

# THE REVITALIZATION OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF MEXICO CITY IN THE EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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## Resumen

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Este trabajo hace un seguimiento de las tendencias de la expansión de la educación superior en la zona metropolitana de la ciudad de México en la última década, poniendo especial atención al comportamiento de las instituciones privadas, identificando aquellas que han logrado posicionarse en el mercado educativo debido a la proliferación de sus planteles y a la ampliación de su población estudiantil de licenciatura atendida.

### Palabras clave:

- Expansión educativa
- Matrícula
- Universidades privadas
- Zona metropolitana de la ciudad de México

## Abstract

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This study tracks the trends of the expansion of higher education in Mexico City's metropolitan area over the last decade, paying particular attention to the behavior of private institutions, identifying those that have achieved a position in the education market due to the proliferation of their campuses and the expansion of the student population served.

### Key words:

- Educational expansion
- Enrollment
- Private universities
- Mexico city's metropolitan area

## Introduction

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Toward the end of 1998, the *Revista de la Educación Superior* (Journal of Higher Education), published by the Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior (ANUIES, National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education), printed an article that conducted an analysis on the evolution of the higher education system in Mexico City's metropolitan area (MCMA), from 1982 to 1997, where we outlined the privatization process of education in Mexico (Garay, 1998). Thirteen years have since passed and we consider it an appropriate time to look back at what has happened. In particular we want to update three cases, namely: the number of public or private institutions, the development of undergraduate student enrollment in both cases, and look at what happened to the subsystem of private institutions. The 1997 to 2009 period is analyzed because the ANUIES Statistical Yearbook was most recently published in 2009.

It is worth pausing for a moment to reflect on some of the key elements that characterize the higher education system context during those years. First, it should be emphasized that Mexico saw a momentous political change in 2000. Vicente Fox triumphed as the National Action Party (PAN) candidate in the presidential federal elections which ended more than seventy years of Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) rule. However, PAN's triumph, known for its conservative and Catholic tradition, was seen by large sections of analysts as ensuring the prevalence of the neo-liberal government project that began in 1982, with Miguel de la Madrid, then followed by Carlos Salinas and Ernesto Zedillo, thus many were concerned, and deservedly so, that in the field of higher education we would see a continuation of public policies that would encourage the advancement of private higher education. In fact, during the months between Vicente Fox's election and inauguration, Rafael Rangel Sostmann, a member of his transition team, then Rector of the Tecnológico de Monterrey, and following his appointment as coordinator of the educational team, seemed poised to become the next Secretary of Public Education (SEP). However, that position proved to be one of the most contested. PAN's leadership, through Felipe Calderón, sent their own proposal for the position to the then President-elect: Efraín González Morfín. His trajectory, as the party's ideologue and former presidential candidate, gave clear indication of the weight PAN awarded to the position. Late but loud, through public relations appeared yet another candidate: Reyes Tamez Guerra, then Rector of the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, who at last was to take the position throughout all six years of the Fox administration.

Unlike in PAN's first six year term, so far in the Felipe Calderón Administration, two officials, who did not come from the educational sector, have been in charge of the Education Secretariat. First Josefina Vazquez Mota, who had been the Social Development Secretary in the previous six years and only lasted two years and four months as the Education Secretary, being then

replaced by Alonso Lujambio who has remained in office until the time of writing.

Second, we must remember that in 2000, the Mexican left wing Democratic Revolution Party (PRD), ensured their hold on Mexico's capital, the Federal District, with the triumph of Andrés Manuel López Obrador as Mexico City's head of government, who just months after taking office in April 2001, decreed the creation of the Autonomous University of Mexico City (UACM) under an academic model radically different from those prevailing in the rest of Mexico's public universities, for example its admission mechanism for undergraduate applicants consists of a draw before a public notary instead of an exam. The UACM got its autonomy granted in December 2004.

Third, it is worth mentioning the role ANUIES played in the process of the change of Presidency in 2000. During 1998 and part of 1999 ANUIES prepared a comprehensive document about the future of higher education in Mexico, that after extensive discussion within its governing bodies, was finally approved at the end of 1999. ANUIES, as the 'spokesperson' on behalf of the higher education institutions in the country, was poised before the change of government. The ANUIES document titled Higher Education in the twenty-first century. Strategic guidelines for development turned into the guidelines for sectorial public policy during Vicente Fox's Presidency, and remains a relevant document in future policy discussion, in part because during the PAN's first six year term, Julio Rubio Oca, the head of the then Department of Higher Education and Scientific Research, today Department of Higher Education, was ANUIES's Executive Secretary during the final years of President Zedillo's term. Previously, before ANUIES, Rubio Oca was the General Rector of the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana. The Higher Education Program 2001-2006 is based largely on the previously mentioned ANUIES policy document.

