



Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Chile

**REVIEWS OF NATIONAL POLICIES
FOR EDUCATION**

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FOREWORD

Growth and diversity have characterised higher education in most OECD countries in recent decades. Nowadays, higher education provides a range of new kinds of education and training to an increasingly heterogeneous student body, scarcely imaginable in the past. One of the main challenges that face Governments is how to address the persistent inequality in access to high quality post-secondary education. When in 2006 OECD Ministers met to consider developments in higher education, a key conclusion of their discussion was the need to shift the policy focus from quantity to quality, from student numbers to learning outcomes. Finding the right approach to fostering high quality education for all, in a diversified system of autonomous institutions, is crucial if graduates are to be prepared to participate effectively in the knowledge-based economy and society.

Chile is no exception to these trends. In the past two decades Chilean higher education has experienced a dramatic increase in student numbers, and rapid growth in the range of institutions and the programmes they offer. But wider participation and diversification are only part of the story. Chilean society remains highly unequal in economic and social terms, and the quality of the academic, technical and professional programmes on offer is uneven. The fact that Chilean students, or their families, have to directly pay a substantial share of the costs of their courses has focused attention on the value for money that they receive and their chances of finding a worthwhile career after graduation. The establishment of a culture of quality in higher education which goes beyond accreditation, and the provision of accurate and reliable information, have become issues of concern not only to institutions, students and employers but to a wider public.

For these reasons the present report on the Chilean Quality Assurance System in Higher Education has been prepared at the request of the Chilean Government. The report aims at providing a set of core principles based on international practice on the basis of which Chile can improve the existing quality assurance arrangements. Setting a solid basis for quality enhancement is key to creating a strong quality culture. The publication draws on meetings and interviews carried out during a review visit in August 2012, and a self-evaluation report prepared by the Higher Education Division in the Ministry of Education (DIVESUP), as well as additional information provided to the review team, notably the reports written by each of the stakeholders participating in the *Comisión de Trabajo*, coordinated and run by the DIVESUP prior to the review team's visit.

The report is the work of an OECD review team led by Richard Yelland, Head of the Policy Advice and Implementation Division at the Directorate for Education and which included Fiona Crozier (UK), Jane Knight (Canada), Rob McIntosh (New Zealand), Salvador Malo (Mexico) and Queralt Capsada (on secondment to the OECD Secretariat from the Fundació Jaume Bofill, Catalonia, Spain). The authors are indebted to all those with whom they spoke during their interviews: including elected politicians, government officials, students, employers, leaders and staff of higher education institutions and of the responsible state agencies, as well as other informed observers. The discussions and information that they provided constitutes the basis of the report but the report itself is the work of the OECD review team and is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General. The review team thanks all those involved and

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| ACRONYM | English | Spanish (as applicable) |
|----------|---|---|
| AA | Accreditation agencies | Agencias Acreditadoras |
| AFD | Direct public grant | Aporte Fiscal Directo |
| AFI | Indirect public grant | Aporte Fiscal Indirecto |
| AHELO | Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes | |
| BB | Bicentenary scholarships | Becas Bicentenario |
| BEA | Academic Excellence scholarships | Beca de Excelencia Académica |
| BNM | New millennium scholarship | Beca Nuevo Milenio |
| CAE | State guaranteed loan system | Crédito con Aval del Estado |
| CC | Coordination Committee | Comité de Coordinación |
| CFT | Technical Training Centres | Centro de Formación Técnica |
| CHEA | Council for Higher Education Accreditation | |
| CNA | National Accreditation commission | Comisión Nacional de Acreditación |
| CNAP | Commission for the evaluation of undergraduate programmes | Comisión Nacional de Acreditación de Pregrado |
| CNED | National Education Council | Consejo Nacional de Educación |
| CONAP | Commission for the evaluation of postgraduate programmes | Comisión Nacional de Acreditación de Postgrado |
| CONICYT | National commission for science and technology | Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica |
| CRUCH | Council of rectors of Chilean universities | Consejo de Rectores de las Universidades Chilenas |
| CSE | Higher Education Council | Consejo Superior de Educación |
| DIVESUP | Higher education division of the Ministry of Education | División de Educación Superior del Ministerio de Educación |
| ECAES | Quality test for higher education | Examen de Calidad para Educación Superior |
| EHEA | European Higher Education Area | |
| ENQA | European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education | |
| EUA | European University Association | |
| EUNACOM | | Examen Único Nacional de Conocimientos De Medicina |
| FSCU | University credit solidarity fund | Fondo Solidario de Crédito Universitario |
| HEFCE | Higher Education Funding Council for England | |
| HEIs | Higher Education Institutions | |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistics Agency | |
| IEA | International Engineering Alliance | Alianza Internacional de Ingenieros |
| INFOACES | Integrated information system for higher education institutions in Latin America for the common higher education area in Europe | Sistema Integral de Información sobre las Instituciones de Educación Superior de América Latina para el Área Común de Educación Superior con Europa |
| INICIA | | <i>inserción de nuevos académicos.</i> |
| INQAAHE | International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education | |
| IP | Professional Institute | Instituto Profesional |

| | | |
|----------|--|--|
| IUQB | Irish Universities Quality Board | |
| MINEDUC | Ministry of education | Ministerio de Educación |
| MUN | Public municipal schools | Establecimientos Municipales |
| NEM | Secondary education report | Notas de Enseñanza Media |
| NQF | National Qualification Framework | Marco nacional de calificaciones |
| PP | Private schools | Establecimientos Particulares o Establecimientos Privados |
| PS | Private schools publicly funded | Establecimientos Particulares Subvencionados |
| PSU | University entry test | Prueba de Selección Universitaria |
| RANA | National Accreditation Agencies Network | Red de Agencias Nacionales de Acreditación |
| RAUI | Latin American University Authorities Network | Red de Administraciones de Universidades Iberoamericanas |
| REFLEX | The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society New Demands on Higher Education in Europe | |
| RIACES | Iberoamerican Network for Quality Accreditation of Higher Education | Red Iberoamericana para la Acreditación de la Calidad de la Educación Superior |
| SIES | Higher education information system | Sistema de Información de la Educación Superior |
| SINAC-ES | National quality assurance system for higher education | Sistema Nacional de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior |
| SOFOFA | Chilean federation of industry | Sociedad de Fomento Fabril |
| TESQA | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency in Australia | Agencia para la calidad y estándares de la educación superior (Australia) |
| TRESAL | Transformations and Higher Education Reforms in Latin America | Transformaciones y Reformas en la Educación Superior de América Latina |
| WB | The World Bank | Banco Mundial |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chile has developed rapidly in the past two decades – it has become a strong economy, and a member of the OECD. Despite the global recession, the devastating earthquake and the tsunami, Chile is still one of the most successful economies in Latin America. The total GDP, as well as the GDP per capita, have been increasing; while income inequality and the percentage of poverty among the population have decreased. But Chile still remains as the OECD country with the highest income inequalities, presenting in 2009 a Gini coefficient of 0.49. As in other OECD countries, one of the strategies to compensate for income and other social inequalities is investing in education.

Higher education has grown and diversified: much has been achieved. Both the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions and the gross coverage have dramatically increased: in 2002 there were about 520 000 students in Chilean higher education, while in 2012 the number enrolled had more than doubled to over 1 100 000. The number of higher education institutions has also grown and diversified and a wide range of academic, professional and technical courses are on offer.

Growth has brought with it some well-known problems. These have been building up for some time but they are more than growing pains. Failure to attend to them led to an outpouring of disquiet on the part of students. A part of the problem – and an important part – is the quality of higher education. There are strengths as well as weaknesses, but the latter are serious. The system of quality assurance in higher education cannot be expected to provide a solution to all the issues - of equity in access, of relevance to the labour market, of ensuring strength throughout the system - and it should not be blamed for things beyond its control, but that said, **the current system is not working nearly as well as it should.**

The quality assurance system is relatively young – it was established in its current form only in 2006. It brings together three key actors: *División de Educación Superior del Ministerio de Educación* (Higher Education Division in the Ministry of Education) (DIVESUP), the *Consejo Nacional de Educación* (National Education Council) (CNED) and the *Comisión Nacional de Acreditación* (National Accreditation Commission) (CNA). While licensing and accreditation are exclusive functions of CNED and CNA respectively, the three actors share the task of providing information about higher education. The whole system is known as *Sistema Nacional de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior* (National quality assurance system for higher education) (SINAC-ES).

There are a number of reasons for the failure of SINAC-ES to work as was intended, including a poorly conceived legislative basis, inadequate resources, and lack of a shared view of what it is trying to achieve. **But just as the quality assurance system should not be blamed for all the ills, it cannot be expected that a new and better system will in itself put everything right.**

A new system should be based on key principles, which we espouse, and which we believe both reflect best international practice AND are relevant for Chile. But it will be essential for the actors in the system to share them if reform is to be effective. A new system should:

- Promote equity, relevance and efficiency

- Guarantee minimum standards
- Foster a culture of quality and professionalism which leads to continuous improvement
- Support the active involvement of stakeholders, especially students and employers, in order to promote responsiveness and relevance
- Allow for the diversity of institutions, programmes and modes of provision of higher education
- Embed transparency and openness to inspire trust and confidence
- Be open to the experiences of other countries

We feel that there has been a lack of leadership in the system. The student protests have shone a spotlight on the current arrangements and there is a need to strengthen them so that they visibly demonstrate coherence and accountability.

The principal observations and recommendations that the review team sets out in this report are:

- So far as confidence in new providers (entry to the system) is concerned the licenciamiento approach is the right one, although it should be both tightened up and completed more quickly. Crucially the gap between licenciamiento and acreditación has to be eliminated.
- Licenciamiento should be granted for a defined scope and scale of operation as set out in an institutional business plan.
- The maintenance of institutional quality after licenciamiento should be monitored through a process of periodic external institutional quality review which will replace the acreditación process.
- The quality assurance system should focus on continuous quality improvement. The expectation should be that all institutions will undertake self-review and external institutional quality review should be mandatory.
- Institutional quality reviews should be conducted according to explicit agreed criteria and should draw on a broader pool of trained peer reviewers.
- Institutional quality review criteria should cater for the diversity of institutions and the contexts in which they operate. The accreditation process should be affordable and appropriate for all institutions
- Institutional reviews should lead to a quality improvement plan for each institution and failure to adequately maintain quality should have consequences for licensed status.
- The current link between funding and acreditación diverts the focus from quality improvement. In the long term funding eligibility should be associated with the licensing decision, once all institutions have been subject to a first round of reviews. Transitional arrangements will need to be put in place so as to avoid funding institutions of questionable quality.
- Quality support and improvement at programme level should be selective.
- The systems an institution has in place to assure the quality of its individual programmes (including the extent to which the outcomes meet employer and student needs) should be a strong focus of external quality reviews for institutions. In addition consideration should be given to making accreditation of additional programmes mandatory and giving professional bodies a stronger voice in programme development and approval.
- Changes should be made to the processes for programme accreditation to give greater transparency and assurance as to the appropriate management of conflicts of interest. Private agencies should contract with the bodies responsible for accreditation, not directly with the institutions

- At both programme and institution level more has to be done to take account of outcomes – both intended and achieved. There is much good experience in the OECD and elsewhere in Latin America that can be relevant.
- The work of developing a National Qualifications Framework should continue as it will also support the development of greater transparency in and understanding of the quality of individual programmes of study.
- Information is a key foundation for the successful operation of the system. While progress has been made more can be done to assure the quality of information available, to strengthen its integration and support its use by student and their families and institutional decision makers alike.

