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Crisis in the Government of our Public Universities

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Abstract

This article is a criticism of the way in which higher education is governed in Mexico, on a federal level and on an institutional level. According to the author, our worn-out political culture, while living through the present difficult moment of historical transition, and facing a most uncertain future, may be headed toward new "surprises" as serious as 1999's prolonged strike at the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). The article proposes an analysis of the characteristics of traditional and deterministic practices, and recommends the abandonment of our present separation between thinking and acting, while reflecting upon action that can facilitate a real transformation of our IES (Institutions of Higher Education). The author calls upon the actors of higher education to regain their ability to create an imaginative, new future, based on those possibilities we can envision as viable. He also calls upon the government, with its educational policies; he says that instead of trying to predict and fantasize about the impossible, it should build highways over which to travel toward this future whose creation must be the result of individual and collective action.

Key words: Higher education, strategic planning, organizational behavior, decision making models.

Introduction

When we speak of government, we embark upon a type of reflection that goes beyond the sphere of science alone, and enters the realm of philosophic, social and even religious questions. There is a close relationship between the reflections we make regarding the act of governing, and the world vision we sustain, explicitly and implicitly. Every empirical study of the world, in this case a study of the ways of conducting human organizations, is done within the context of a larger framework made up of our suppositions about the nature of reality. A vision of the world is not in itself scientific; it is the precondition for specific forms of scientific investigation (Durant, 1999)¹. The predominating vision of the world based on Judeo-Christian suppositions about the harmony and perfection of the natural world is being replaced by a more dynamic vision, one based on the nature of a system controlled by laws of material in motion. In this new vision, opportunities and change have shifted from a mechanistic and causal vision of nature toward a very different vision, like a scene or a theater designed by a scenographer or an architect, for the staging of the activity of human conduct.

In this article we join those thinkers who, like Oscar Wilde in his essay "*The Soul of Man under Socialism*", attribute particular value to the human being as an individual. In other words, we join those who detest all totalitarianism, and who believe in the value of a more human and more fraternal society, more egalitarian, and more respectful of others. All scientific synthesis is an effort to see total reality in its most objective terms. But the visions of reality that emerge from science are not scientific; that is to say, they are not subject to scientific verification. This explains to us why many interpretations of what is happening today differ so greatly among themselves, contrast, or are in conflict with each other. It has to do with interpretations closer to philosophy than to the sciences.

This work was written in a country of the so-called First World, but has its attention and sympathy centered on a Latin American country whose population sold or lost its collective soul as a result of the bad government of a corrupt political class. This class, in the form of an all-powerful political party, has created and permeated a highly contaminating political culture, propped up by a social elite produced by a failed revolution, as powerful as it is decadent. Furthermore, it has been maintained during the present century by *ways of doing things* whose mechanisms and bureaucracy today, at the end of the millennium, are far from the virtues attributed to free enterprise. The scene is a world, which for better or for worse, is completely immersed in the "information era", marked by computer-assisted innovation, by growing competition and by automatized international markets where money and its products move unchecked by international boundaries.

We live in a moment of historical transformation, characterized by a bipolar conflict between techno-economic globalization and socio-cultural identity. The social and spatial consequences of these transformations are just beginning to be seen; however, the ways in which we work, consume and live are already changed. On the

international scene, both in institutions and in other places, the power of central governments is decaying. The same thing is happening on a national level, and in the institutions of higher education. Little by little, universities have expanded their relationship with multilateral institutions, and are accommodating themselves more and more to national and international inter-institutional agreements. The schools and centers that make up each institution of higher learning are acquiring greater strength in their tendency toward decentralization. This tendency is growing as local administrative bodies are able to exercise a certain independence, with greater power for negotiation, representation, and strategic initiative. There is a growing recognition of the fact that decentralized governments are more able to navigate these floods of information and resources. They are also more capable of connecting themselves with the diversity of their actors, and of representing the interests of their teachers, administrators and students. The central government, at every level, from the SEP (Department of Public Education), to the IES, and including the state governments, has become too large to handle daily and specific needs; control of finances; interaction with other departments and agencies; production and information. In the midst of today's federal crisis regarding political legitimacy, there is a growing distance between persons and institutions, and this, just when the public sector should be active and supported, in order to counterbalance the undesirable effects of the forces of market and financial turbulence.