Fourth, we cannot ignore the student strike that paralyzed the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) from April 1999 to February 2000. A movement that rose in opposition to the attempt of Francisco Barnés, then UNAM's Rector, to implement a new General Regulation of Payments (RGP), which involved, among other measures, increased fees for undergraduate and graduate students. The strike forced Barnés to resign by the end of 1999. The new Rector, Juan Ramón de la Fuente, former Health Secretary under the administration of President Zedillo, introduced in January 2000 the so-called institutional proposal to lift the strike, which definitely avoided the RGP and called for a university congress to discuss the General Rules of Registration and Examination, which dated from 1997, among other issues. It must be noted that after eight years as Rector, De la Fuente did not fulfill his promise of holding such congress, and the current Rector, Jose Narro, does not seem interested in doing anything of the like. The long strike that paralyzed UNAM, and had negative effects on the public image of public education ended with the intervention of the Federal Preventive Police in February 2000.

Fifth, based on the analysis presented by ANUIES, from which many of its proposals were incorporated into the sectorial educational programs during

Vicente Fox's presidency, and now Felipe Calderon's, particular emphasis has been placed on the expansion of coverage with equity and quality. To that end, during the last ten years the federal government has been given to the task of expanding the technological institutes subsystem, creating dozens of facilities across the country, creating more universities of technology, and opening a new subsystem of polytechnical universities and intercultural universities, created during the Fox administration. More recently, since 2007, the creation of a "Fund for Increasing Enrollment in Higher Education at the State Public Universities" in order to expand their enrollment for which from 2007 to 2010, 3.6 billion pesos have been allocated.

Sixth, a key policy, and unprecedented in Mexico, has been the National Program of Scholarships for Higher Education (PRONABES), which was created in 2001 to support economically disadvantaged youth with good academic performance who are studying Higher University Technician, Associate Professional, or Bachelor's degrees in public higher education institutions. The ongoing program, now reaches 15.7% of enrollment, which has shown itself to be an excellent public policy instrument to reduce academic lag and dropout (SEP, 2010).

## Institutions

Although this paper aims to analyze the period 1997 to 2009 (hereafter period 2), we will also refer, albeit partially, to what happened between 1982 and 1997 (hereafter period 1), to emphasize some of the profound changes that we found between the two periods. Let's start with the number of institutions. In 2009 there were 208 higher education institutions (HEIs) in the MCMA offering degree programs, 79 more than in 1997, 170 private and 38 public (Table 1). However, while in 1982 the proportion of private schools was 80.9%, in 1997 it had risen to 87.6%, by 2009, the percentage of private HEIs shrank back to 81.7%, returning to a similar proportion to that which existed at the beginning of President's Miguel de la Madrid term.

**Table 1**  
**Higher Education Institutions in MCMA. By Regime. 1997-2009**

	1997		2009	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Public	16	12.4	38	18.3
Private	113	87.6	170	81.7
Total	129	100.0	208	100.0

Source: Author's with data from ANUIES Statistical Yearbooks

The main growth in public institutions was primarily due to the creation of various facilities in the technological subsystem under the auspices of the federal or Estado de México governments, as well as the creation of the UACM, which we previously referred to. For their part, the private sector did not cease to open new institutions at a rate similar to what occurred in period 1, when 58 HEIs were created compared to the 57 created in Period 2.<sup>1</sup> In addition, several universities that had already established their presence with the previous expansion of more branches during period 1 continued to expand in the MCMA as is the case with the Universidad del Valle de México (UVM) and the Universidad Tecnológica de México. Even the UVM embarked on major campus building in various regions of the country reaching 35 campuses in 2009, just below Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM). The latter, added to its 32 traditional campuses, the technological Tec-Milenio Project, started in 2002, which reached 33 facilities in 2009, which positioned the private institution as the one with the largest number of schools in the country (in 2001 ITESM opened its third campus in the MCMA in the Santa Fe area).

In the private education scene, the growth of some institutions, that in 1997 didn't have a very visible presence in terms of campuses or enrollment, must also be highlighted. The Universidad Mexicana, the Universidad ETAC, Universidad Insurgentes, Universidad ICEL and the Universidad Privada del Estado de México, all of which reached over three thousand students in 2009.

However, the way we have tried to look at the institutional diversity of private schools has been to group together, on the one side, the institutions that in 1997 and in 2009 had an enrollment of over two thousand students, offering degree programs in two or more areas according to ANUIES's classification.<sup>2</sup> This type of HEIs are called *Selected*. On the other hand, we set apart all of those educational institutions that did not meet both criteria, i.e. that typically offer degree programs in only one area of knowledge, the least of which in two areas, but in none of these cases does their enrollment exceed two thousand students.

As shown in Table 2, the difference prevailing among private institutions is revealing, since the vast majority (83.2%) of those schools, offer educational opportunities that are limited to undergraduate programs in one field of knowledge and have an enrollment of less than two thousand students. However, it is interesting to note that between 1997 and 2009 ten HEIs entered into the *Selected* group, which came to represent 16.8% of private institutions in the MCMA.

<sup>1</sup> According to statements by the then Sub-Secretary of Higher Education, Julio Rubio, between 2000 and 2005 the federal government only authorized the creation of 29% of total new private HEIs that began operations in those years in Mexico. The remaining 71% of private universities were granted Official Recognition for Advanced Studies (RVOE) by state governments or autonomous universities authorized to grant the recognition of the validity of study programs, and thus endorse the opening of private universities (*El Universal*, March 30, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> The areas of knowledge established by ANUIES are: Agricultural Sciences, Health Sciences, Natural and Exact Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, and Engineering and Technology.