It is not our role to substitute our arguments and opinions for the democratic process in Chile, and we cannot resolve the political tensions. We realise Chile needs a short-term solution to a long-term problem.

In summary a new system should be transparent, student-focused and outcomes-oriented:

Transition will be crucial. Chile has to rebuild the quality assurance house while taking care of those living in it. These changes will help, but they need to take place in harmony with others: creation of *Superintendencia*; development of some sort of National Qualifications Framework (see OECD/World Bank, 2009) and creation of a system approach in which CRUCH and the other institutions can work together.

Chilean higher education should aim to develop a strategic vision involving all the key players, not just some, and not only from the supply side. The world outside Chile is changing fast and Chile needs to reflect on her place in the international higher education landscape too – one where global providers will seek business; where Chile's services can be offered to other countries, and where on-line education may rapidly become pervasive.

CHAPTER 1. THE CHILEAN CONTEXT

This first chapter provides a brief summary of the political and social context in Chile. Starting with a description of its population and geography, an outline of the political organisation of the country follows. Main economic indicators are included, as well as a short description of the whole educational system. To finish with, some data in reference to how Chile performs in relation to international education comparisons is provided, using the latest OECD data.

Population, geography and political administration

Chile joined the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on 7 May 2010, being the first South American country to do so. Discussions with Chile about membership had been under way for three years, during which time 20 OECD committees reviewed Chile's policies, facilitating the assessment of Chile's position and the degree of coherence of policy with those in other OECD member countries¹.

The population in 2010 was estimated to be 17 094 million, growing at 1% per annum. Life expectancy at birth in Chile in 2010 was estimated to be 78.6 years for the total population. Population density is 22.6 (OECD, 2012a), but around 40% of Chile's inhabitants live in the Metropolitan region, where Santiago de Chile is located. It is estimated that only around 13% live in rural areas (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012).

Chile is a long and narrow country, about 4 300 km from north to south and between 90 and 435 km from east to west. It has an extraordinarily diverse terrain, including Andean mountains, the world's driest deserts, lush pastures and vineyards, volcanoes, fjords and lakes. The country is divided into 15 regions and each region, in turn, into provinces (53 in total) and municipalities (*comunas*, 346).

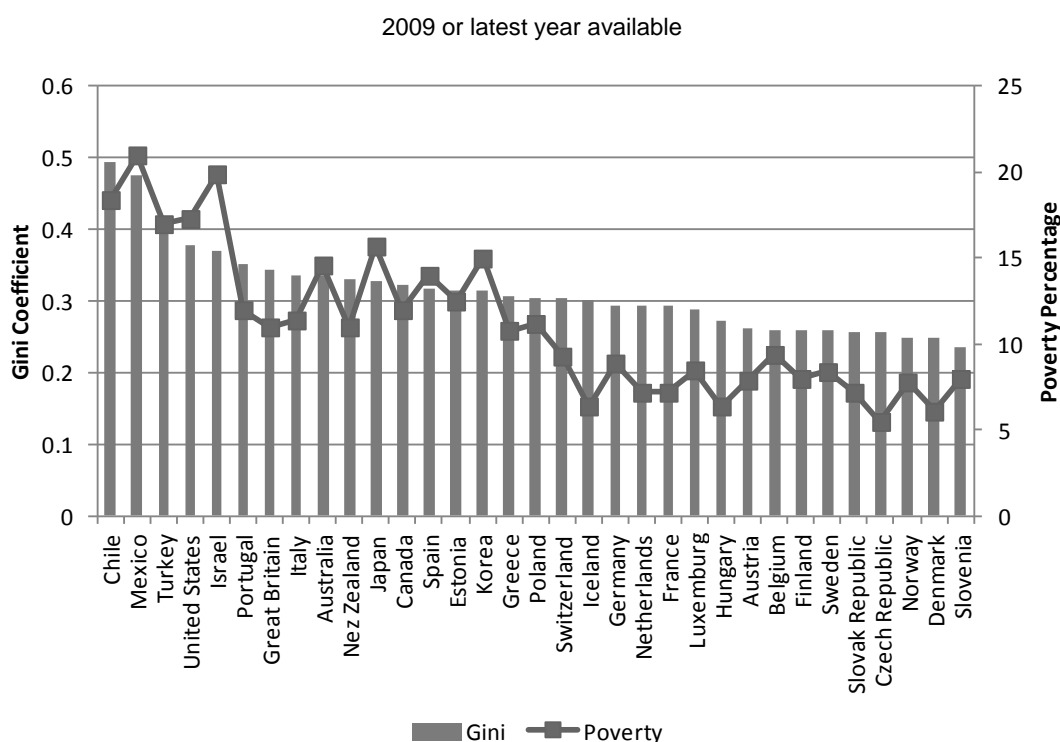
According to the Constitution of 1980 – substantially amended in 1989 and 2005 - Chile is a democratic republic with a Presidential system. The President is directly elected by universal suffrage for a term of four years. The President is at the same time head of the state and head of government. Following the referendum of 1988 the military dictatorship of General Pinochet handed over power in 1990, and the centre-left Coalition of Parties for Democracy (*Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia*) held political power until 2010. Since 2010, the government has been comprised of a centre-right coalition of the National Renewal (*Renovación Nacional*) and Independent Democratic Union (*Unión Demócrata Independiente*) parties, led by Sebastián Piñera. The Congress is made up of 120 Deputies and 38 Senators, all elected by universal voting. The judiciary is independent of Government with the Supreme Court as the highest institution.

1. More information on Chile accession to the OECD can be found in www.oecd.org/chile/chilesaccessiontotheoecd.htm

Economy and society

Despite the global recession of 2008-2009 and a devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2010, Chile has remained one of the most successful economies in Latin America. In 2010 total GDP was USD 257.5 billion and GDP per capita was USD 15 107. Both indicators have been rising for the past decade. Nevertheless, Chile is the OECD country with the highest income inequality, presenting a Gini coefficient of 0.49 in 2009 (Figure 1.1). However, income inequality and the percentage of poverty among the population have decreased during the past years (OECD, 2102a).

Figure 1.1 Income Inequality: Gini coefficient and percentage of poverty, after taxes and cash transfers



Source: OECD (2012), *OECD Economic Surveys: Chile 2012*, OECD Publishing, doi: 10.1787/eco_surveys-chl-2012-en.

The World Bank (WB) classifies Chile as a medium-high income country. The economy is mainly based on services (OECD, 2012a; Banco Central de Chile, 2011). According to OECD data, in 2010 the service sector represented 66.5% of GDP, with mining in second position, though at a considerable distance, representing 19.2% of GDP. Exports of goods represented 34.2% of the GDP, significantly higher than the 28.3% of GDP represented by imports. Copper is the most important commodity, but exports also include other minerals, salmon, fruit, and wine (OECD, 2012a).

The overall employment rate for people aged 15-64 years old in Chile was 61.3% in 2011, close to the OECD average of 64.8%. However, labour force participation in 2011 was 66.2%, below the OECD average of 70.6%. This is mainly due to the low labour force participation rate of 15-24 year-olds in Chile, which in 2011 was reported as 38.4%, against the OECD average of 47.2%. High differences are also visible between the male and female labour force participation rates: 92.9% and 65.5% respectively in 2011. However the overall unemployment rate for Chile in 2011 (7.4%) was lower than the OECD average (8.2%) (OECD, 2012b).

Chile's education system outlined

The educational system in Chile includes 12 years of compulsory education. Both public and private alternatives exist for all educational levels (UNESCO/IBE, 2010). The system has four main elements:

1. *Early Childhood Education and Care* (ECEC) concerns children from birth to 6 years old. It is not compulsory. It is divided in nursery (0-2), early childhood education (2-4) and the transition period (4-6).
2. *Primary Education* is compulsory and lasts 8 years. Children usually start school at the age of 6. Primary Education is divided in two main cycles, corresponding to the ISCED 1 level.
3. *Secondary Education* refers to the last 4 years of compulsory education. It includes two years dedicated to general and common training for all students, which are considered lower secondary education (ISCED 2). During the final two years differentiated tracks are offered, corresponding either to ISCED 3A or B level: humanistic-scientific, technical-professional and artistic. After finalising these four years, regardless of the track, all students obtain a secondary degree. The maximum age to access secondary education is 18.
4. *Higher Education* (HE) is not compulsory, but requires completion of the secondary education degree as a condition for access. Programmes are classified as ISCED 6 if the academic track is chosen, as 5A if the professional track is selected, and as ISCED 5B for a technical track. Universities and some *Institutos Profesionales* (Professional Institutes) (IPs) provide mainly ISCED 6 and 5A, while some IPs and *Centros de Formación Técnica* (Technical Training Centres) (CFTs) provide ISCED 5B. Masters and doctoral programmes are offered by comprehensive universities, and lead to either ISCED 7 or ISCED 8.

Chile compared with other education systems

The publication *Education at a Glance 2012, OECD Indicators*, provides comparative data for Chile and the other 33 OECD member countries, as well as two non-member countries participating in Indicators of Education Systems network (INES) and six G20 countries. The key indicators relevant to the present review are set out in the following paragraphs.

In 2010 71% of Chile's population between 25 and 64 years old had attained at least upper secondary education, while the OECD average was 74%. However Chile is rapidly improving its educational attainment, since among those between 25 and 34 years old 87% have attained at least upper secondary education, above the 82% OECD average for this age group.

38% of young Chilean adults (25-34 year-olds) attained tertiary education in 2010, the same percentage as the OECD average. Among the older age group (55-64 year-olds) the percentage decreases to 19%, below the OECD average of 23%. Although the overall population percentage is still below OECD average (27% in Chile versus 31% OECD average), trends in tertiary education attainment in Chile are converging with the OECD.

In 2010, the total graduation rate in Chile (first degree) was 20% for tertiary-type A programmes and 19% for tertiary type B. Belgium and Mexico present similar graduation rates for type A. The OECD averages are 38% and 14%, respectively.