Faced with this dynamic of social and spatial transformation, the intellectual groups that comprise the foundation of public administration and general planning, particularly in education, have become obsolete. However, the problems confronting both decision-makers and planners are more important than ever, and the accumulated repertory of capabilities and proficiencies, in professional practice as well as in the academic field, continues to have value and importance. Now at stake is the ability of planners and their mentors to renew their thinking, their field of knowledge and their methods. As well, they must distance themselves from an outdated vision of the world, centered on an imposition of vertical politics; an excess of legislation and regimentation; a belief in models of growth and organization; the possibility of predicting social patterns; the legitimacy of national governments; and the long-term benefits of economic growth with social and environmental limits produced by a basically patriarchal worldview.

The danger for those who study and teach public administration, e.g. in schools for planners, lies in meeting this transformation in a defensive way. As in all the major processes of social change today, there are extraordinary opportunities opening up. We should take advantage of these, since serious costs are implied for those institutions and individuals that cannot or will not exercise the self-criticism necessary for change. Many academics resist change by falling back on speculations about cultural resistance, re-vamping antiquated concepts, or burying themselves in processes of reflection, where the matter of government and planning becomes a goal in itself, rather than a useful medium of action. Meanwhile, in the professional world, the hard reality of bureaucracies, politics and markets leaves very little room for intellectual escapism. Then again, in the academic field of public administration and planning, the construction of fantasy worlds of abstract categories becomes an attempt

to replace the difficult task of re-inventing transformational and creative procedures in an ever-more-complex real world.

Today, more than ever, the re-statement of higher education and the formation of policies, as well as the concept of democratic planning, is part of the necessary reform. There must be a confrontation of the explosive problems—economic and social, as well as those of physical space—emerging in systems and institutions around the world, and brought on by the impact of the “information era.” To be prepared for this task, planning must reconstitute its analysis tools, not try to produce new *theories*; its task should be, rather, to focus on its specific object, ways of organizing research, teaching processes, links with private and public sectors, extension and community service, and the development and transmission of new knowledge. As Manuel Castells puts it (1998), “planning is a profession, not an academic discipline; it is a tradition of professional work, not an ideological goal of rationality.” Educational planning has been nourished by a variety of academic disciplines: sociology, history, economy, anthropology, engineering, psychology, mathematics, philosophy, and even art and literature. Its strength has been, and continues to be, its interdisciplinary character which opens a wide space in which to deal with new affairs. This character makes possible the fabrication of new tools with those materials at hand, with no need to surrender the normative vision to that technical rationality which acts as a tether for academic disciplines even today. Planning moves freely across many boundaries in order to think, design and plan. Its purpose provides it with a powerful and empirical definition of its object: dealing with questions having to do with values, attitudes, cultural identity, organization, processes. Planning is concerned with a wide range of affairs. Some appear in the daily life of institutions and the concerns of governments, along with more general concerns occurring today around the world; these are:

1. The problem of the quality of education. This has to do with the importance of creating a sustainable environment in each institution. We are conscious of the great damage caused by education’s out-of-control growth in mass. One strategy for unity between the generations—that is, between ourselves and our children, between teachers and students—requires an extraordinary effort to improve educational quality, analogous with environmental quality, which is always territorially specific.
2. A second fundamental is the planning of an infrastructure to complement the process of advancing knowledge on the planet, as well as improving, adapting or transforming the arid infrastructural design we have inherited from the last few decades.
3. The reconstruction of cultural meaning in educational forms and processes, which constitutes a new frontier for planning. In a world noted for abstract flows of information, and characterized by the uprooting of culture and the gaining of new experience by means of virtual reality, it is important that we recover a sense of identity in the places where we study and work.

4. Actual decentralization toward entities of local and regional decision-making, of administration, participation and representation, requires a serious reconfiguration of local and state institutions prone to parochialism, corruption and petty politics.