**Table 2**  
**Private HEIS in the MCMA. 1997-2009**

	1997		2009	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
<b>Selected</b>	9	8.0	19	16.8
<b>Others</b>	104	97.0	151	83.2
<b>Total</b>	113	100.0	170	100.0

Source: Author's with data from ANUIES Statistical Yearbooks.

From these data, it can be clearly derived that only a small number of institutions have taken up the challenge of forming complex academic organizations in response to the magnitude of their enrollment and the diversity of knowledge areas in which they offer degree programs. In fact, 75% of the student population in private HEIS is concentrated in the area of Social and Administrative Sciences and another 15% in the area of Education and Humanities. Areas that, as we know, do not require expensive facilities and equipment, as opposed to some degrees in Engineering and Technology or Health Sciences. Moreover, the vast majority of private institutions that offer courses in the area of Engineering and Technology do so in programs that do not require large investments such as Industrial Engineering or Systems Engineering or related degrees centered in the field of computing –relatively speaking– that do not require large spaces and facilities, unlike programs that require extensive and expensive facilities and equipment such as Chemical Engineering, Geophysics, Mechanical Engineering or Environmental Engineering, among others. This means that most private institutions are concentrated largely on providing degrees that are not conducive to the diversification of educational opportunities that our country needs, thus contributing to the oversupply of professionals in various areas.

## Undergraduate enrollment

In contrast to the domain that the private sector showed according to the number of institutions in the MCMA, the sheer enrollment differences between public and private sectors shows the opposite trend, as most of the students were enrolled in public institutions despite the fact that between the first and second periods its proportional weight decreased slightly from 66.9% to 64.1% over the course of thirteen years (Table 3).

Contrary to what we expected to find, given the observed trends between 1982 and 1997, the weight of private HEIS enrollment has remained at about a third of the total, while between 1982 and 1997 the student population in private schools had jumped from 18% to 33.1%, between 1997 and 2009 it only increased from 33.1% to 35.9%. This means that the distribution of demand within the higher education system in the MCMA appears to have

reached a point of relative stability between the two different regimes. Many experts' predictions, including our own, as well as political analysts, believed that with the arrival of the PAN to presidential power –which has already served ten years– higher education would witness a rapid advance of privatization, this did not come to pass, not in the case of the MCMA, nor at the national level, which by 2009 continued to hold an average of one third of total enrollment: 33.2% (Ibarra, 2009, Gil, 2005). This percentage is far behind many Latin American countries, where the privatization of higher education has reached an unprecedented presence, as is the case in Brazil, Colombia, Chile, El Salvador and Nicaragua, countries where more than 60% of enrollment is held by private institutions (Pereyra, 2008).

**Table 3**  
**Undergraduate enrollment in HEIS in the MCMA. By Regime. 1997-2009**

	1997		2009	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
<b>Public</b>	252,834	66.9	344,622	64.1
<b>Private</b>	125,260	33.1	193,271	35.9
<b>Total</b>	378,094	100.0	537,893	100.0

Source: Author's with data from ANUIES Statistical Yearbooks.

Undoubtedly, there is still a sector of Mexican society that continues to choose to attend elite private institutions like the Universidad Iberoamericana (UIA), Universidad Anahuac, Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, Universidad Panamericana and Universidad La Salle.

Another sector is geared towards studying as a first choice in private HEIS that have managed to become prestigious venues with some academic recognition, their fees are not too excessive and also, they have several campuses located in different geographical areas such as the Universidad del Valle de México (UVM) and the Universidad Tecnológica de México (UNITEC). There are also some institutions that despite having a solid trajectory, many of their students come from their own high schools, that is, they have a kind of captive audience, and are establishments that serve low and middle income social sectors, they also feed off the rejected candidates from UNAM, UAM and IPN, and have several facilities and lower fees than the previous two sets of HEIS. The following institutions belong to this group: the Universidad Mexicana, Universidad ETAC, Universidad ICEL and Universidad Insurgentes, among others.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> An example of the differences in fees: at the Universidad Anahuac, on average, one semester costs \$71,500 pesos, while the Universidad del Valle de México, which has differentiated fees according to geographical area, in Lomas Verdes one semester costs, on average, \$42,900 pesos and \$33,900 at San Rafael. In contrast, the Universidad Mexicana, which also has different fees depending on the location of the campus, in Polanco one semester costs \$14,700 pesos and \$12,600 at Izcalli. One semester at Universidad ICEL costs \$7,270 pesos. (Source: institutions' websites. April 2010).

Now let's review the growth rate of enrollment by educational sector in more detail, with particular emphasis on the changes that took place between the two periods analyzed. Between 1982 and 1997, of the 106,065 new spaces created in the MCMA, the public sector accounted for 29,667 seats (28%), while private HEIs created 76,398 new spaces, or 72%. It is clear that in this period the higher education growth in the region was the result of the role played by private institutions. However, the period between 1997 and 2009 witnessed a remarkable change, of the 159,799 new seats, public institutions supplied 91,788, i.e. 57.4%, while the private sector contributed 68,011 new places or 42.6% of the total. In other words, while during the first period, seven out of ten new spaces were created by the private sector, in the second period this ratio decreased to four out of ten (Table 4).