In 2010 total expenditure in tertiary education institutions as a percentage of GDP in Chile was 2.5%, much higher than the OECD average (1.6%). However two-thirds of Chile's tertiary education funding comes from private sources (equivalent to 1.6% of GDP) whereas only one-third (equivalent to 0.8% of

GDP) is publicly funded. Other countries where tertiary funding comes primarily from private sources include the United States, Japan and Korea. Across the OECD, average public funding is equivalent to 1.1% of GDP and only a small part is privately funded (0.5%). Chile has one of the lowest direct public expenditures for tertiary institutions in the OECD and the overall percentage of GDP spent on primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education in Chile is 3.6%, below the OECD average (4.0%) (OECD, 2011).

Annual expenditure per student in Chile is still significantly below the OECD average: while in 2010 Chile was spending USD 6 863 per student in tertiary education (including educational core services, ancillary services and R&D), the OECD average was USD 13 728. Chile's spending per student is similar to that of Estonia (USD 6 373) and the Slovak Republic (6 758).

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CHAPTER 2. HIGHER² EDUCATION IN CHILE

This chapter offers a brief summary of the Chilean higher education system and its main characteristics, for those unfamiliar with it. In recent years, higher education in Chile has experienced a pronounced increase in the number of students enrolling. At the same time, higher education institutions have diversified, as has the socioeconomic and academic profile of students attending their programmes. The chapter provides some historical background, and then describes the types of higher education institutions in Chile. The characteristics and evolution of the student population are presented, followed by a description of the access, retention and graduation rates of students. To finish, the financing of the system and its actors are described.

Historical background

The first university in Chile, *Universidad San Felipe*, was founded in 1738 during the colonial period by the Spanish Monarchy, and promoted by the Catholic Church. After Independence, in 1842, *Universidad San Felipe* was transformed into *Universidad de Chile*, initiating state higher education development. 46 years later, the first private university in Chile was established, *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile*. The two existing universities, academically autonomous, expanded throughout the country with new branch campuses and six more universities were founded. Their administrative autonomy was recognised in 1931. Until the early 1980s, 8 universities formed the higher education spectrum in Chile:

Table 2.1 Existing universities until the early 1980s

| | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Universidad de Chile | Publicly owned | Publicly funded |
| Universidad Técnica del Estado | Publicly owned | Publicly funded |
| Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile | Privately owned | Publicly funded |
| Universidad de Concepción | Privately owned | Publicly funded |
| Universidad Austral de Chile | Privately owned | Publicly funded |
| Universidad Católica de Valparaíso | Private owned | Publicly funded |
| Universidad del Norte | Privately owned | Publicly funded |
| Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María | Privately owned | Publicly funded |

Source: self-elaboration, from DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012.

In 1981 a new legal framework was established, allowing private actors to create *Institutos Profesionales* Professional Institutes (IPs), *Centros de Formación Técnica* (Technical Training Centres) (CFTs) and private universities in the higher education system (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012). State

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2. In consonance with the term used by the actors of Chile's Quality Assurance system, the review team uses the term "higher" education to refer to all tertiary education institutions and system. The term "tertiary" education is only used when referring to the 2009 OECD/WB publication entitled *Tertiary Education in Chile*.

universities and those created out of their branch campuses started to be represented by *Consejo de Rectores de las Universidades Chilenas* (Council of Rectors of Chilean universities) (CRUCH), differentiating themselves from new private universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) created after 1981.

The system began to diversify, as branch campuses were transformed into regional universities. There were significant changes in the financing of higher education. Public grants direct to HEIs decreased and transfers to families became the main funding stream. A small proportion was retained for grants and scholarships to students (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012). CRUCH universities continued receiving *Aporte Fiscal Directo* (Direct Public Grant) (AFD), but private funding was diversified among tuition fees and *Aporte Fiscal Indirecto* (Indirect Public Grant) (AFI), among others.

In the early 1990s entry of new institutions into the higher education system began to be regulated through the licensing process - named “*accreditación*” at that time- and run by *Consejo Superior de Educación* (Higher Council of Education) (CSE), the predecessor to the current *Consejo Nacional de Educación* (National Education Council) (CNED) (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

As established by the *Ley General de Educación* (LGE), there are three types of higher education institutions, classified by the kind of qualification they can grant: academic, professional or technical (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012).

- **Universities** can grant the three kinds of qualifications. They are the only ones that can deliver academic degrees (ISCED 6 and 5A) and teach those professions regulated by law (architect, agricultural engineer, biochemist, civil engineer, commercial engineer, forest engineer, dentist, lawyer, pharmacist, primary and secondary school teacher, psychologist, surgeon, veterinarian) (OECD/WB, 2009). Universities also offer post-graduate diplomas, Master’s degrees and medical specialisations (ISCED 7). By law all universities have non-profit status. Among universities, there is an important distinction to be made between the member universities of *CRUCH*- or ‘traditional’ universities - which are state-run or state-subsidised and receive direct public funding - and those universities created after 1980 - known hereinafter as new private universities.
- **Institutos Profesionales** (Professional Institutes) (IPs) can award professional and technical degrees. They typically teach four year programmes at 5A ISCED level, but they also offer significant numbers of 5B programmes. All IPs are private, self financed and can be either for-profit or non-profit.
- **Centros de Formación Técnica** (Technical Training Centres) (CFTs) are only allowed to provide technical programmes (ISCED 5B), which usually last between 2 and 2.5 years of study. They are all private institutions and can be either for-profit or non-profit.

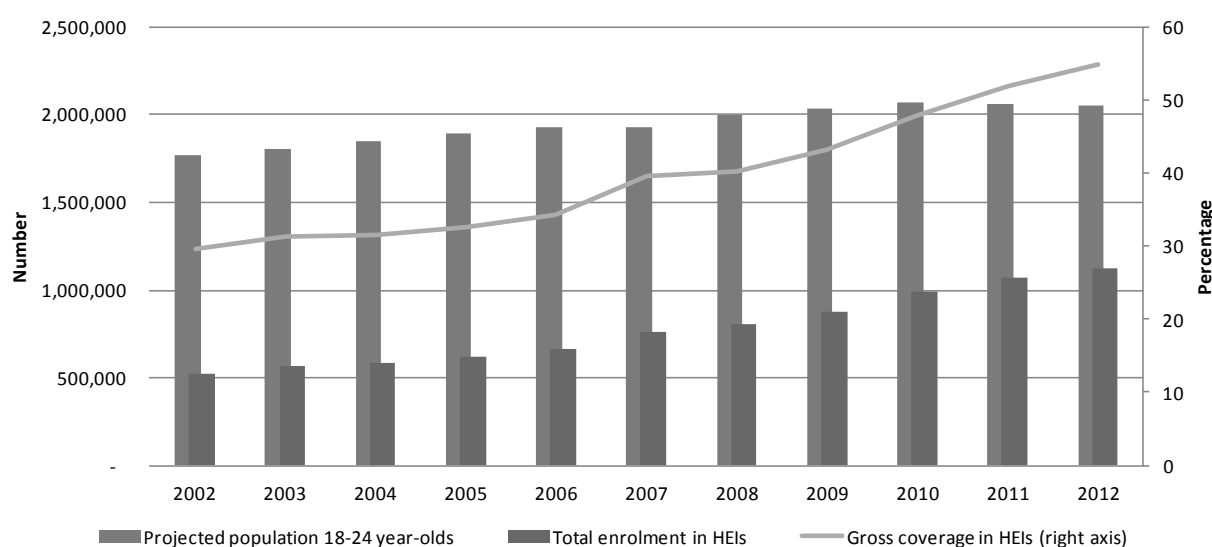
HEIs may be autonomous or non-autonomous. When an institution is first established needs to seek for permission to the Ministry of Education and CNED and goes through the licensing process. CNED will monitor the new institution and take responsibility for its awards for a period not less than 6 years and not longer than 11 years. CNED will determine if the institution has developed in accordance to its stated objectives and can either become autonomous or has to close down. According to the information system in the Ministry of Education, in September 2012 there were:

- 173 HEIs: 60 universities, 45 Professional Institutes (IPs) and 68 Technical Training Centres (CFTs). In addition to them, there were 20 armed forces institutions belonging to the Ministry of Defence.
- 25 CRUCH universities, of which 16 are state owned and 9 state-subsidised private universities. 35 new private universities do not belong to CRUCH. All universities are autonomous.
- 33 autonomous IPs and 12 non-autonomous IPs, either going through examination or licensing.
- 34 autonomous CFTs and 34 non-autonomous CFTs, either under supervision or licensing.

Student population

The 2009 OECD/WB Country Review of Tertiary Education in Chile pointed out that Chilean tertiary education had already moved from an elite to a mass system in a relatively short period of time, while maintaining education quality. Nevertheless, the report went on to point out the weaknesses of the system, focusing on those related to the accreditation system and the link with funding. These weaknesses remain. In 2002 there were 521 882 students enrolled in Chilean higher education. By 2012 this figure dramatically increased to 1 127 200 (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012). Gross coverage has steadily increased from 30% in 2002 up to around 55% in 2012 (see Figure 2.1), surpassing the expected 50% enrolment of 18-24 year-olds youth in higher education by 2012. Though the exact figures are not consistent across institutions, the trends are.

Figure 2.1 Evolution of enrolment and coverage in HEIs for projected 18-24 year-olds, 2002-2012

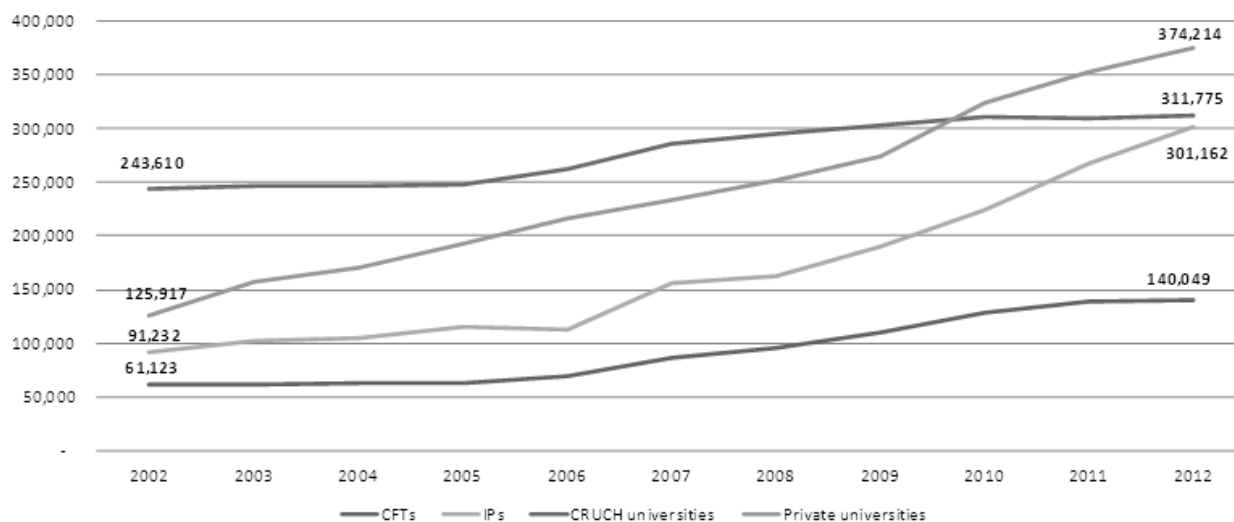


Source: SIES, in DIVESUP/MINEDUC (2012), *Informe Nacional de Antecedentes. "El Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior en Chile"*, Comité de Coordinación. Sistema Nacional de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior en Chile (SINAC-ES), August 2012, Santiago de Chile..

