actors would be illegal (Kline 2017, 177).

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## HIGHER EDUCATION OF COLOMBIA IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERALISM

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The higher education system of Colombia has over the 50 years increased steadily and has made some significant progress over the last decade (OECD 2016, 246; Acosta and Celis 2014, 465). Total enrollment for higher education has grown steadily during the last decade from 24,4 % in 2002 to 42,2 % in 2012. However, even though enrollment expanded, the enrollment in public institutions has decreased from 72% in 1950 to 32% in 2000 (Acosta and Celis 2014, 465).

The rapid expansion of the higher education system becomes apparent in figure 5 that shows that in 2010, 37% of the youth population between 17 and 21 years has entered a bachelor's degree, whereas in 2017 it has increased to 52%. This figure also shows that there is an increased demand for higher education in the country and that the numbers are still rising (MEN-SNIES 2018).

The rapid expansion in demand for higher education has fueled the emergence of many private higher education institutions and the surge of many different programs offered by these institutions. The range of programs has widened, giving access to an increasing and increasingly diverse, student population (Acosta and Celis 2014, 465-466; OECD 2016, 246).

The emergence of private higher education institutions has to do with at least two reasons. Firstly, the major expansion of private higher education institutions is largely connected with the impact the National Front had on higher education. Despite the growing demand for higher education institutions, the government did not increase the size of the public universities due to student unrest related to the National Front. Some of these public universities were also financially constrained to expand or continue to exist. This often led to the closing of public universities (Patrinos 1990, 164). This is still visible when looking at figure 6, in which the private enrollment of students in higher education systems have expanded with over 61%, and the expansion of enrollment in public institutions has been only 33,9 % over the course of 8 years (MEN-SNIES 2018). Thus, the access to public higher education institutions has been limited, resulting in the expansion of private institutions to provide institutions for the demand for higher education.

Another reason for the rapid expansion of private higher education institutions is connected with the allocation of government budgets for public higher education institutions by a change in the constitution in 1991. Law 30 in 1992 allocated the budget of the state for public higher education institutions. This budget has been remarkably constant over the last 20 years. As a result, public higher education institutions need to operate with worrying budget deficits. As argued by Acosta and Celis:

*“The available funding has mainly been allocated for educational purposes rather than for research; this has prevented institutions from being able to develop more and larger research projects”* (2014, 466). In turn, higher education institutions have been less able to increase their research capacity (Acosta and Celis 2014, 466; Orozco 2005, 5). As a result, due to the financial containment of public institutions, the public institutions could not expand, leaving a vacuum that could be filled with the surge of private institutions. These budget constraints, not only the public higher education institutions, but also the private institutions have to rely almost entirely on the tuition fees to cover their costs (Patrinos 1990, 164).

The higher education systems are divided into three types of institutions of higher education: elite private universities (e.g. Universidad de los Andes, Javeriana and Rosario); the large public universities (e.g. Universidad Nacional); and the low cost, low quality, private and also some public small universities (Patrinos 1990, 163-164). The organization of the higher education system in Colombia poses two special problems: (1) the access of students to higher education institutions and (2) the quality of the higher education institutions.

The problem of access can be found in the fact that the socioeconomic background of the students is highly influential on which type of institutions the students are attending. The elite private universities cater to the wealthy, with only 13,1% of the students come from the lowest 40% of the population income. And since public institutions have not expanded and admittance to private elite institutions is associated with family income, students from lower middle class have to rely on the low cost, low quality institutions. Some of these low-cost higher education institutions are considered to be of poor quality with a lack of sufficient qualified teaching staff, low graduation rates and poor employment rates after the completion of studies (Orozco 2005, 5-7; Patrinos 1990, 164).

The students who have to enter the private institutions and who do not have the financial resources to pay their tuition fees themselves, can rely on student loan programs, also known as ICETEX. This institute provide different types of student loans, depending on the length of the study. It even has special programs for students from remote places in the countryside of Colombia or students who have indigenous heritages or disabled (ICETEX, n.d.; OECD 2016, 246).

When one wants to apply for a loan, there are some requirements one needs to fulfill. As a student you can either choose, a short loan, a middle loan or a long term loan to pay for either just a semester or for your whole study career. In all the three options, you need to have a certain grade that you received when graduating from high school. More interestingly, if you want to apply for the long term loan, you can only do so if classified as stratum 1, 2 or 3 (ICETEX, n.d.) . These strata identify your socioeconomic background and they are based on where you live. This scale counts up to number 6, in which the higher the number on this scale, the wealthier one is considered (Marcos, 2018).