**Table 4**  
**Spaces created for undergraduate students at HEIs in the MCMA.**  
**1982-1997/1997-2009. By Regime.**

	1982 - 1997		1997 - 2009	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
<b>Public</b>	29,667	28.0	91,788	57.4
<b>Private</b>	76,398	72.0	68,011	42.6
<b>Total</b>	106,605	100.0	159,799	100.0

Source: Author's with data from ANUIES Statistical Yearbooks.

In short, the higher education private sector in the MCMA continues to have an important role according to the number of institutions and the student population it serves, a phenomenon which, moreover, is characteristic of the whole country and many other countries in the world (Acosta, 2005). But at the same time, it is important to note the fact that in the past thirteen years the public sector has made considerable efforts, although insufficient, to capture a greater share of student demand. This is due to an ad hoc policy by the federal government to establish more institutions in the region, the City Government with the creation of a new institution and also, of course, the commitment undertaken primarily by UNAM, UAM –which launched its fourth campus– and IPN to increase educational coverage, without adversely affecting the quality of their programs.

## Private institutions

In this section we want to approach the behavior of private HEIS in the MCMA. Going back to the classification made above, establishing a distinction between *Selected* institutions and *Others*, in Table 5 it can be seen that while the *Selected* institutions in 1997 encompassed 65.7% of the student population in the private sector, by 2009, their proportional weight amounted to 75.5%. This difference is partly due to the fact, already mentioned, that the number of institutions that meet our criteria of having more than two thousand students and offering degrees in two or more areas of knowledge went from nine to nineteen between 1997 and 2009, but can also be explained, as we shall see, by the growth that some of the institutions, that were already among the *Selected* group in 1997, experienced. It is also worth noting that only 19 of the 170 private institutions that exist in the MCMA control two-thirds of the sector's enrollment.

**Table 5**  
**Private HEIS enrollment in the MCMA. 1997-2009**

	1997		2009	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
<b>Selected</b>	82,324	65.7	145,968	75.5
<b>Others</b>	42,936	34.3	47,303	24.5
<b>Total</b>	125,260	100.0	193,271	100.0

Source: Author's with data from ANUIES Statistical Yearbooks.

The domain by *Selected* private institutions is such that between 1997 and 2009, 93.6% of private new education spaces were the product of their organizational or for profit effort and commitment, together with the social acceptance they are enjoying from important and varied social sectors. So the growth of private establishments in the MCMA does not correspond to a homogeneous inter-institutional distribution of enrollment. Despite the increased competition among an increasingly wider range of private institutions, during the past three decades the schools with the most tradition have been, as well as ten of those better poised new institutions, the ones that have attracted the largest number of applicants who choose to enter the private system, or are forced to do so because of the number of rejected UNAM, UAM and IPN applicants (Table 6).

**Table 6**  
**Spaces created for undergraduate students in private HEIS in the MCMA.**  
**1997-2009**

	1997 - 2009	
	Abs.	%
<b>Selected</b>	63,644	93.6
<b>Others</b>	4,367	6.4
<b>Total</b>	68,011	100.0

Source: Author's with data from ANUIES Statistical Yearbooks.

Lets now consider the behavior of *Selected* private HEIS. To do so, we will conduct a review focused on the demand they serve and offer several additional data that characterize this sector's institutions, both common traits, as well as distinguishing aspects.

The first thing to note is that, despite the fact that these 19 *Selected* institutions represent 93.6% of private school enrollment, there are significant differences in the number of students they had in 2009, while the Universidad de Cuautitlan Izcalli had 2,003 students, the Universidad del Valle de Mexico (uvm) had 25,836; the latter, is the institution with the largest population of students, maintaining the same position it had in 1997, over a period in which it went from eight to eleven campuses in the MCMA. In addition, uvm has grown in different regions of the country with 24 additional schools, becoming, as we have already noted, after ITESM, the institution with the largest number of campuses nationwide (Table 7).

**Table 7**  
**Enrollment, campuses and high schools of Selected private institutions**  
**in the MCMA, in 2009.**

	Institutions	Abs.	%	Campuses	High Sc.
1	Universidad del Valle de México (1)	25,836	17.7	11/24=35	yes
2	Universidad Mexicana	25,412	17.4	3/1=4	yes
3	Universidad Tecnológica de México (2)	22,545	15.4	5/0=5	yes
4	Universidad Iberoamericana (4)	9,745	6.7	1/7=8	yes
5	Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (3)	9,326	6.4	3/62=65	yes
6	Universidad Anáhuac (6)	8,176	5.6	2/8=10	no
7	Universidad ETAC	6,862	4.7	4/1=5	yes
8	Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (8)	4,789	3.3	1/0=1	no
9	Universidad La Salle (5)	4,587	3.1	2/12=14	yes
10	Universidad Insurgentes	4,499	3.1	19/1=20	yes
11	Universidad ICEL	3,343	2.3	8/1=9	yes
12	Universidad Privada del Estado de México	3,281	2.2	4/2=6	no
13	Universidad Panamericana (9)	3,137	2.1	2/2=4	yes
14	Universidad de Ecatepec	2,587	1.8	1/0=1	yes
15	Universidad Justo Sierra	2,535	1.7	4/0=4	yes
16	Universidad de Londres	2,480	1.7	7/1=8	yes
17	Escuela Bancaria y Comercial	2,449	1.7	4/3=7	yes
18	Universidad Intercontinental (7)	2,376	1.6	2/0=2	yes
19	Universidad de Cuautitlán Izcalli	2,003	1.4	1/0=1	no
<b>Total</b>		<b>145,968</b>	<b>100.0</b>		

Source: Author's with data from ANUIES Statistical Yearbooks.