Between 2006 and 2011 all HEIs increased their gross enrolment rate. While CRUCH universities enrolment increased by 18% private universities experienced an average 63% increase in their figures. CFTs doubled their enrolment during this period and IPs increased around 137%. Part of this rise is explained by new financial support implemented since 2006: a state guaranteed loan system (CAE) and new millennium scholarship (BNM). One out of three higher education students in Chile are enrolled in

CRUCH universities. Nevertheless, for the past years the growth in the gross enrolment has been concentrated in CFTs, IPs and private universities rather than in CRUCH universities (see Figure 2.2), which now account for only 29% of total enrolment (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012).

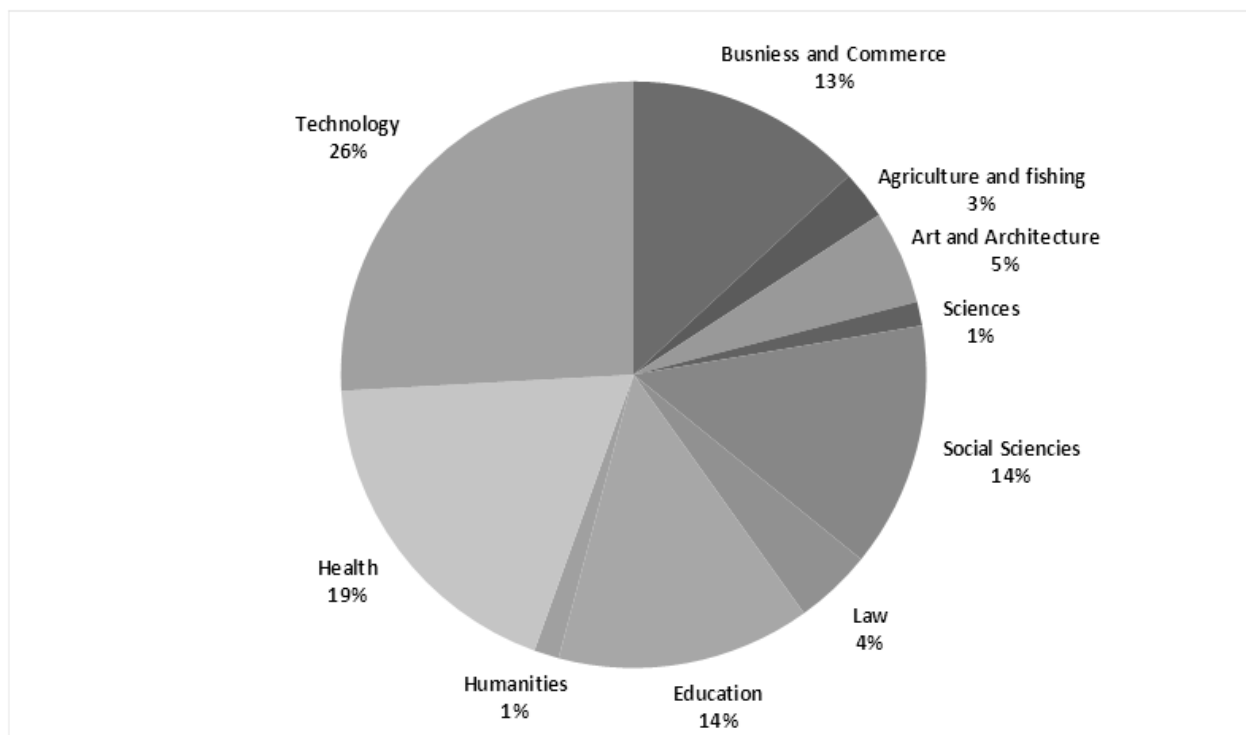
Figure 2.2 Evolution of enrolment in higher education by type of institution, 2002-2012



Source: SIES, in DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012.

In 2011 the most popular study area was Technology (26%), followed by Health-related programmes (19%), Social Sciences (14%) and Teaching (14%) (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 Share of enrolment in HEIs by knowledge area, 2011



Source: SIES, in DIVESUP/MINEDUC (2012), *Informe Nacional de Antecedentes. "El Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior en Chile"*, Comité de Coordinación. Sistema Nacional de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior en Chile (SINAC-ES), August 2012, Santiago de Chile..

Enrolment has not only increased in undergraduate courses, but also in master and doctoral programmes. In 2000 there were 6 632 students enrolled in master programmes, and this figure built-up to 29 371 in 2010. As for doctoral programmes, the number of students increased fourfold in ten years, moving from 1 053 to 4 055 (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012). Thus, the proportion of higher education students enrolled in postgraduate programmes although still small (3.3%) has more than doubled in the past ten years.

This sudden growth has brought a change in the student profile. In 2011 seven out of ten students enrolled in higher education in Chile were the first generation from their family accessing university. Most private universities, CFTs and IPs – in which students' growth is focused – established non-selective admission systems (neither school performance nor the university selection test score), encouraging more students to access HEIs (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012).

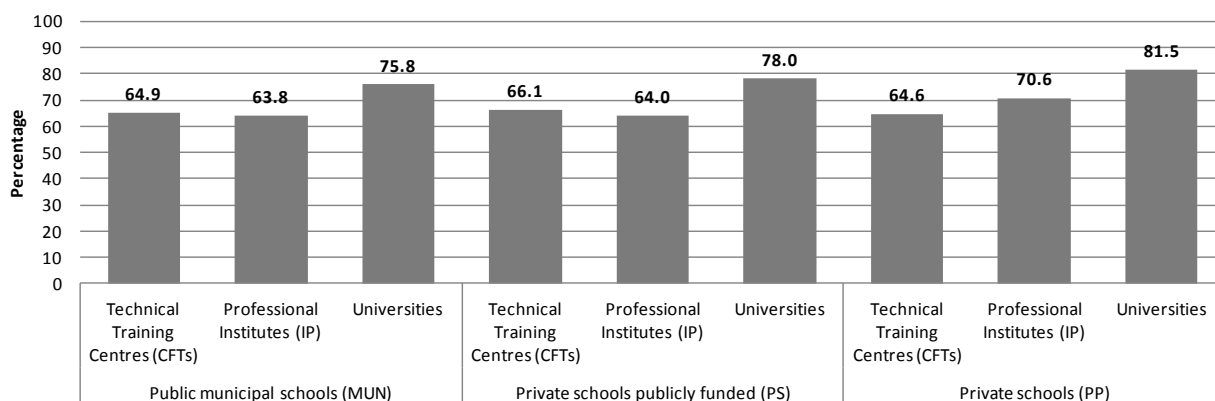
Access, retention and graduation in Higher Education

The transition from upper secondary education to higher education in Chile is decentralized and independently administered by each HEI. Social segmentation can be observed in the pattern of students accessing different types of HEIs. In 2012, CRUCH universities and eight private universities used a centralized admission selective system based on the combined results of the University entry test (*Prueba de Selección Universitaria*, PSU) and the secondary school report (*Notas de Enseñanza Media*, NEM). A high proportion of students who attended private schools (PP) – which in 2010 accounted for only 7% of the total enrolment in upper secondary education – entered universities using this selective system. Direct access, with no selection, is mainly concentrated in CFTs, IPs and non-selective private universities. Most

of the students enrolling in these institutions come from *Establecimientos Municipales* (municipal schools) (MUN) – which in 2010 accounted for 37% of the total enrolment – and *Establecimientos Particulares Subvencionados* (publicly-subsidised private schools) (PS) – which in 2010 accounted for more than half of total enrolment (54%). Proportionally, students with a lower socioeconomic background register to a lesser extent for the PSU and tend to obtain lower scores. Thus, they are less likely to gain admission to more selective institutions and programmes. In 2010, 93% of PP students took the PSU test and 76% enrolled in HEIs, while the corresponding figures for MUN students are 62% taking the PSU and 33% finally enrolling in HEIs (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012).

Differences are also observed in relation to retention of students. Three out of ten higher education students leave their institution during the first year (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012). This percentage rises to 35% for CFTs and IPs, while for universities the average is lower, at 25%. In IPs and universities, students coming from PP show higher retention rates, while students coming from MUN present the lowest percentage (Figure 2.4). The situation is not observed in CFTs, probably because only a small percentage of students coming from PP enrol in CFTs. On average, Chilean higher education programmes are long – 6.3 years on average, according to the latest SIES calculations – and delayed graduation and drop out are common, even beyond the first year of higher education studies. As noted in Chapter 1 above, in 2011 Chile presented a graduation rate for tertiary-type A programmes of 20%, below the OECD average of 38%. For type B programmes the graduation rate was 19%, above the OECD average of 14% (OECD, 2012).