What kind of decentralized institutions can adjust themselves to the information era? How can they be connected with each other so as to be at the same time local and global, and how can planning be renovated from this perspective? This has to do with a larger field of thought and organizational design, which must be related with the characteristics of the territories where these institutions are rooted. I am writing then for an inquirer filled with fatigue and great political indignation, lacking dependable political options, in a society whose politicians, the decision-makers, still base their conduct on rituals, on empty discourse with room for neither protest nor criticism. I am addressing a situation extending to the academic world, the seedbed of future decision-makers, aggravated recently by a strike that paralyzed the continent's largest university, a strike without precedent in the history of higher education in Latin America. On the subject of this fatal legacy which defies every attempt at criticism, I am trying to give practical and useful means of explaining the previously-mentioned "ways of doing things" from the viewpoint of higher education and Mexico's public universities.

The need for change in the Institutions of Higher Education

All over the world, universities find themselves in a very different situation from the prevailing one of only a few years ago. The expansion of the sphere of knowledge and its connection with the productive dynamic presents them with innumerable problems in maintaining their identity as institutions of wisdom and culture (Gago, 1993).

In the same way, Mexico's universities, particularly the public ones, are living through a revolution without their being truly aware of it yet. To use a comparison made by Keller in his book "Academic Strategy" (1983), it has to do with a profound change similar to the one which impacted the small religious schools of the early nineteenth century, creating an era of new universities and educational institutions. It is a change which brings confusion and pain in circles of higher education. This time we are not speaking of a crisis like that of the eighties, when worsening of financial conditions bulldozed us into the worst and longest in educational quality in this country's contemporary history. We are dealing with other forces—perhaps less easily perceived, but powerful—which propel us toward other changes. Basically, these forces are two: 1) those which displace the university as the formative site for the whole human being, toward the urgencies and new demands of a society trapped in an unjust economic model, making it increasingly less relevant to a clientele which the institutions seem to forget: the students. And 2) those which seek changes which would brake the dehumanization of the university, and permit the recovery of its ability to illuminate and shape persons committed to a search for truth.

What response are the universities giving to the changes forced upon them by circumstances? On the one hand, there is an immense proliferation of institutions of higher education (IES), all seeking their place in the market of educational supply and

demand. On the other hand, the public universities are struggling to overcome this commercial vision, and to maintain themselves as accessible environments for society, as educators of a whole and complete person. There are many forces trying to transform the university into one model or another. Certain sectors of society see the university as acting against their interests. A central weapon used against one side or another, is organizational change in the private sector, a tool designed to confront the threats and opportunities of the marketplace. This is a double-edged sword which we will attempt to analyze.

Some of those who study academic organizations (Baldrige 1971; March and Simon 1958; Cohen & March, 1977), have called the universities “organized anarchies”, and have compared their processes of administration, planning, and decision-making to a “garbage can”. Today, the Mexican public university's growth in mass, and deterioration in quality is such that the prevailing university model—shaped by anarchistic, arbitrary, indolent groups upheld by a small contingent of committed people in charge of exalting the institution—finds itself, if it continues this way, on the road to a rapid collapse. The federal government—which exerts so strong an influence on the Mexican university—in reaction to the situation of university deterioration, implemented new initiatives in its political strategies for higher education two decades ago. The formulation and introduction of these policies will be the raw material for this critical analysis. The public university, for its part, has begun to shake off the rejection and disdain it had for financial planning and strategic administration. Although the authorities are still ruled by traditional and archaic forms of governing, many university teachers have formed communications and study networks, and devote themselves to the task of designing new game rules for the university. These rules will have an influence on the formation of new directive bodies. Sooner or later they will also lead to the structuring of priorities, plans and programs to improve their washed-out academic quality.²

The construction of new knowledge and personnel educated with greater consciousness of self, can carry the universities to a period of greater achievements instead of the massive decadence to which today's inertia is taking them. These changes also serve as an answer to the requirements of the federal government, in an evolutionary period when there is a demand for the government to assume and assimilate the real significance of the policies of the last few decades. If the university aspires to success within the new spirit of “modernization” that Mexico is experiencing as part of a new world, it must first resolve a basic dilemma. This problem is that in order for the university to get out from under government control, including the tendency toward bureaucratism and hyper-regimentation, so that it can gradually abandon its evasive routines and habits of low production, the institution must begin to use its autonomy not as a defensive shield, but rather as a sovereign space inside which to redefine itself, its form of government, its mission, its values, its identity, its learning capacity, and above all, its ability to change.