Campus: the first figure before the slash represents the existing campuses in the MCMA, the number after the slash represents campuses in the rest of the country.

Note: The number that appears after some HEIS name corresponds to the prior position they held among the nine *Selected* private institutions in 1997.

The second institution with the largest number of students is the Universidad Mexicana (UNIMEX) –founded in 1991– which by 1997 had less than two thousand students. During the thirteen-year period it grew until it added more than 25 thousand students in its three campuses in the MCMA plus one in the City of Veracruz. Like UVM, the UNIMEX has its own high school, an important space to recruit students for the upper levels. In third position is the Universidad Tecnológica de México (Technological University, UNITEC) –which in 1997 occupied the second place– with 22,545 students, it went from three to five campuses between the first and second period. This institution also has a high school. Only these three institutions, UVM, UNITEC and UNIMEX, account for 50.5% of the enrollment in *Selected* universities and 38.1% of the private sector's share in the MCMA.

The Universidad Iberoamericana (UIA), the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM) and the Universidad Anahuac (UA) are positioned in the fourth, fifth and sixth places, respectively, each with over 8,000 students, but less than 10,000. In the case of UIA and UA they maintain the same position they had in 1997, while ITESM dropped from the third to the fifth place, not only because the first three institutions mentioned above grew in the number of students, but also because ITESM went from having 11,376 students in 1997 to 9,326 in 2009.

The ITESM has its own system of high schools, whereas the Universidad Anahuac has no high schools organizationally linked to it, but as part of the Catholic congregation to which it belongs, the Legionaries of Christ, it is directly connected to some high schools that are controlled by this congregation, i.e. the Instituto Cumbres, the Instituto Irlandés and the Instituto Rosedal, schools that play an important role in sending their graduates to continue their studies at the UA. In the case of the UIA, which is run by Jesuits, it just reopened its own high school in 2010, the Instituto Patria, which had been closed since the seventies because the Society of Jesus decided, that after the 1968 student movement, it was not justified to maintain a school for bourgeoisie children to study in, and should turn instead to pastoral work in poor neighborhoods.

Of the remaining thirteen institutions among the *Selected* institutions we would like to note that the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) held the same position as in 1997, by increasing its enrollment between that year and 2009 by only 681 students, ITAM does not have its own high schools but has special agreements with some private high schools to provide what they call “automatic entry” to the graduates from these schools.<sup>4</sup> The remaining private HEIS that were already part of the *Selected* group in 1997 lost their position because of the number of students registered, those being the Universidad La Salle (ULSA), the Universidad Panamericana (UPA) and especially the Universidad Intercontinental (UIC). These three HEIS, which all coincidentally have their own high schools and Catholic orientation, saw their student populations decrease between the first and second periods, the ULSA by 2,638 students, UPA by 271 and UIC by 1,746.

It is remarkable that private Catholic institutions have lost considerable ground from 1982 to date. While in 1982 59.7% of the enrollment in *Selected* institutions came from Catholic universities, by 1997 it had dropped to 38.7% and in 2009 it accounted for only 19.2% of the total. Perhaps this is because—in part—these Catholic oriented universities fees for undergraduate studies are not affordable for certain sectors of the Mexican middle class, which have found new educational options in other private HEIS for

<sup>4</sup> On the ITAM website there is reference to the agreements with high schools to provide “automatic entry”, but they do not mention which those are. In an email inquiry to the office of admissions ITAM responded: “That information may not be published or provided by the institutions due to the different rules and characteristics of each of the covenants.” The Universidad La Salle has also established “automatic entry” agreements with about fifty high schools that do not belong to the network of secondary schools or the Catholic congregation of La Salle, but it is mostly high schools led or inspired by other Catholic congregations. For example: the Centro Universitario México, El Instituto Pedagógico Anglo Español, the Instituto Simón Bolívar and the Instituto Miguel Ángel.

their children. However, it must be said, that Universidad Iberoamericana and Universidad Anahuac, have incorporated more Jewish students from high income families which have reached a higher proportion of their student enrollment. Even in Rector's reports of activities, in both universities, agreements and activities signed with Jewish organizations and high schools can be identified. Moreover, at the Anahuac University the Yitzhak Rabin Cultural Center –20 thousand square meters– is under construction, at its Northern campus, funded largely by the Jewish community in Mexico. It should be noted, however, that private Catholic universities, each serving the congregation to which they belong, have formed their own institutional networks in various states of the country. It seems that their strategy is to have a presence and penetration in certain social sectors covering different regions of the country, but without seeking any kind of massification with several campuses in each state.