Figure 2.4 Percentage of students that remain in the same institution during the first year of enrolment by type of HEI and secondary institution, 2008



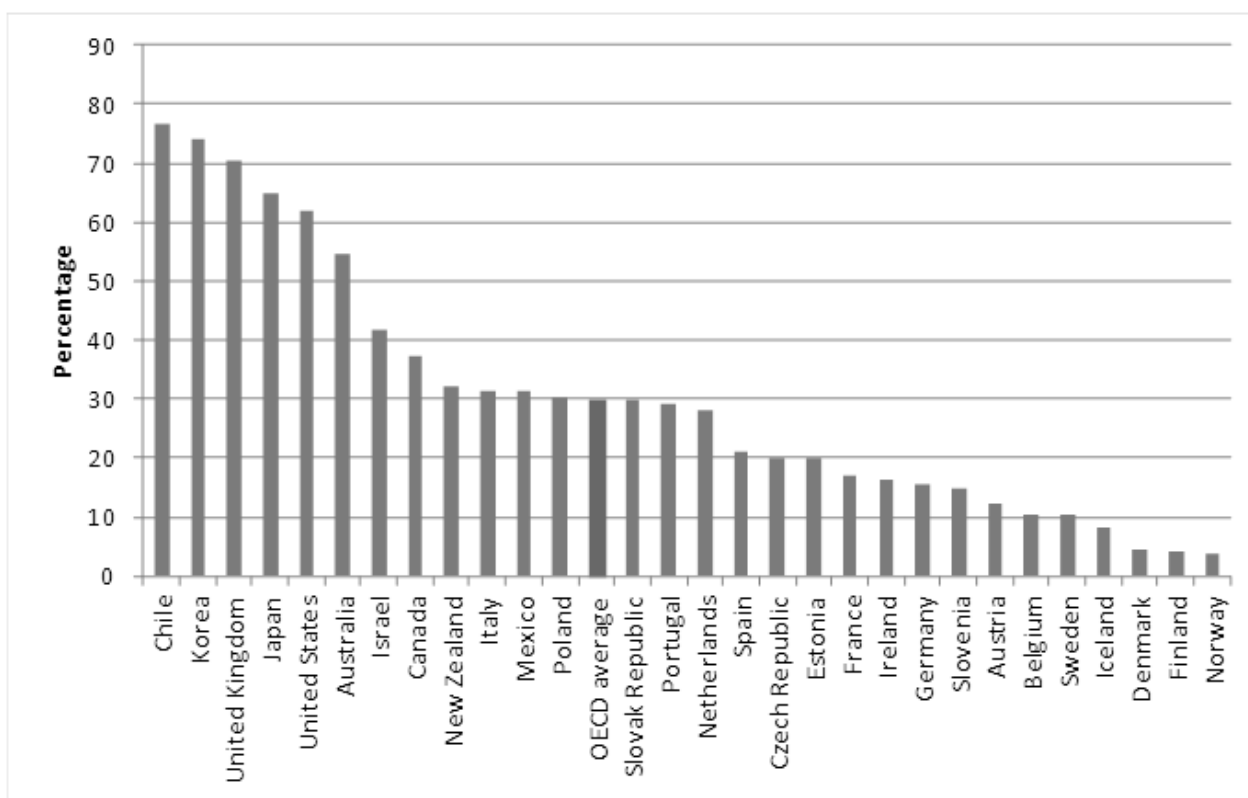
Source: SIES, in DIVESUP/MINEDUC (2012), *Informe Nacional de Antecedentes. "El Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior en Chile"*, Comité de Coordinación. Sistema Nacional de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior en Chile (SINAC-ES), August 2012, Santiago de Chile.

CRUCH institutions have always provided the largest group of graduates in the country. However, the other higher education sectors have significantly increased the number of graduates and have been growing more rapidly: in 1999 CRUCH institutions graduated 18 426 students, and in 2009 45 183. Private universities graduated 5 378 students in 1999 while ten years later the figure increased seven-fold to 38 495. IPs graduate numbers over the same period moved from 4 089 to 21 661 – a five-fold increase – and CFTs from 5 378 graduates to 16 560 (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012). Thus while CRUCH graduates represented 55% of the total in 1999, the corresponding percentage in 2009 was 37%.

Financing Higher Education

Although in recent years Chile has significantly increased public funding for higher education both absolutely and as a share of GDP, it remains as the OECD country with the highest private expenditure in higher education (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5 Share of private expenditure on higher education institutions, 2009



Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, doi: 10.1787/eag-2012-en

Institutional financing

Chilean higher education institutions have four principal sources of funding:

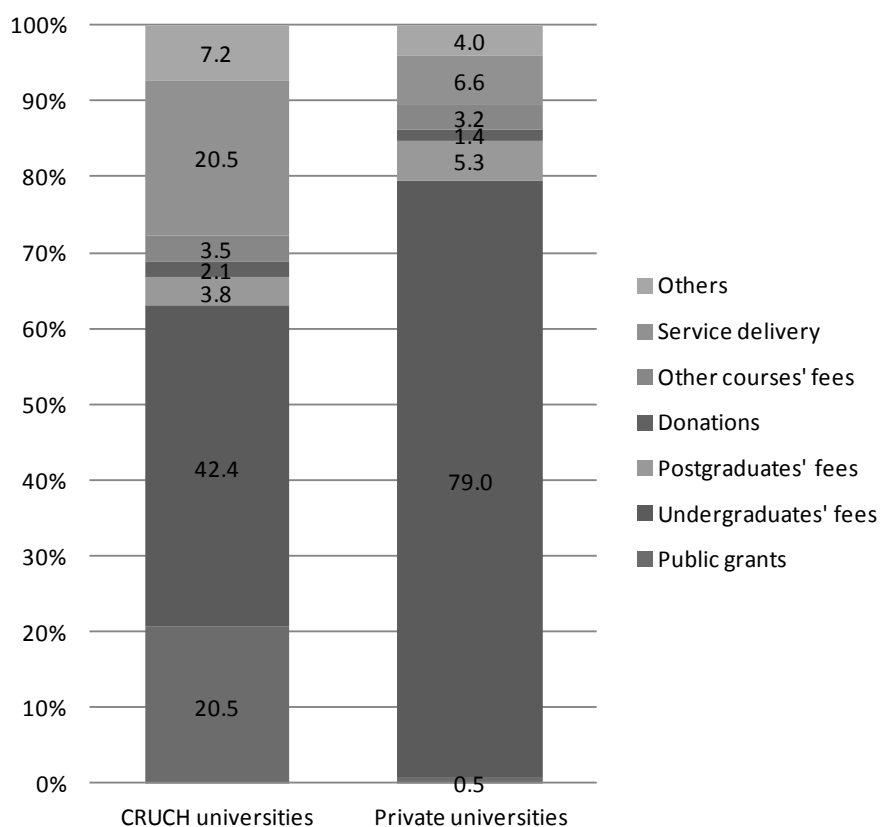
1. **Public grants and funds**, which include the direct and indirect public grants (*Aporte Fiscal Directo* (AFD) and *Aporte Fiscal Indirecto* (AFI)). CRUCH institutions have access to AFD, while private ones can only apply for AFI, which depends on the number of students enrolled with successful PSU grades, considered as an indicator of excellence. Universities receiving AFI usually have a higher proportion of students coming from *Establecimientos Particulares Privados* (private schools) PP, rather than *Establecimientos Particulares Subvencionados* (Private schools publicly funded) PS and MUN. HEIs can also apply for other institutional public funding, such as *Fondos de Desarrollo Institucional* (FDI) and *Fondos del Programa de Mejoramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior* (MECESUP) and research funding from CONICYT.
2. **Undergraduates' fees** are the money paid by students directly to HEIs. Some of this money is available to students through grants and loans, and as such represent an indirect source of public

funding for institutions, a significant part from students' own resources or, more usually, those of their families.

3. **Service delivery.** Some institutions - especially CRUCH universities- provide a range of services to the state, including for example advice on issues such as seismology or meteorology.
4. **Donations** are another funding source. Individuals can contribute to funding HEIs through their taxes. Law 18.681 regulates private donations.

Different types of HEI typically have different patterns of funding. While private universities, CFTs and IPs receive on average around 60% of their funding through tuition fees, CRUCH universities present a more diversified income structure (see Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6 Financing scheme by type of university, 2011



Source: SIES, DIVESUP/MINEDUC (2012), *Informe Nacional de Antecedentes. "El Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior en Chile"*, Comité de Coordinación. Sistema Nacional de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior en Chile (SINAC-ES), August 2012, Santiago de Chile.

Student financial support

Publicly-provided student funding in Chile is based on grants and loans. The period 2006-2011 saw major developments to the grant system with the introduction of new grants and increases in existing ones: *Beca de Excelencia Académica* (Academic Excellence scholarships) (BEA), *Becas Nuevo Milenio* (New millennium scholarship) (BNM), *Becas de Reparación Rettig-Valech* and *Becas Bicentenario* (Bicentenary scholarships) (BB) (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012). Since CRUCH institutions enrol the largest share of

higher education students, they are also the ones benefiting more from these grants. Nevertheless, for the past years the proportion of grants awarded to students from other HEIs has increased.

So far as student loans are concerned, the state provides two types:

- a) *Fondo Solidario de Crédito Universitario* (University credit solidarity fund) (FSCU), for which only students enrolled in CRUCH universities are eligible: this is an income-contingent loan and, according to DIVESUP, the recovery rate is very low.
- b) *Crédito con Aval del Estado* (State guaranteed loan system) (CAE), to which students from non-CRUCH institutions have access. It covers tuition fees, and it is dependent on *Prueba de Selección Universitaria* (University entry test) (PSU) scores. Unlike a private loan, the CAE has the advantage that no guarantee is required. CAE is mainly given to students coming from the two first income quintiles in Chile (DIVESUP/MINEDUC, 2012). On average, private universities fees are higher than CRUCH ones.

Although grants and loans do not always cover the total real cost of tuition fees and other expenditures related to higher education, they are currently available to the 60% of the students' population with lower income.

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CHAPTER 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CHILE: PROCESS, PRINCIPLES AND KEY COMPONENTS

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the current quality assurance arrangements in Chile. After outlining the main functions and actors involved in SINAC-ES, the chapter focuses on quality assurance principles. Broader considerations are then discussed, referring to the role of the state, the importance of a clear leadership in the system and the relevance of quality improvement in addition to quality assurance. The chapter concludes with some recommendations related to the broad Chilean quality assurance system.

The Chilean higher education quality assurance system (SINAC-ES)

The historical context

As noted in Chapter 2 above, until the early 1980s higher education in Chile was provided by just eight universities. At that time the concept of a quality assurance system would have been almost unknown in Chile, as in most of the rest of the world. During the past 30 years the notion of quality assurance has developed strongly driven by two quite different forces: the concern of higher education institutions to ensure that the quality of their teaching and learning is continuously improving; and the concern of the providers of funding to those institutions and to students that their money is being well spent. According to Woodhouse (in OECD, 1999): *'The phrase quality assurance refers to the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced'* but he goes on to note that *'Quality assurance is sometimes used in a more restricted sense, either to denote the achievement of a minimum standard or to refer to assuring stakeholders that quality is being achieved (i.e. accountability)'*. Therefore, the tension between accountability and improvement in quality assurance is universal and inevitable.

Following the expansion and diversification of Chilean higher education in the 1980s, the quality assurance question began to be raised in Chile in the early 1990s. The first steps to quality assurance were not taken until the creation of *Consejo Superior de Educación* (CSE), which started implementing a compulsory licensing system for new HEIs (CFTs and IPs). In 1999 the *Comisión Nacional de Acreditación de Pregrado* (Commission for the evaluation of undergraduate programmes) (CNAP) was created to start developing experimental voluntary programme accreditation. One year later, *Comisión Nacional de Acreditación de Posgrado* (Commission for the evaluation of postgraduate programmes) (CONAP) was established, with the same mission as CNAP but directed to graduates' programmes. In 2004 CNAP also started implementing accreditation at the institutional level. After this learning period, in 2006 the Law 20.129 set up the *Sistema Nacional de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior* (SINAC-ES), the National Higher Education Quality Assurance System. The law created new Quality Assurance (QA) institutions and functions.