This means that only the poorer students from lower socioeconomic background are able to apply for such a long term student loan, implying that the richer students are not allowed to apply for one. On the one hand, this shows that these richer students need to pay their career themselves, which in the most cases should not be any problem. On the other hand, it means that the students from lower socioeconomic background are more likely to indebt themselves heavily, and that puts pressure on their economic situation after they have graduated. It also puts pressure on the Colombian economy, because if the economic situation appears to not be beneficial, many people will indebt themselves.

This institute presents itself as one that offers a tailor-made perfect student loan depending on the students. However, the problem remains that students need to pay off their debts and the interests that they are being charged are quite high on average between 10% and 15% (ICETEX, n.d.). This might still be a problem for students that come from lower socioeconomic background being able to pay off their debt, especially if one entered an institution of lower quality that not always offer good job perspectives after graduating.

The problem posed to the Colombian higher education system related to quality can be assessed in the following. Law 30 also enforced the position of these higher education systems as autonomous in which the government needs to control the quality of the education, since in the law it is considered to be a public good. It also states, that institutions can organize their programs and staff as they wish, as long as it upholds a certain qualitative benchmark that has been put in place by the government. However, some of these higher education systems are considered to be questionably of poor quality with a lack of sufficient qualified teaching staff, low graduation rates and poor employment rates after the completion of studies. This appears to be especially true for the private institutions that receive a lot of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Orozco 2005, 5-7).

Another issue that has appeared within the Colombian higher education systems regarding the quality of the education, is the lack of graduate doctorate PhD's enrollment. In Colombia in 2012, only 3063 students were pursuing a PhD, which is 0,2% of total higher education enrollment. This becomes a problem, because PhD graduates are a critical factor for enhancing R&D and innovation in a country, especially when they are employed by firms in which they have a significant impact on performance, innovation and the firms' absorptive capacity. In comparison to other Latin American countries, Colombia is lagging behind with the PhD graduates (Acosta and Celis 2014, 468-471). As Acosta and Celis argue: " *This is a rather depressing figure [..]For instance, Brazil annually produces 63 Ph.D. graduates per million people; Mexico produces 24, Chile 23, Argentina 23, and Colombia only 5*" (2014, 469).

## ASSESSING TRENDS IN COLOMBIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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When having addressed the higher education systems in Colombia and its development and challenges it has, we can now focus on examining the four hypotheses on the higher education system in Colombia. The hypotheses were the following:

H1: *HEI's are independent autonomous institutions from neoliberal states and global institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD.*

H2: *HEI's are institutions that depend their existence on the collaboration with corporations to create a capitalist knowledge regime.*

H3: *HEI's are dependent on the position-taking of the elite within that institutions to continue their existence and create higher inequality.*

H4: *HEI's are institutions that function in favor of the public good.*

### 1. Autonomy from the neoliberal state and global institutions

When assessing this hypothesis, in the case of Colombia, there seems to be little support for the autonomy from the neoliberal state and global institutions. Firstly, the neoliberal state is influenced by the neoliberal policies that were promoted by these global institutions. Especially Law 30 implements these policies onto the Colombian higher education, creating a situation in which public institutions receive reduced budgets that constrain these institutions financially. As a result, they cannot develop a sufficient research capacity or expand to the demands of the students due to this dependency on the neoliberal state and global institutions.

### 2. Academic capitalism

When assessing this hypothesis on the Colombian higher education system, there is some support but not exclusively that this hypothesis is present in the Colombian case. Especially, due to the higher demand for higher education, expansion of mostly private institutions and a constant budget for the public institutions, both type of institutions need to rely on tuition fees that are being paid by the students themselves to continue to exist. This is a business approach to education in which knowledge is seen as a product that is sold to its 'consumers' being the students. However, this puts a financial pressure on the future career of these students after graduating.

However, this is the only commercialization of education that can be noticed, making this hypothesis important, but not as visible or present to state that this hypothesis is the case for the whole Colombian higher education system.

### 3. Elite reproduction

When examining this hypothesis on the higher education system of Colombia, this hypothesis is very visible in the Colombian case and holds much support. Especially since there is limited access to public higher education institutions and limited access to the elite private universities, it is almost inevitable for students from lower socioeconomic background to go to a low-quality private university. And since these students need to pay for the full tuition fee, they have to take a student loan. These loans are expensive and put pressure economically on the students after being graduated. Since the lower quality private institutions have such a low quality, they are not well prepared for the labor market. Employing rates are very low after graduating from such institutions. In the meantime, they are given a limited amount of time to pay off the debt these students have accumulated over time.