Functionaries in upper-level management of Mexico's upper-level education still seem to be failing with regard to the debatable objective of *modernizing* the institutions, if we understand by *modernizing* the inclusion of game rules which value productivity and

efficiency more than things like reflection and evaluation. In this work we maintain that the labor of government not only fails because of its policy content, but also because of the weakness of the governmental tools used, in concept as in application. In other words, the success or failure of policies in higher education does not depend on their content, but rather on the personal and institutional ability of the system or the organization which carries them out. We may venture the assertion that it is not education that finds itself in crisis today, but rather a particular style of government in education, in the federal environment as well as in the private institutional. This point of view we are going to try to outline and analyze in this work. In any case, the key to understanding why the institutions of higher learning in Mexico find themselves in their present situation, lies not in the decision-makers and their thinking ability, but rather in their inability to integrate thought and action. Taking these statements as a starting point, and going on from there, we believe that the appropriate leadership or government of a sector like that of higher education (or of any of the multiplicity of institutions making it up), does not depend on its directors, but instead, on what develops in the academic life of the institution—that is, in the dynamic of the debate between the different groups struggling to take the institution in one direction or another. When these groups or actors, who live in the different organigrams and structure of our institutions, are left out, with no capacity to exercise power (in sum, they form no part of the government or they do it symbolically), it is necessary for the authorities to revise their assumptions, question their methods, re-state their frames of knowledge and the models they are trying to impose. How to achieve this? One way is to confront those employing an obsolete cultural policy, with arguments which will lead them toward the self-evaluation they evade. These thoughts are an attempt to orient the reader interested in themes emanating from the government of higher education, toward such self-evaluation—without which it is impossible to continue learning.

Based on these very simplified premises, we hold that what we cannot understand through the theory of the organizations, the institutional analysis, and the normative, rational planning which dominated (and in great measure continues to dominate) the thinking of the last few decades, we can learn today from advances in the area of public administration, and from a critical but studious vision of a new way of looking at government, its policies and the role played by planning in this wide field. To make academic administration an effective instrument for change, those academics who are being trained to assume positions as university leaders, and those who now hold such positions, must add to their repertoire of knowledge and to their vision of the university. They must add a better understanding of the theories of knowledge they themselves use in their administrative and academic practice. As well, they must recognize the necessity of learning, and not as a cultural aggregate obtainable in seminars, congresses or self-improvement programs. They must recognize it as an internal, epistemological break leading one to question one's own principles, so as to develop a greater consciousness of the variety of models assumed by the conduct of academic organizations and the role played in them by new administration and leadership.³

An educational policy concept is the take-off point for reaching the concept and vision of government. There are many definitions of *policy*. The classic definition of *policy* is “the

series of explicit orientations that serve as a base for the plans of the authorities, at whatever level, for the achievement of consistent results as to the missions and goals of the government or the organization". However, there is no one definition, and "policy" can mean many things. For some, a policy implies an ideology, the theory on which the conduct of the institution is based; that is to say, a vision or a perspective; while for others, a policy is a tactic, a maneuver to conquer our enemy. It is, in other words, a strategy or a *stratagem*. Like a coin, a policy always has two sides:

- It gives direction, course (but in giving this, it also limits, because it closes off other possible paths).
- It helps travel in a certain direction (but it can impede or discourage looking toward the side, or looking in other directions).
- It concentrates forces, promotes coordination, (but it diminishes peripheral vision).
- It defines the organization, gives it identity, clarity, meaning, suitable forms of understanding what the organization does, (but in defining it so very concretely, it simplifies it, stereotypes it, diminishes the rich complexity of the system, its multiple facets of identity, potential or hidden).
- It gives consistency, reduces ambiguity, it puts things in order. It is like the theory which helps to simplify and explain the world, facilitating action (but it reduces the creativity arising in the imprecise areas of the indefinite and the inconsistent).