SINAC-ES functions and main actors

The National Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SINAC-ES) provides a new framework with new actors and functions (see Figure 3.1). The main actors of the system are:

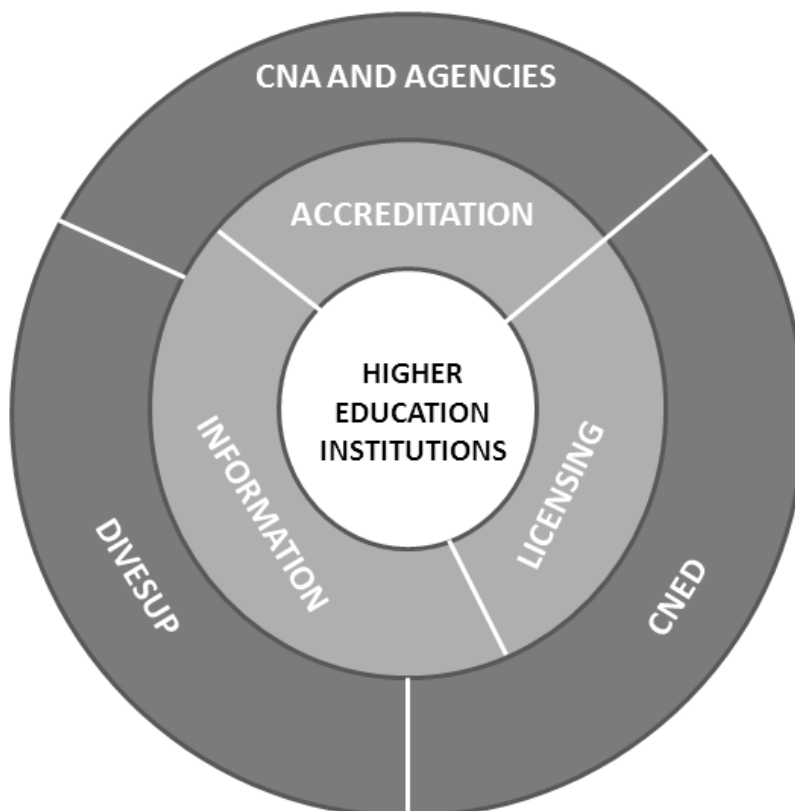
- 1) **DIVESUP**, *División de Educación Superior del Ministerio de Educación* (the Higher Education Division in the Ministry of Education) is responsible for assuring legal compliance and formally recognises HEIs. Its other main function is information gathering and dissemination, which pursues through the newly created higher education information system: *Servicio de Información de Educación Superior* (Higher education information system) (SIES).
- 2) **CNED** *Consejo Nacional de Educación*, (National Education Council) –the successor of CSE (*Consejo Superior de Educación*, Higher council of education) – has responsibilities in all levels of education. Regarding higher education it manages the licensing process, the appointment of peer reviewers, the provision of information and the conduct of appeals from accreditation decisions. The President of CNED is a renowned scholar or professor designated by the President of the Republic. CNED is composed of nine more well-known scholars and professors coming from different knowledge areas. Two of them are proposed by the President of the Republic. They are selected by CNED President and proposed by the most representative education union, the senate, CRUCH, IPs and CFTs representatives. Their mandate lasts for six years. CNED chooses an Executive Secretary who manages the Technical Secretariat.
- 3) **CNA**, *Comisión Nacional de Acreditación* (the National Accreditation Commission), manages accreditation, establishes accreditation criteria, implements institutional accreditation, authorizes Accreditation Agencies and provides public information. The President of CNA is a renowned scholar or professor designated by the President of the Republic. CNA is formed of fourteen more people, including well-known and experienced academics and professors coming from different types of higher education institution, the Head of the DIVESUP, students' representatives and the Executive Secretary, who has voice but no vote. The mandate of most of these members lasts for four years.
- 4) **Accreditation Agencies** (AAs) are private and for-profit organizations which conduct programme accreditation. They have to be authorised by the CNA in order to operate at specific knowledge areas and academic levels.

Four main functions are performed by the main bodies comprising SINAC-ES:

- 1) **Information:** SINAC-ES has the responsibility to identify, collect and disseminate public information directed to students, families, employers and society, as well as background information required by the system and its institutions. DIVESUP is the main actor in charge of the information function, though CNA and CNED also take part in delivering information on their specific performance areas. In 2007 DIVESUP created the *Sistema de Información de Educación Superior* (Higher education information system) (SIES), which is responsible for information functions.
- 2) **Licensing:** a compulsory process consisting of approval and monitoring the development of new HEIs. This function is exclusively performed by CNED. The process lasts not less than 6 years and not more than 11, and on completion leads to institutional autonomy.
- 3) **Institutional accreditation:** a voluntary process of quality assurance of autonomous institutions, through a combination of internal and external evaluation of the mechanisms, implementation and results of the institution's goals and mission. This function is exclusively run by the CNA.
- 4) **Programme accreditation:** a process of quality verification of delivered programmes in autonomous institutions, according to the goals and mission declared. Programme accreditation is obligatory for health and education programmes, voluntary for others. This function can be either

performed by the CNA or by Accreditation Agencies, which can be either dedicated to specific subjects or to wider academic areas.

Figure 3.1 SINAC-ES main actors and functions



Source: self-elaboration, from CNA, (Comisión Nacional de Acreditación) (National Accreditation Commission) (2012), www.cnachile.cl/.

In 2006 the 20.129 law created a *Comité de Coordinación* (Coordination Committee) (CC) in charge of assuring the adequate functioning of the system. This CC is composed of the Vice-president of CNED, the President of CNA and the Head of DIVESUP. The Executive Secretary of CNED acts as the Secretary of the CC. The CC was expected to meet at least three times a year, and extraordinary meetings could be held by legitimate request of any of the bodies integrating the SINAC-ES. During 2012 more than 3 meetings have been celebrated by the CC, with formal records of the topics discussed and decisions taken. Although several meetings have been declared prior to 2012, no formal records are available.

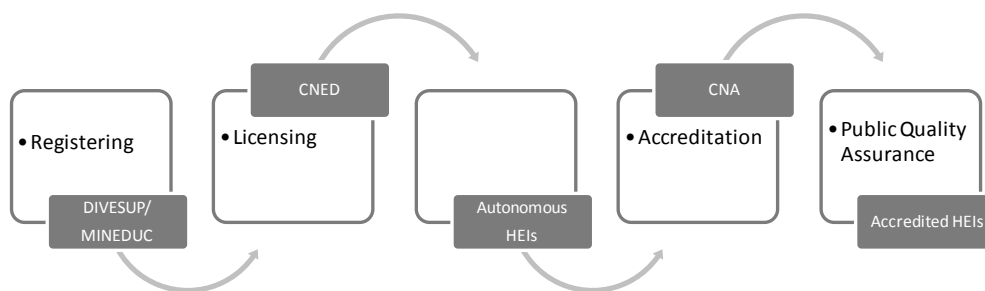
The Quality Assurance process

For newly-created HEIs the first step is to formally register statutes in the DIVESUP/MINEDUC office (see Figure 3.2). After this legal procedure, institutions have to go through the compulsory process of licensing, which may take a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 11 years. The eight CRUCH HEIs, created before 1981 (see Table 1 in chapter 2), were already considered autonomous within the new higher education framework and did not have to undertake the licensing process. The rest of HEIs created after

1981 (private universities, IPs and CFTs) had to get the autonomous status. During the 1980s these institutions were going under the supervision of a CRUCH institution in order to get the institutional autonomy. After the creation of *Consejo Superior de Educación* (Higher Education Council) (CSE) in 1990, new universities and IPs were under its supervision to get the autonomous status, while the Ministry of Education was in charge of CFTs. This first compulsory process to attain autonomy used to be called *acreditación* (accreditation), while in the current SINAC-ES system it is known as *licenciamiento* (licensing).

Once an institution is licensed, it becomes autonomous and can develop according to its mission, creating new programmes, new branch campuses and enrolling more students. Since institutional accreditation is a voluntary process, there may be some institutions that do not undertake it. Thus, there is not a fixed period between licensing and accreditation. The main incentive for accreditation relates to funding. Successful institutional accreditation leads to eligibility of students for state funding. Programme accreditation is compulsory only for pedagogy and medicine, although some of those interviewed by the review team proposed that other professions should be included. Both institutional and programme accreditation lead to public recognition of quality assurance and HEIs become responsible for maintaining it.

Figure 3.2 The Quality Assurance process



Source: self-elaboration, CNA, (Comisión Nacional de Acreditación) (2012), Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior, Presentation, 17th July 2012, Santiago de Chile, 2012.

Elements of an Effective Quality Assurance System

Key quality assurance principles

The review team has sought to understand the operation of different aspects of the current Chilean higher education quality assurance system (*Sistema Nacional de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior*) (SINAC-ES) and to assess the overall performance of the system in the context of international experience. In doing so the team found it helpful to articulate a number of principles or objectives which, on the basis of its experience, it suggests should underpin all elements of SINAC-ES and which will help build cohesion for the system.

A system of quality assurance and quality enhancement should aim to:

- Promote equity, relevance and efficiency in the higher education system concerned
- Guarantee minimum standards in order to protect the interests of every student
- Foster a culture of quality and professionalism which leads to continuous improvement in both: the wider higher education system and in the quality assurance process itself
- Support the active involvement of stakeholders, especially students and employers, in order to promote responsiveness and relevance of higher education
- Allow for the diversity of institutions, programmes and modes of provision of higher education, in order to foster its flexibility and fitness for purpose
- Embed transparency and openness to inspire trust and confidence
- Be open to the experiences of other countries in order to learn from them and to promote international engagement and mobility

The review team recommends that the principal actors in Chilean higher education should collectively agree on a similar set of principles that could guide their future work. The team's views might form a basis for this, but what is important is to build consensus on objectives which are appropriate to the Chilean context. Box 3.1 summarises as an example the standards and guidelines for quality assurance which have been proposed for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Collective ownership of such principles would support more consistent ways of working across the system.

Box 3.1. Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

In collaboration with its members and other organisations, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) proposed a series of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance within higher education institutions, as well as for external quality assurance agencies. These standards and guidelines are based on a number of basic principles on quality assurance which include:

- Higher education providers have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance.
- Interests of society in quality and standards of HE need to be safeguarded.
- Academic programmes' quality need to be developed and improved for students and other beneficiaries of HE.
- Programmes need to be provided in efficient and effective organisational structures.
- The importance of transparency and the use of external expertise in quality assurance processes are important.
- There should be support for a culture of quality within HE institutions.
- Processes should be designed in a way that institutions can demonstrate accountability of both, public and private resources.
- Make compatible quality assurance for accountability purposes with quality assurance for enhancement.
- Quality of institutions should be demonstrable domestically as well as internationally.
- Quality assurance processes should not stifle diversity and innovation.