This, in the long run, will increase inequality and create a reproduction of the elite, because the student from lower socioeconomic background that went to the lower quality private institutions are not able to climb the social ladder. Whereas the students that went to the private elite universities have no debt to pay off and have good employment opportunities. On long term, this will widen the gap between the richest and poorest part of Colombian society.

### 4. Higher education functions in favor the public good

When evaluating this hypothesis on the Colombian case, this is not very much the case. Especially, the two components quality and access are lacking to support that the higher education system of Colombia is functioning in favor of the public good. Regarding quality, there are huge quality differences between the elite private institutions and the other private institutions that affect the future career of the students attending these institutions. Another quality issue that undermines the plausibility of this hypothesis, is the fact that there are not many students pursuing a PhD. This reduces the quality of the research capacity of the higher education system in general. Regarding access, there is no equal access possibility for all students. Since there is limited access to public institutions and to the elite private institutions, the students that are not allowed to these institutions need to go to the lower quality private institutions.

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

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Having applied the four hypotheses on the higher education system of Colombia, it becomes clear that H1 does not fit in the context of the Colombian higher education institutions since these institutions are still dependent of the budget they receive from the government for their existence.

H2 is neither a complete fit for the profile of the Colombian higher education system. Even though, these institutions rely almost entirely on the revenues of the tuition fees, these institutions are not very much led in a business management approach.

H3 is very visible in the context of the Colombian higher education system, since the two problems that become most apparent, access and quality, create that there is a widening gap between students from lower socioeconomic background and students from higher socioeconomic background. This creates as a result higher inequality in Colombian society between the more richer part and lower-middle income part of society that is able to access higher education.

H4 is not present at all, because the higher education system in the Colombian context does not grant equal access and quality for all students. The discrepancies that can be seen between the elite private institutions and the lower quality private institutions is extremely present. Thus, it could be argued that H4 does not represent the higher education system at all.

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## DISCUSSION

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This discussion will reflect on the two case studies discussed above. Firstly, I will summarize the case study on Chile briefly and the case of Colombia. Afterwards, I will compare the both cases and put them in perspective related to the literature.

In the case of Chile, it became apparent that the organization of the higher education after the implementation of the reform in 1981, has had some major challenges that students are facing to enter the higher education system. Due to the fact that the funds of the government are very minimal and selective to the institutions that attract the best students, institutions (private as public) need to marketize their programs. As a result, students are treated as consumers that consume certain study programs. These revenues and funds from the government and revenues from the tuition fees are necessary for the existence of these institutions. It became apparent that H2 is the hypothesis that fits best the situation of Chile, in which higher education is treated with a business style of management and the knowledge produced at these institutions are seen as a product that can become profitable in the future. However, looking at the four hypotheses, H3, the position-taking of the elite, which creates inequality in the long run, is also very visible in the Chilean higher education system, but is a result of the business management approach that higher education systems are pursuing. Since these funds are only given to institutions that attract the best students, less-performing students are being discriminated. Generally, these students will be the students with more financial resources and who have attended the best schools. This will then, in the long term create inequality and the position taking of the elite in these higher education systems will solidify even more. Though, it should be taken into consideration that this is a result of the capitalist knowledge regime that is created by the business style that is being used in the management of institutions.

In the case of Colombia, the organization of the higher education system is interestingly different than that of Chile. Even though privatization has played a major role in the expansion of the supply of higher education institutions, this had not very much led to a business style approach to the management of these institutions, which can be seen in the Chilean experience. Furthermore, what is interesting, is that H3 is more apparent in the Colombian case rather than in the Chilean case. Especially the challenges that the higher education system in Colombia is facing, access and quality, creates a widening gap between the position-taking elite in the elite private institutions. Notably, whereas only the public institutions and elite private institutions have good career prospects for its students after graduating, but have little capacity in the case of public institutions or are very selective in which students are allowed to enter the private elite institutions, creating this widening gap between the more richer students and the less-wealthy students. This puts pressure on these students financially due to the student debt that they have accumulated to enter these institutions, that are of bad quality and do not offer any prosperous future employment prospects. This also widens the inequality gap even more between the rich and the poor and in the long run will create a reproduction of the elite.