In spite of such contradictions, the danger of the policies emitted in one place for application in another, is that they distort reality by diagramming it in pronouncements, declarations, words, theories. It is well to remember that policies, like theories, are not reality; they are representations of reality—in the same way that organizations are not their organigrams nor their constitutions, nor their legislation nor list of procedures. Policies cannot be seen nor touched; for this reason, they become distorted. In studying the pros and cons of policies one may think that it is as well for them to exist as not to exist, especially when instead of being formed in the life of an institution or a nation, they are formulated by a few so that they may be followed by many.

The thought-action dichotomy in the government of higher education

In our hierarchical political culture (of submission and obedience, understood as loyalty and discipline) where investiture is everything, there is a tendency to see in the highest-ranking executive (President, Minister, Vice-secretary, Director, Chancellor, etc.) the strategist who, situated in the highest sphere, produces and interprets great ideas, so that others may develop them, put them into practice, "occupy themselves with the details". Neither of the two occurs: high-level directors are not strategists, nor are the subordinates able to put the ideas into practice. The lack of vertical communication in our system, evident in management offices (to which is added the lack of horizontal communication), turns little details, unspecified in the policies, into the actual, central part of the daily reality lived by the subordinates. These little details become more important than the managerial statement itself. The printed mandates in official documents do not get to those their authors take for granted they will reach. So we see

how the policy remains under discussion, or in the document, whose force is lost the moment it comes off the press, and before it finds its place on the bookshelf. This happens because in our environment there is still a predominating concept of “policy formulation”, as a conceptual process similar to the designing of a project. The directors devise their policies with the same attitude as an architect prefiguring a house or building. In doing so, they confuse “policy” with “concept”.

For example, in the Under Department of Higher Education, a group of experts, called together by the highest authority, the Under Secretary, meets to put together a policy whose objective is to better the quality of the IES. For this they meet in a place, they sit around a table, and they come up with a program for promoting the improvement of teachers in the public universities. It has to do with a vision which conceives of the formulation of policies as a design—the design for a project. The Latin-American version of this concept of normative planning, also known as rational comprehensive, has roots in CEPAL (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) and ILPES (Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning). The concept came out of Washington, half a century ago, and it had not changed much, decades later, when it was promulgated as “strategic planning”, this time promoted from Boston, by the School of Business Administration of Harvard University. This model, widely popularized as SWOT (*Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats*), put forth a planning method based on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of an organization. It is a deliberate process of conscious thought, assumed to be “rational”, located at the level of decision-making, where the person in command is the strategist-architect. Following this model and the preceding example, the Vice-Secretary confers power upon a group of experts, following an institutional logic (complying with the legal policy which includes ANUIES [National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education], CONACYT [National Council of Science and Technology], etc.) led by a prestigious person (whom the Vice-secretary trusts). When this happens, the other actors making up the sector, many of whom will be subject to the said program, are relegated to subordinate roles. Along with this, other groups formed in a similar manner draw up other policies that will also take the form of important federal programs, such as FOMES (Fund for the Modernization of Higher Education), *Carrera Docente* (Merit pay programs for faculty members), etcetera. None of these groups have any real communication with each other. The role of prioritization, synchronization and coordination, if it exists as such, occurs at the top of the pyramid. There are no meetings among the work groups, nor are there any on the multiple levels which form the base of this great pyramid. This type of model or work method requires a simplifying process in policy-making, since, in its verbalization, it should be straightforward, easy to understand, capable of being reduced to a few “executive cards” (a common type of instrument in our political culture where concepts and ideas are reduced to their minimal form of expression). Things happen in this way, and in no other, because the program, practically controlled by just one whole mind (in this case that of the functionary with enough authority), must take care that its formulation does not cross over the fine line separating formal analysis from intuition or subconscious, and must maintain this form, its “rational” quality.