Standards and guidelines developed following the principles listed above guide and assist institutions to improve education, forming a background for quality assurance and making external quality assurance more transparent and simpler to understand for everybody.

Source: ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) (2009), www.enqa.eu.

Taking as a point of departure the key quality assurance principles set out above, the review team concludes that SINAC-ES does not yet satisfy these principles in a number of respects:

- Basic assurance of minimum standards is not consistently provided
- A quality culture which embraces continuous improvement is still only emerging
- The role of users – notably students and employers - in assuring quality is peripheral
- The system has been developed with the missions, practices and aspirations of the longer-established universities in mind, and to be more suited to them. This tendency for a ‘one size fits all’ approach is perceived to be unsuited to the development of vocational and professionally oriented institutions
- A lack of transparency about how decisions are made within SINAC-ES has weakened confidence within the system and created mistrust in the public mind about the judgments that it makes
- The lack of an integrated and verifiable information system has led to a loss of trust in the data which is provided, and contributed to a situation in which information can be misleadingly presented
- There appears to be no clear strategy for international engagement

In order to perform well and satisfy the objectives set for it, a quality assurance system needs to incorporate a number of elements. These include mechanisms for:

- Ensuring all provision meets certain standards of quality
- Enhancing HEIs own capacity for quality assurance and improvement
- Assuring the quality of individual programmes
- Delivering timely, accurate and relevant information to decision makers in and users of the system
- Ensuring engagement with international developments in higher education quality assurance

The remainder of this report examines how the current quality assurance system is performing in each of these areas and makes recommendations for improvement. The efforts which have been made in the few years since 2006 have to be acknowledged. But the review team’s overall assessment is that, while the basic building blocks are present to some extent, because of their initial design and subsequent implementation, they have yet to deliver what is required to assure the quality of Chilean higher education either now or in the future. SINAC-ES cannot be said to be more than partially meeting the objectives set out for it. The team’s view is that given the lack of confidence in the system on the part of students, institutions and wider society, it needs to be over-hauled. Addressing the issues that are causing concern will require some fundamental changes: there is a need for additional mechanisms and a significant redesign of some of the current mechanisms, and these have all to find their place in a broader policy context which is itself changing.

Broader Quality System Considerations

Before focusing on the design of the components of Chile’s quality assurance system, there are some more general considerations that have to be taken into account. These are discussed in the following sections.

Clarifying the Role of the State

Chilean higher education demonstrates a strong commitment to institutional diversity, implying the possibility of entry to the system by new providers, and to student choice, implying a reliance on informed

decision making by students and their families. The expectation is that the operation of a relatively free market in higher education will produce good outcomes. It is unlikely that this basic operating paradigm will change significantly in the near future.

In such a context there can sometimes be a view that it is inappropriate for the state to become involved in regulating or monitoring the activity of autonomous institutions or private agents. However across OECD countries it is recognised that the state plays a key role in promoting the best possible outcomes in higher education. One of the key policy levers is to ensure appropriate competition between HEIs, as an incentive for better performance, economic efficiency and quality in education (OECD, 2008). While there are many advantages to the use of market mechanisms in higher education systems, some risks have also been identified. An inadequately regulated market in higher education may result in too great a focus on income generation and profitability rather than teaching and research.

It is the underlying assumption of this report that, as with any market, there is a role for the state to ensure that a regulatory framework is in place that safeguards the interests of consumers. Moreover education is a service of which the quality can only be assessed (sometimes with a considerable delay) after the decision by the consumer to invest. Thus, there is a strong case for oversight and leadership as well as regulation.

As systems mature and institutions build up a track record of performance, then individual decision makers are better placed to make well informed investment decisions. But in the Chilean case with a significant number of relatively new providers and many new programmes on offer, the case for the state to adopt approaches that support and strengthen the operation of the market is even stronger. Both on the consumers' side and the providers' side, government has a role in developing policies to ensure that students make their choices advisedly (OECD, 2008).

Viewing Quality Assurance as an Integrated Whole

The main structural elements of a quality assurance system are already in place in Chile and, to some extent at least, have become accepted by the higher education sector. This is no mean achievement, given the circumstances of growth and diversification in recent decades. However, in order to strengthen the foundations on which these elements are based and to extend and improve their capacities some changes are necessary to those structural elements. It is important that the national framework for quality assurance and enhancement should be sufficiently coherent to be understood by all relevant stakeholders - both within the HE sector and outside -, and sufficiently responsive to inspire greater confidence in its processes for those being reviewed. And its reports and judgments need to be consistent, robust and transparent.

Subsequent chapters of this report will focus on the operation of the various components of SINAC-ES, but the overall outcomes achieved by the quality assurance system will be dependent just as much on how the different parts of the quality assurance system work together. The keys to the success of a new approach are first to make accreditation mandatory and periodic, and second to ensure closer linkage between the licensing and accreditation processes. This will allow Chile to build on the structures and bodies already in place but will require clarification and modification of the respective responsibilities of the bodies concerned, as well as changes in their methods of work

A lack of leadership

The review team's view is that the operation of SINAC-ES as a whole has been fragmented. While the licensing body (*Consejo Nacional de Educación*, National Education Council) (CNED) and the institutional accreditation agency (*Comisión Nacional de Acreditación*) (CNA) play distinct roles within the system, the relationship between them has not been as effective as had been envisaged. The team

believes that this weakness has undermined public confidence in the quality of higher education. Similarly, the processes for institutional accreditation and programme accreditation do not appear to inform each other.

As noted above, the *Comité de Coordinación* (Coordinating Committee) (CC) comprising the three key agencies (DIVESUP, CNED and CNA) met on several occasions between 2007 and 2011, but without any formal record being made of the proceedings. In 2012 the CC met several times with formal acts of the meetings. This lack of formality in the coordination function may be symptomatic of reluctance on the part of any of the three key actors to be seen to be taking a dominant role.

In moving forward it will be important to ensure that the different components of the quality assurance system work cohesively to ensure that quality assurance and the general thrust for improvement are reinforced. Quality assurance and quality enhancement should be seen as part of a continuous, cyclical process of assurance and enhancement rather than a one-off event. How this should be done is identified as part of recommendations for change discussed further below.

Towards a new architecture

A coherent quality assurance system requires a clear and appropriate definition of roles and a well-understood articulation between its various elements. Currently, the constituent elements (DIVESUP, CNED and CNA) have relatively well-defined roles within SINAC-ES. However, they are not grounded in a coherent strategy and it is unclear how – collectively or individually – they are expected or willing to take responsibility for the system as a whole and for its impact on higher education in Chile. The diagram used to characterise SINAC-ES (Figure 3.1) is telling: it portrays a system of three equal partners, with no hierarchy. Implicitly however, the fact that the Presidents of both CNED and CNA are nominees of the President of the Republic suggests that ultimately the Government has the responsibility for ensuring that conditions are in place under which the system as a whole can operate effectively, and this manifestly also reflects political reality.

The review team therefore recommends that the SINAC-ES should be restructured in order to better reflect and embody the realities of the relationships between its main components. This restructuring should also deal with the most obvious anomaly in the current system, namely the role of CNED as the appellate body for CNA decisions on accreditation. This role appears to engender misunderstanding and tension, and implies a higher level of responsibility or authority, at least in this important regard, but there does not appear to be any expectation that it should exercise any broader oversight of the operation of the system, the CNA or Accreditation Agencies.

Within the existing quality assurance institutional framework one possibility would be to expand the role of CNED, so that it incorporates what are currently the accreditation functions of the CNA, and is given overall responsibility for the functioning of the quality assurance system (licensing, accreditation, information and quality enhancement) and monitoring its effectiveness. This would appear to sit well with what is understood to be the CNED's broad mandate for evaluating the overall performance of the education system. However, if CNED would take over both licensing and accreditation processes the SINAC-ES would need to establish a new approach to dealing with accreditation appeals.

Given the lack of an ombudsman role in the system and the increased workload that our recommendations would impose on quality assurance bodies, an alternative - which would amount to very much the same thing - would be to bring these functions together under the auspices of the CNA or a new agency or higher education council based on it, with CNED continuing to serve the role as an overall monitor of the quality assurance system's effectiveness. What is essential, as is discussed further below, is that there are much stronger links between the licensing and institutional accreditation processes with

feedback from accreditation processes informing on-going licensing status. Whatever solution is adopted should bring the licensing and accreditation processes closer together and support these tighter links.

A new architecture for SINAC-ES must take account of - and be consistent with - other elements of higher education governance and such a solution would fit well with what we understand to be the Government's proposals for a *Superintendencia* and an Undersecretariat of Higher Education³. A future re-constituted Coordinating Committee might then have the heads of SINAC-ES, *Superintendencia* and Undersecretariat as key actors. The main function of the *Superintendencia* would be to ensure compliance, leaving the new quality agency to focus on quality assurance and improvement, while the Undersecretariat would deal with policy matters such as access and equity, as well as ensuring the collection and dissemination of reliable information about the system, both for management purposes and for the benefit of its users.

A Focus on Quality Improvement as much as Quality Assurance

Quality in higher education neither comes nor is sustained only through the quality assurance system. It is the result of many activities most of them arising through the teaching, learning and assessment practices and the general academic culture within the institutions. Guidance and support at higher education system level is particularly needed for such activities when the national higher education system is growing and the international higher education scene is constantly evolving.

The three Chilean quality assurance key agencies (DIVESUP, CNED and CNA) have concentrated their efforts on regulatory and supervisory issues and mechanisms, while leaving those of quality enhancement, learning assessment, teachers' capability among others to the higher education institutions. If in addition to quality *assurance* SINAC-ES is also willing to work on quality *improvement*, these three key agencies have to modify their approach.

One of the most useful aspects of quality assurance mechanisms is the impact they have on the institutions' overall quality culture. The preparation, documentation and other aspects of the accreditation processes incite institutions to make a collective reflection on the purpose, practices and outcomes of their academic programmes. This applies even more in present circumstances when the pace of change in knowledge, technology and society at large is so fast. The joint intellectual effort of the quality assurance mechanisms should give way not only to more effective actions; it should provoke a different mind-set, a "new" academic culture unceasingly seeking to improve. Should the quality assurance mechanisms fail to achieve this, new ways should be sought to generate it. Otherwise the mechanisms will become a mere "box ticking" exercise. Over the past 25-30 years Chile has been at the forefront of Latin America in a number of higher education movements, including accreditation and quality assurance processes established originally by CNAP. However, these seem to have been discontinued or disconnected and have not reached teaching, learning and assessment practices. Efforts in recovering the lessons learnt and introducing them into the higher education system would bring quality as well as a sense of achieving it.