When comparing the two cases (see figure 7), it can be concluded that in neither cases H1 is the hypothesis that reflects the situation of both the higher education systems of both countries. This means that these institutions in these higher education systems of both Chile and Colombia are not exclusive from society and do not function absolutely autonomous from the neoliberal state and other global institutions. It can neither be concluded that these higher education systems are organized in a way that it favors the public good by granting equal access and quality (H4). The relation that accordingly can be identified of the two cases, is that both have different relation that is being maintained in its higher education systems. In Chile, there is more emphasis on a business approach to higher education and knowledge is considered as a product (H2). In Colombia, however, the trend is towards an elite reproduction and consequently an increase in inequality (H3). Even though, both the countries are assigned as having a huge potential when considering their higher education systems for delivering professionals to the (global) labor market, it is still only a small part of both these societies that make it that far. This becomes problematic if these countries want to have competitive economies domestically, regionally, and internationally in the long run.

## CONCLUSION

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This thesis is an attempt at understanding the phenomenon of the role of higher education in the knowledge-economy. Do neoliberal reforms promote more inclusive higher education responsive



to labor market needs? This question has been divided to the literature that has been found, in four different hypothesis that were accordingly tested on two case studies, which are Chile and Colombia.

It became apparent that in both cases this is not the case and that there are challenges and issues which these higher education systems face. Especially if this trend can be found in other countries of Latin America or even in other regions, this might be a problematic development that in the end will reduce inclusiveness and leave a lot of citizens out.

Thus, more research is needed in the field of higher education to examine what could be done to improve such systems to be more open and inclusive to everyone in order to pursue a tertiary education. Also, more in-depth research is needed in the role of higher education in the knowledge economy since it is the foundation for the mobility of countries in the global political economy.

Wordcount: 13516

Total wordcount: 14885

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## APPENDIX

Figure 1: Evolution of the higher education system in Chile (Espinoza 2017, 181).

Tipo de institución	1980		1990		2015	
	Número instituciones	Matrícula	Numero instituciones	Matrícula	Número instituciones	Matrícula
Universidades del CRUCH	8	118.978	20	108.119	25	304.577
Universidades Privadas nuevas	0	0	40	19.509	35	341.391
Total Universidades	8	118.978	60	127.628	60	645.968
Institutos Profesionales	0	0	81	40.006	43	373.171
Centro de Formación Técnica	0	0	161	77.774	54	146.515
Total Educación Superior	8	118.978	302	245.408	157	1.165.654
Cobertura (población de 18 a 24 años)	7,5%		15,6%		53,1%	

**Cuadro 1: Evolución del Sistema de Educación Superior chileno (pre grado) en cifras (1980-2015)**

Figure 2: Sources of revenues for publicly funded universities in Chile (1981-2007) (Gregorutti et al. 2016, 142).

Table 3. Sources of revenues for publicly funded universities (1981-2007).

Year	Direct and indirect public support (%)	Tuition* (%)	Sale of services (%)	Loans from private banks (%)	Other income sources** (%)	Total (%)
1981	63.2	13.1	6.5	0.0	17.2	100.0
1985	44.3	22.7	9.7	2.3	21.0	100.0
1987	40.0	23.8	12.3	3.5	20.4	100.0
1990	31.3	26.4	16.6	9.2	16.5	100.0
1992	28.4	24.6	16.2	9.8	21.0	100.0
2007	28.0	25.0	16.0	10.0	21.0	100.0

Notes: \*Tuition payments only include those received from undergraduate students.

\*\*Other income sources include: sales of assets (physical and financial), investment profits, enrolment fees, tuition for graduate studies, special laws and donations from private institutions (philanthropic organisations).

Source: Espinoza (2002, 231); Estadísticas de las universidades del Consejo de Rectores.

Figure 3: Percentage of 18–24 year olds from families in each SES quintile attending higher education in Chile institutions, 1987–1998a (Espinoza 2008, 279).

SES quintile	Year					
	1987	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998
I	2.6	3.0	3.6	3.9	5.1	4.4
II	3.5	5.0	4.7	4.9	8.0	7.6
III	6.6	8.2	7.7	10	12.4	12.6
IV	13.1	13.4	14.3	18.4	22.0	22.9
V	27.6	25.3	26.6	35.8	43.5	45.0

<sup>a</sup> There are no data available before 1987

Source: Personal elaboration based on *CASEN* household survey years 1987, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, and 1998

Figure 4a: Owners of Post-1980 Universities still operating in 2006 in Chile (Barandiaran 2012, 210).