What matters to those in charge is the specific situation, the fact that within certain time limits and using certain resources, effective ways of helping to “better the quality” of the institutions or carry out a “more reasonable distribution of resources”, in order to achieve social “equity” or “pertinence”, etc., must be found. The situation is not seen as a complex system of general variables; it is not registered in the variety of situations presented by the environment of higher education. Policies generated in this way are designed to meet an objective, without bothering much about their content and their possible impact on other dimensions of the same reality, or about the typology of the institutions, very different among themselves, although belonging to the same “system”: technological schools, public universities, etc. The effort is spent on the creation process, on drawing up a comprehensible document for the approval of the directors, (who are the first to read it, and who must understand it) so that the community—those responsible for putting it into action—may automatically comply with it. This type of policy takes the form of a total, broad concept which leaves little room for changes. A type of mandate similar to a “Biblical” formula, made explicit in modern tables of the law, documents, manuals, visual presentations, etc. The policies thus conjured up neither evolve nor are they discussed; they are not formed, they are formulated. This explains why once they are written and published, there occurs a period of legitimization, dissemination and “educative” process, (people have to understand what is wanted, because it is assumed that once it is understood, it will automatically be accepted). The supposition is that only training is needed in order for the policy to be understood and introduced. It is the brand-new moment in which communication (vertical and horizontal) until that instant practically inexistent, appears as a necessity. It is the time to organize “participation forums”, “seminars”, so that the prescriptions may be heeded. For this reason, the policies must be predigested—made explicit—so that they may be easily disseminated and converted into activity, into action. It has to do with a model where one thinks first in order to act later.

What are the problems with this type of formulation? Developed in the faraway offices of the directors, by an inaccessible group of “experts”, they deny or annul important aspects of the formation of policies. This type of formulation sees the incremental development of policy as a problem, not as an enrichment process. It pays no attention to the possibility that “emerging policies” may arise. The influence that the existing institutional structure can exercise on policy is seen as a disadvantage, as a bother or as a barrier. It omits the participation of the different actors whom that policy will affect. What characterizes this *modus operandi*, predominant in Mexico, is the central role played by conscious thought (as thought which precedes action); therefore the partition practiced by the system or organization divides the labor of those who *think* from that those who *do*. The idea that thought is independent of action, where the policy is a concept and not a learning process, sets its good intentions at a distance and rigidifies every process of negotiation (Schön y Rein, 1994). Moreover, it makes evident the difference between the politicians as “expert thinkers” situated above the directors, and the rest of the actors as “acting subordinates”, (potentially guilty of misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and introduction or non-introduction of the policy).

This is clearly illustrated in the fact that the method starts out by evaluating “strengths and weaknesses”. Who knows what is the strength and what the weakness of an institution? It is difficult for an individual or a group to arrive at this type of “diagnosis”. The 1999 chancellor of the UNAM (Autonomous National University of Mexico), protagonist and victim of this type of political thinking, repeated ten years later, what the ex-chancellor, Dr. Jorge Carpizo, had attempted by strictly applying this procedure of strategic business planning (SWOT) in his endeavor to change the UNAM. Both men formulated policies based on conscious, verbal and written thought. The document “Strengths and Weaknesses of the UNAM”, unleashed the movement which led to the resignation of the chancellor. At the time this essay was being written, Dr. Barnés was enduring the longest strike in UNAM history. It is easy to imagine the group of authorities assembled, reading the “executive cards” written by the “expert assessors”, listing the strengths and weaknesses of the institution or the new fees to be paid by the students. But, who can say that the problem lies with those policies and not others, without having really discussed them with the community?⁴