The contrary is true for the Universidad del Valle de Mexico, which has endeavored a major expansion process with 35 campuses in the country. To achieve this the original owners sold 90% of UVM shares to a transnational corporation that has become the main player in the for profit higher education global market, the Laureate Education Inc., which started operations with UVM in 2000 and more recently, in 2008, also acquired the Universidad Tecnológica de Mexico (UNITEC). This is a corporation that has a presence in 24 countries, with 50 HEIs and enrolling more than 660,000 students worldwide. This educational enterprise is listed on stock markets in several countries, mainly in Mexico, which allows it to finance the expansion of its institutions while maintaining affordable fees for students (Rodríguez, 2007a; Rodríguez, 2007b; Rodríguez, 2007).

The power of Laureate is such that in the case of Chile it has become the leading higher education provider (Brunner et al., 2007). As an organization, in Mexico, adding the enrollment of both UVM and UNITEC, drew together the largest number of private HEIs students in 2009 with a total of 73,970, leaving ITESM in second place with 48,462 students. At the higher education system level in the country, the student population represented by the Laureate Corporate was exceeded only by three public institutions: the University of Guadalajara with 74,609 students, the National Polytechnic Institute with 86,503 and UNAM with 156,404 students. Isn't this enough to draw more attention to this phenomenon?

We are thus faced with the beginning of a wider process of commodification of higher education in the hands of transnational corporations with insurmountable economic power, over which the federal government does not exercise the slightest control. Its policy is just restricted to granting and supervising the partial and limited granting of the RVOE (official recognition) for each school's degree programs, without a vision of State for regulating the presence and progress of transnational corporations in the national educational market, or at least to outline future scenarios, bypassing or ignoring what Joaquín Brunner said: "the 'question of the market' not only is at the center of the analysis and contemporary debate on university systems and

policies, but also presents a series of out-shoots that reach practically all of the thematic universe of higher education” (Brunner et al., 2007: 20-21).

But what is the profile of the ten new *Selected* institutions that have successfully, or relatively in some cases, penetrated in the MCMA, even in some cases displacing other institutions which enjoyed an important position in the past? For this purpose, the information source used were the websites of each institution. In several cases the information on the HEIS is partial and incomplete, so it is not easy to delineate their profiles with precision. Despite this limited information and lack of transparency in the universities, it is possible to identify some aspects.

Bearing that in mind, we must first note that eight of the new ten *Selected* institutions have several campuses in the MCMA and seven of them, although few, also have campuses outside the MCMA (Table 7). Universidad Insurgentes (UI), founded as such in 1995, which has 19 campuses in the MCMA located in diverse geographic areas, from central neighborhoods such as los Alamos, Narvarte, to the outskirts in Toreo de Cuatro Caminos and Tlalnepantla, through the Historic Downtown and San Angel areas. With a few exceptions, all schools are inserted into office buildings retrofitted as schools, as if they were job training centers instead of universities (see photos at: <http://www.universidadinsurgentes.edu.mx/planteles.html>). Despite offering 18 degree programs, several of its sites do not have the official certification of studies (RVOE) issued by the Public Education Secretariat or any public university authorized to do so, which means graduates will not be able to obtain a degree or a professional certificate.<sup>5</sup>

The next institution of the new *Selected* HEIS according to the number of branches is the Universidad ICEL, which acronym stands for “International College for Experienced Learning” (sic), founded in 1990, it has nine campuses in the MCMA, that are also located in different geographical areas, for example in Ermita Iztapalapa, Tlalpan, Zona Rosa, Cuautitlan Izcalli and Lomas Verdes. All sites, except the Zona Rosa site, are quite appropriate, purpose-built to achieve what a higher education institution should look like (See photos: <http://www.icel.edu.mx/nuestros-campuses/campuses-federal-district>). All of the Universidad ICEL degree programs have the RVOE. Next, according to the number of schools is the Universidad de Londres (UL), founded in 1980, which has seven campuses in the metropolitan area, all located in the Colonia Roma, some of which are located in Porfirian houses from the early twentieth century, that although beautiful, are not suitable for university teaching (See photos: <http://www.udlondres.com/campuses/Guanajuato/index.htm>). In the case of the UL most of its degree programs have no RVOE.

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the Education Act does not expressly establish a mandate for private institutions to obtain RVOE so they can operate, they are only obliged to mention in all their advertising and documentation their condition as a non-incorporated which means no official recognition of studies. Something that in many cases was not met according to a review we made of the websites of several of the *Selected* institutions.

Second, another issue we have already mentioned is the fact that several of the *Selected* HEIs also have their own high schools, which generate a pole of attraction and relatively captive demand, or at least for its graduates to continue their undergraduate studies at the same institution. Eight out of the ten new *Selected* HEIs offer high school education, with the Universidad Privada del Estado de México and the Universidad de Cuautitlán Izcalli being the two exceptions.

Returning to the set of the 19 *Selected* private institutions, we thought it appropriate to investigate what admission mechanisms they have established to enter their undergraduate programs. Out of all of these, only the Universidad del Valle de México, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey and Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México require a minimum high school GPA<sup>6</sup> (Table 8).