**Table 2** Owners of post-1980 Universities still operating in 2006 (total: 35, some universities contain owners in more than one category)

Source: Elaborated from data from Monckeberg 2007

Business	24
Politicians linked to Pinochet Government	10
Elite religious groups (Opus Dei, Legionaires of Christ)	5
Military	5
Academic groups	3
Jesuits, Salesians and traditional Catholic orders	3

Figure 4b: Owners of Post-1980 Universities still operating in 2006 in Chile in chart (Barandiaran 2012, 210).

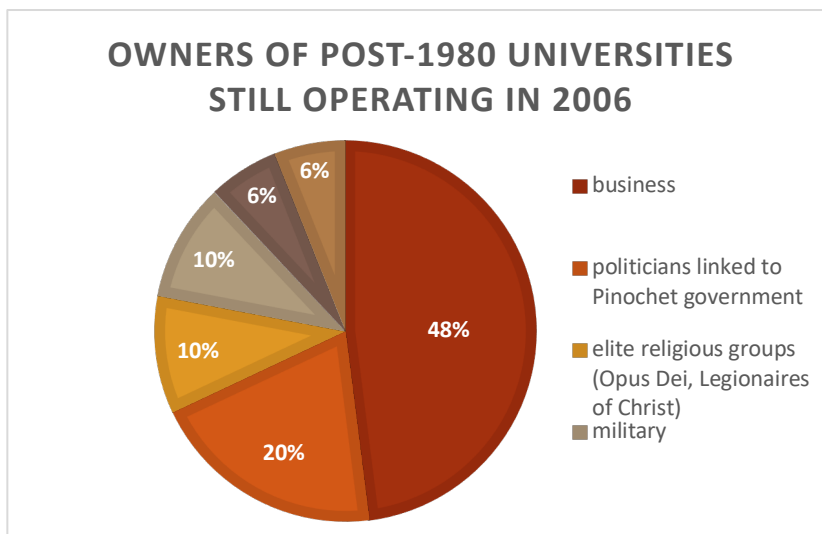


Figure 5: The enrollment rates of bachelor students in the higher education system in Colombia over the whole population between 17 and 21 years , 2010-2017 (MEN-SNIES 2018).

**TASA DE  
COBERTURA  
EDUCACIÓN  
SUPERIOR**

<b>AÑO</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
<b>MATRÍCULA PREGRADO</b>	<b>1.587.760</b>	<b>1.745.983</b>	<b>1.812.500</b>	<b>1.967.053</b>	<b>2.080.440</b>	<b>2.149.504</b>	<b>2.234.285</b>	<b>2.280.327</b>
<b>POBLACIÓN 17 A 21 AÑOS</b>	<b>4.284.916</b>	<b>4.319.415</b>	<b>4.342.603</b>	<b>4.354.649</b>	<b>4.356.453</b>	<b>4.349.823</b>	<b>4.336.577</b>	<b>4.317.994</b>

<b>COBERTURA</b>	37,1%	40,4%	41,7%	45,2%	47,8%	49,4%	51,5%	52,8%
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Figure 6a: Enrollment rates for public and private higher education institutions in Colombia, 2010-2017 (MEN-SNIES 2018).

SECTOR	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>OFICIAL</b>	927.295	995.826	1.017.138	1.089.911	1.142.084	1.167.888	1.194.697	1.241.790
<b>PRIVADA</b>	746.726	863.866	912.449	1.002.980	1.078.568	1.125.662	1.199.737	1.204.524
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.674.021</b>	<b>1.859.692</b>	<b>1.929.587</b>	<b>2.092.891</b>	<b>2.220.652</b>	<b>2.293.550</b>	<b>2.394.434</b>	<b>2.446.314</b>

Figure 6b: Expansion of public and private education in Colombia in percentage (Data from MEN-SNIES 2018; calculation done by author).

	<b>Public higher education 2010-2017</b>	<b>Private higher education 2010-2017</b>
<b>2010</b>	927.295	746.726
<b>2017</b>	1.241.790	1.204.524
<b>percentage</b>	0,339153128	0,6130736

Figure 7: Assessment of the hypothesis for both case studies.

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<b>Chile</b>	<b>Colombia</b>
<i>Hypothesis 1: autonomy from the neoliberal state and global institutions</i>	No	No
<i>Hypothesis 2: Academic capitalism</i>	Yes	Limited support
<i>Hypothesis 3: Elite reproduction</i>	Yes, as a result of H2	Yes
<i>Hypothesis 4: HES that function in favor of the public good</i>	No	No