Every policy implies moving toward new experience, taking a step into the unknown. If this is so, then one cannot be safe and sure. One cannot promote a change from inside the secure shelter of narrow collegiate organs in institutions where representation is questionable, in the same way that one cannot promote a federal program from inside the central offices, as if from that vantage point we could know the multiple reality of our institutions beforehand. Experience tells us that the structures of the IES are neither easily manageable nor flexible. Changes do not come in sequences. Changes are interactive, they happen in a zigzag manner, they are dialectic. One thing influences another, from behind to before, or vice versa. The idea of “let’s create a policy, and then work out all the details for putting it into action” is not possible in a changing environment. No plan is certain and definitive. The organization goes on functioning while the policy we are trying to make into a plan is being formulated. The factors that make up this functioning come from multiple directions; they happen along the way: internal decisions, external events, relationships of power and conduct, technical and informational needs, actions of intelligent opponents, and so forth. The policy we want to convert into a Plan of Institutional Development (PID) assumes that the institution will wait for it, or tries to detain the institution so that the planning office can orchestrate it at the precise, impossible moment. The resulting plan is a printed document containing explicit objectives, strategies, actions, resources, etc. Explicitness in a policy once more closes our peripheral vision. This vision does not speak of how, or when not to make a policy explicit. It makes the same error; it separates formulation from implementation, which is the same as separating thinking from acting.

Our future is most uncertain, and many new surprises await us. This does not imply that it may be impossible for us to govern better, to plan better—unless we intend to continue with traditional, determinist practices, embedded in predictability, which has already been shown to be obsolete. A good government precedes and presides over *actino* (Matus, 1988). It does not hold back in the moment of truth, in thinking, in making diagnoses and studying so as to know what is going on. It governs to *create* the future, not to fantasize and try to predict it, since the future is and always will be

unknown to us. But "good government", for lack of a better name, is that which prepares itself to try to create the future, with imagination, but based on the possibilities that we are able to see as achievable, to discover as desirable. If we act as if something is going to happen, then that something has a greater chance of occurring. We speak then of betting on the future, on specific futures. Although we cannot control the results of our actions, we can indeed *influence* them. Then, instead of predicting, we must construct roads upon which to travel better. But it must be I, myself, as an individual, as part of a collective, designing and building it as I go. Not on the map, but on the land, with its intricate geography and its unevenness, planning in the field of action, together with those who know the terrain and who change it by their daily action.

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¹ In his critique of John C. Greene's book "Debating Darwin", New York Times Review of Books, July 11, 1999. p. 28.

² At the moment, RISEU and GRUDEO are two networks outstanding in this sense. Riseu, Network of Researchers in Higher Education, can be found at riseu@servidor.unam.mx; Grudeo is the Study Group on Organizations, based at the UAM of Ixtapalapa, aeo@xanum.uam.mx.

³ This work is inspired by Henry Mintzberg's last book entitled "*Strategy Safari*" (1998). The book is highly didactic; it is a textbook, schematic and simple, which delineates ten visions defining the evolution of thought in reference to the formulation of strategies in the world of business administration (which we translate as "policies" in the field of public administration). I adapt these ten visions to education with new labels: the formulation of new policies, such as:

- 1) the process of conceptualization (design or project),

- 2) the process of the formal process of planning (plan),
- 3) the process of identity analysis (positioning),
- 4) the process of the leader's vision/mission (company),
- 5) the process of knowledge in the mind of the board of directors (mind),
- 6) the process of organizational learning (adaptation),
- 7) the process of negotiation (power),
- 8) the process of collective cooperation (culture),
- 9) the process of reaction to the environment (ecology),
- 10) the process of configuration, transformation and change (situation).

The first three are eminently prescriptive; they concentrate on the "out to be", (as it should be formulated, more than how they are formulated). The following two are individual descriptives (they describe how, in fact, the directors formulate the policies). The last five are group descriptives, wherein the policies are described as emerging processes (the processes are formulated slowly, step by step, while the organization adapts or learns), as a negotiation process between forces, as a collective and cooperative process, as a reactive process, and last, the situational as an integrative combining process which seeks strategic change.

⁴ According to Carlos Matus's concept of "situation", what can be seen as a problem for the upper-echelon executive may be an opportunity for someone of another level or playing another role; what can be taken as a weakness might be a strength from another point of view. The situation will be the result of how we define what is a problem, or in this case what is a weakness or a strength.