**Table 8**  
**Admission requirements for undergraduate programs in**  
**Selected private institutions in the MCMA. 2009**

	GPA	Admission Exam	Automatic Entry
Universidad del Valle de México *	7	Psychometric	Yes
Universidad Mexicana	No	Placement	Yes
Universidad Tecnológica de México *	No	Yes	Yes
Universidad Iberoamericana *	No	Yes	n / a
Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey*	8	Yes	Yes
Universidad Anáhuac*	No	Yes	Yes
Universidad ETAC	No	No	Yes
Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México*	7	Yes	Agreements
Universidad La Salle*	No	Yes	Yes, plus agreements
Universidad Insurgentes	No	No	Yes
Universidad ICEL	No	No	Yes
Universidad Privada del Estado de México	No	No	n / a
Universidad Panamericana*	No	Yes	Yes
Universidad de Ecatepec	No	No	Yes
Universidad Justo Sierra	No	No	Yes
Universidad de Londres	No	No	Yes
Escuela Bancaria y Comercial	No	Placement	Yes
Universidad Intercontinental*	No	Psychometric	Yes
Universidad de Cuautitlán Izcalli	No	No	n / a

Source: Institutions' own websites  
\* *Selected* Institutions in 1997

<sup>6</sup> In the case of Universidad Iberoamericana it is not an entry requirement, but the high school GPA is weighted along with the scores on the entrance exams.

Of all the new *Selected* HEIS, it is noteworthy that only the Escuela Bancaria y Comercial has an admission mechanism that consists of conducting an entrance test. In contrast, the nine institutions that were part of the *Selected* group since 1997 implement some form of entrance examination. Seven of them use tests to measure skills and knowledge either designed by the HEIS themselves, or the test sold by the National Center for Education Evaluation (CENEVAL), which is also used by several public universities in Mexico. The Universidad del Valle de Mexico and Universidad Intercontinental apply only a psychometric tool, not a skills and knowledge test, where “passing it” is not a requisite for entering.

However, HEIS that apply admission tests also offer graduates from their own high schools “automatic entry” into their undergraduate programs. ITAM, which has no high school, Universidad La Salle and Universidad Panamericana that do have high schools, have also established specific agreements with several private high schools to offer what they call “automatic entry” to graduates from these high schools (Table 8). So, we may ask why is there such an irate criticism around UNAM’s “automatic entry” awarded to UNAM’s high school graduates that enter undergraduate studies?

To summarize, the growth and acceptance of new *Selected* private institutions, that have surpassed a population of 2,000 students and offer degrees in two or more fields of knowledge, is due to several factors: they have several campuses located in different geographical areas of the MCMA to serve a wider population without having to travel too far from their homes, their fees are lower than most of the *Selected* institutions classified as such since 1997, they award an “automatic entry” to graduates from their own high schools, and practically the only admission requirement for those applicants that do not come from their high schools, and even for those institutions that have no high school, is to present the corresponding high school diploma.

However, one way, among many, for a close observation of HEIS quality and recognition is to know if they belong to either one or both of the following: the Mexican Federation of Private Higher Education Institutions (FIMPES), the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES), and whether the Public Education Secretariat (SEP) has awarded them the “Academic Excellence Recognition”.

FIMPES, founded in 1982, is a Civil Partnership that brings together 109 private institutions “with the intent of promoting academic excellence and institutional quality, improving communication and collaboration among its partners and other educational institutions in Mexico, respecting each other’s mission and philosophy, to attain full compliance with the responsibility of serving the nation” (Article 1 FIMPES Statutes). To become a member of this Federation it is required that HEIS have at least one generation of graduates (Art. 6), and are able to meet certain requirements laid out in its Internal Regulation, in regard to items that from the FIMPES perspective, ensure that these institutions are serious, responsible and prestigious according to the quality of their undergraduate programs and services offered.

For its part ANUIES, established in 1950, is also a Civil Partnership which brings together 152 universities and colleges, both public and private. It aims: “To promote the comprehensive and continuous improvement of programs and services offered by its partners and the higher education system as a whole. To articulate the academic interests of its associates and represent them before the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the Federation and the states, as well as with nongovernmental and international organizations” (Article 2 of ANUIES Statutes). To become a member of the Association it is necessary to meet a set of requirements according to the typology of institutions adopted by its highest governing body, and also to prove to be prestigious and have quality academic facilities for the functions they perform (Fresán y Taborga, 1998).

According to SEP, by 2009 there were 4,228 higher education institutions in Mexico, out of which 2,384 were private. According to this information, it is clear that it is not easy for private institutions to become part of ANUIES and/or FIMPES.

Regarding the “Recognition of Academic Excellence” that SEP awards HEIS, as its name suggests, is a recognition first established in 2004 for which the criteria are the following: 1) That the institution is at least ten years old, 2) That, at least 75% of its degree programs are recognized as good quality in the so-called Tier 1 by the Inter-Institutional Committees for the Evaluation of Education (CIEES) and/or any of the institutions recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (COPAES) 3) That in the case of private institutions not ever having been sanctioned for any breach of the RVOE. To date, the SEP has granted such recognition to only 32 private institutions, which also shows that not just any institution has the academic merit to be eligible for it.

Turning to the analysis of the 19 institutions we have been reviewing, we first need to establish that 16 of them are members of the FIMPES, only the Universidad Privada del Estado de México, Universidad de Ecatepec and Universidad de Cuautitlán Izcalli remain unaffiliated. Two institutions, Universidad Insurgentes and Universidad ICEL are FIMPES members but in both cases with restrictions: the first with “recommendations”, and the second is “conditioned”. This means that most *Selected* private HEIS are backed by the academic reputation and political position that the organization has achieved in the Mexican higher education system<sup>7</sup> (Table 9).

<sup>7</sup> Historically, FIMPES has played a key role as a representative of private education institutions negotiating with the federal government the policy framework governing the operation of the private system, preventing some initiatives that would have sought greater demands of its member institutions. Furthermore, FIMPES has continually advocated for the right of private institutions to receive public funding to carry out their educational mission, an issue that, at least in part, has been achieved through the grants for students that private HEIS (which are part of the National Post-Graduate Register, because of their academic quality) receive from CONACYT.

**Table 9**  
**ANUIES and FIMPES membership and academic excellence recognition (SEP)**  
**for Selected private institutions in the MCMA. 2009**

	ANUIES	FIMPES	REA
Universidad del Valle de México	yes	yes	yes
Universidad Mexicana	no	yes	no
Universidad Tecnológica de México	yes	yes	yes
Universidad Iberoamericana	yes	yes	yes
Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey	yes	yes	yes
Universidad Anáhuac	yes	yes	yes
Universidad ETAC	no	yes	no
Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México	yes	yes	yes
Universidad La Salle	yes	yes	yes
Universidad Insurgentes	no	yes*	no
Universidad ICEL	no	yes+	no
Universidad Privada del Estado de México	no	no	no
Universidad Panamericana	yes	yes	yes
Universidad de Ecatepec	no	no	no
Universidad Justo Sierra	no	yes	no
Universidad de Londres	no	yes	no
Escuela Bancaria y Comercial	no	yes	yes
Universidad Intercontinental	yes	yes	no
Universidad de Cuautitlán Izcalli	no	no	no

Source: ANUIES, FIMPES and SEP websites.

\* Affiliated with recommendations.

+ Affiliated under some conditions.

As for ANUIES membership, contrary to what was observed with FIMPES, only nine institutions are members of the Association, which means from our point of view that its entry criteria are more stringent than those for FIMPES. It is interesting to note that the nine institutions that are members of ANUIES are exactly the same that were classified as *Selected* back in 1997, i.e., they are establishments that have a series of academic attributes based on their trajectories and institutional prestige.

Finally, regarding the “Recognition of Academic Excellence”, only nine HEIS have been awarded the distinction, eight of which are members of ANUIES, Universidad Intercontinental is the only one which is part of the Association but has not been awarded the Recognition, while Escuela Bancaria y Comercial does not belong to the ANUIES but has SEP’s Recognition. In the case of FIMPES only nine of its 16 *Selected* affiliates have received the recognition.

## Concluding remarks

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Between 1982 and 1997 private higher education in the metropolitan area of Mexico City grew exponentially when it went from 18% to 33.1% of enrollment. In contrast, between 1997 and 2009 it only increased by less than three percentage points to reach 35.9%. While in the first time period established private institutions contributed with 72% of all new educational spaces offered by the MCMA educational system, in the second period it dropped to 42.6%. These data show at least two phenomena, namely: the limits of growth in private higher education despite the increasing number of institutions and schools, and the role played by the Federal, Mexico State and Federal District Governments as well as UNAM, UAM and IPN to expand the coverage of the public higher education subsystem.

Within the private higher education subsystem comprising some 170 institutions in 2009, only 19 of them offered degree programs in two or more areas of knowledge and had an enrollment of over two thousand students. However, these 19 *Selected* institutions encompassed 75.5% of students enrolled in private schools.

Out of the 19 *Selected* private institutions, fifteen of them grew due to institutional policy expressed by the creation of several schools in different geographic areas in the MCMA. Moreover, thirteen of them have campuses in various states of the country, forming their own systems of university networks.

The greatest dynamism among private institutions for increasing their presence and enrollment was shown by three universities, the Universidad del Valle de Mexico, Universidad Tecnológica de México and the Universidad Mexicana, which concentrated 38.1% of the student population in private institutions.

A new element that characterizes Mexico's higher education system in recent years has been the arrival of a transnational education corporation which acquired two of the three private institutions with the largest number of students: the Universidad del Valle de Mexico and Universidad Tecnológica de México. The first one in 2009 amounted to eleven schools in the metropolitan area and 24 in various states. Given this new reality of globalization, typical of many countries around the world, Mexican federal authorities have not defined, to our knowledge, any government policy in this regard.

For their part, several Catholic institutions, despite being part of the *Selected* group, over the past fifteen years have seen their presence partially reduced in the MCMA, while still maintaining their own networks at the national level to capture a particular social sector of the population.

Among the new private institutions that in the last thirteen years surpassed the two thousand students enrollment mark, and offer degrees in two or more areas of knowledge, many of them owe their growth to the fact of having their own high schools, various campuses, little or no admission

requisites for applicants, low fees for their students and some do not have RVOE in all of their undergraduate programs.

Out of the 19 *Selected* private institutions, 16 are affiliated with the FIMPES and only 9 with ANUIES. Also, only nine establishments have received the “Academic Excellence Recognition” by SEP, which reflects the uneven standings in terms of quality and academic reputation for the most important private institutions in the MCMA.

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