International dimension of Quality Assurance

During the review it appeared that the current debate about quality assurance is almost entirely domestically focused. While this is understandable - given current concerns and issues - it would appear very important that an international dimension is brought to bear in the development of the quality systems within Chilean higher education. There are a number of reasons for this:

³ The bill for creating a *Superintendencia* was introduced in the Congress on 22 November 2011 and discussed as a high priority matter in the Education Commission of the Senate; the bill for creating an Undersecretariat has not been formulated yet, although the intention to do so has been publicly announced.

- The ability of Chilean graduates to be able to study and work internationally - and therefore realise the maximum value from the investment they have made in education - will be significantly impacted by perceptions of and confidence in the quality of the Chilean system.
- Moreover, the longer term economic and social development of Chile will be dependent on having a work-force that is internationally competitive. Assessing the quality of Chilean education against international benchmarks can support this.
- Almost inevitably the level of provision by international providers is going to grow significantly in the coming years, either through their partnering with Chilean institutions or their entry to Chile in a standalone capacity. The growth of on-line learning will be a significant factor in this. The quality assurance system needs to be able to accommodate this.
- Similarly, Chilean institutions may well expand their international presence over time, particularly in partnership with other institutions. Decisions will be required on the role the quality assurance system should play in assuring international delivery and the extent to which proactive monitoring will be required in order to protect the overall reputation of the Chilean system.
- There are tools and capability available internationally that the Chilean system can draw on as it develops its own capacities further.

Some implications for other areas of higher education policy

The recommendations outlined in this report seek to address the current concerns about the weaknesses of SINAC-ES and lead to more robust outcomes. However, it would be wrong to think that changes to the quality assurance system will address all of the current concerns regarding higher education in Chile. Some of the concerns the review team heard during their visit to Chile relate more to policy settings regarding access, levels and means of state support and the role of private provision.

While it is not within the scope of this report to address those issues, it has to be acknowledged that other policy settings or approaches can have a significant influence on the actual and perceived quality of higher education outcomes. Three that are particularly significant are:

- 1) **The development of professional capability:** the operation of a rigorous quality assurance system and the development of a quality culture have at their heart a high level of professional capability at all levels and throughout the system. This capability is not something that can be developed instantaneously but requires extensive experience in the operation of quality systems with on-going reflection and learning. The support for this process is critical. Providing a broad range of opportunities to learn about quality systems and gain insight from what others are doing is essential to the development of the necessary skills sets. Participation in peer review exercises is one way individuals can contribute to the strength of others' systems and learn from the practice of others as well as develop a more detailed understanding of thinking about quality systems. But some form of direct professional capability development sponsored by the government is also likely to be desirable. In a system based on competition between providers and a high level of private provision there may be resistance to exchange of ideas between institutions and government support for or sponsorship of capability development. In the short term the benefits to overall quality from such developments is likely to outweigh any disadvantage for the competitive functioning of the system.

- 2) **The use of funding mechanisms as a driver for quality:** currently in Chile access to government funding is an incentive for institutions to seek accreditation. However, the funding and student support systems do not act as on-going motivators of quality improvement. This means that the quality assurance system needs to work harder and be more robust relative to other countries where performance thresholds and incentives can be set as a routine part of the funding system. While a major change in funding arrangements is not expected to be an outcome of this review, it is important to acknowledge that there are additional ways to influence quality such as providing differentiated funding resources for accreditation and quality improvement. There are a range of existing options that could be introduced, like making a portion of funding dependent on completion and retention.
- 3) **The development of reliable information about outcomes:** Chile is (or appears to be) at the decentralised end of the spectrum in so far as coordination of provision is concerned. There is a very strong focus on decision making by individuals about their higher education requirements; and by individual institutions about how that demand is to be met. While this should promote a strong focus on an efficient and responsive system, it does rely on very good information about offers and outcomes flowing to all the participants in the system. Gaps in this information can sometimes lead to mismatches between the aggregate outcomes of the system and the on-going needs of the economy, with adverse impacts for perceptions of the “quality” of the system. For this reason, some countries have chosen to invest in collective information generating through the production of skills strategies either at a national or sector level. In this regard we note the initiative to develop Skills Councils in strategic economic sectors (DIVESUP, 2012) and see this as a useful development in support of broader concepts of quality.

Findings and Recommendations

The observations and analysis of the review team can be summarized as follows:

- There would be real benefit if the stakeholders in Chilean higher education – and this includes its users as well as the providers - could collectively agree on a set of principles to guide the work of the higher education system and its participants. Collective ownership of such principles would support more aligned ways of working across the system, especially in reference to quality assurance.
- Securing improvement to the quality assurance system is urgent. While the basic building blocks to ensure good quality assurance are present, they still do not effectively deliver what is required to assure quality in Chilean higher education. Significant changes to the system are required to secure minimum standards, promote a quality culture, integrate the voices of students and employers in the quality assurance process, adjust the system to its institutional diversity, improve transparency in decision making, and provide an integrated and verifiable information system and a clear strategy for internationalisation.
- This will require additional mechanisms and a significant redesign of some of the current ones, and these have all to find their place in a broader policy context which is itself changing. The most important steps are to clarify system leadership and to bring together the processes of institutional licensing and accreditation by making the former conditional and the latter mandatory.

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CHAPTER 4. ENSURING ADEQUATE STANDARDS OF PROVISION THROUGH QUALITY ASSURANCE: LICENSING AND ACCREDITATION

Higher education institutions wishing to operate in Chile must go through the licensing process to get a green light to start operating in the system. Subsequent institutional and programme accreditation is however voluntary. In this chapter the licensing and accreditation processes are reviewed, as is the relationship between the two processes, from the perspective of how well they support adequate standards of provision. The chapter provides recommendations in regard to these two processes and suggestions for strengthened linkages between them.

Effective quality assurance is dependent on having robust systems controlling the quality of institutions which are allowed to operate within the system, at the same time that monitoring the on-going operation of those institutions to ensure that they maintain adequate standards over time.

In this respect the Chilean system is reliant on both the initial licensing process and the institutional accreditation process. Each is assessed from the perspective of adequacy to deliver the quality assurance elements that are required in a robust system.

The role of licensing in assuring quality

All institutions wishing to operate in Chile are required to be licensed by the CNED (*Consejo Nacional de Educación*) (National Education Council). Once fully licensed, an institution can operate autonomously within the system. The licensing process started with the growth and diversification of HEIs. The current licensing process is mandatory for all new HEIs. It starts with the approval of the institutional project, continues verifying and evaluating the implementation of the approved project and finishes with the statement of autonomy. The verification process lasts a minimum of six years, after which CNED decides if the evaluation process may continue for five more years, or the institution is ready to be autonomous. After the extra five years of project verification, CNED has to decide either to grant the statement of autonomy to the institution or to order the closing of the institution (see Figure 4.1). During this maximum of 11 years, CNED evaluates infrastructure, economic and financial resources, academic staff, and services, among other topics. Universities are also evaluated on research and other specific subjects regarding this type of higher education institution.

Figure 4.1 The licensing process



Source: self-elaboration, from CNED, 2012.

Since its creation, 144 projects have been submitted to CNED (58 universities, 56 IPs and 30 CFTs). Among all these projects, 28 were rejected to go through the licensing process, 42 attained autonomy and 51 had to be closed. The rest are still going under the licensing process (CNED, 2012).

The overall assessment of this review is that the purpose and focus of the current licensing system is appropriate and that the licensing regime should continue to play a key role in quality assurance within the system. The approach to licensing whereby an institution is first given a green light to operate but then undergoes a probationary period before being fully licensed is also a good model. However this principle needs to be maintained: the loss of oversight after licensing and the fact that accreditation is discretionary are two major issues which need to be addressed.

There are, therefore, a number of modifications to the licensing system that are very desirable in order to strengthen quality assurance and serve the overall objectives of the system. First, a major weakness of the current system is that an institution can be licensed while operating at a particular scale and scope of activity, but once licensed can expand its range of programmes, operating sites and numbers of students by several orders of magnitude (see Table 4.1). Once an institution has been licensed by CNED it has autonomy and there is no further check on its capability to maintain quality on a larger scale of operations. This weakness in the system has seemingly given rise to many of the issues of quality that are currently of such concern in Chile.

Table 4.1 Development of Universities after autonomy

| | Average when receiving autonomy | Average in the third year after autonomy | Average in 2012 |
|--|---------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Number of students on first year enrolment | 658 | 1 990 | 3 276 |
| Total number of students enrolled | 2 340 | 5 680 | 12 240 |
| Number of programs | 14.3 | 56.1 | 96 |
| Number of headquarters | 1.1 | 3.3 | 4.0 |
| Number of campuses | 1.6 | 4.8 | 6.24 |

Source: INDICES, in CNED 2012.

In order to address this issue it is recommended that licensing for an institution be for an agreed scale and scope of activity, as set out in an institutional business plan which should form the basis for the initial

approval. Expansion in operations beyond that projected in the initial business plan should at least trigger a further review by the CNED as to the adequacy of the systems within the institution to support the enhanced level of activity. Ideally a process of regular, mandatory quality review should be in place which takes licensing as its starting point.

The time frames for receiving full licensing should also be reviewed in order to ensure that they are appropriate for different types of institutions. The current 6 plus 5 formula may be appropriate for a large university, but might be unnecessarily delaying or preventing the entry of new smaller providers into the system, particularly in the areas of vocational and technical education. The proposal to tie initial licensing to an initial business plan also reduces the need to provide assurance for a range of possible development scenarios that an institution might follow. It is recommended that consideration be given to permitting greater flexibility in the timeframes for initial licensing depending on the scale, scope and nature of the institution's proposed operation. For instance, a university operating on a significant scale may require the full five years of provisional licensing as currently, but a small vocational institution could demonstrate its capability in a much shorter timeframe.

Finally, a significant weakness in the current licensing system is that there appears to be no on-going monitoring to ensure that an institution is operating in a manner consistent with the granting of the initial licensing, and no sanctions available even if they are found to not be doing so.

The review team believes that there needs to be an additional mechanism to check at regular intervals that the quality of the teaching and learning at individual institutions is being maintained at a level consistent with the original licensing decision. Within the existing system one possibility would be for the CNED to develop an additional monitoring function to undertake this task. However, as noted above, a better approach would be to align the institutional accreditation system more tightly with the licensing system and use it to provide assurance that institutions are continuing to operate in line with their initial license from the perspective of teaching and learning.

This review strongly endorses the intention to establish a *Superintendencia* to monitor basic compliance of institutions with a range of financial, legal, information and reporting requirements. This will help to address some of the concerns about institutions departing from the assurances that were provided when they were initially licensed.

The role of institutional accreditation in assuring quality

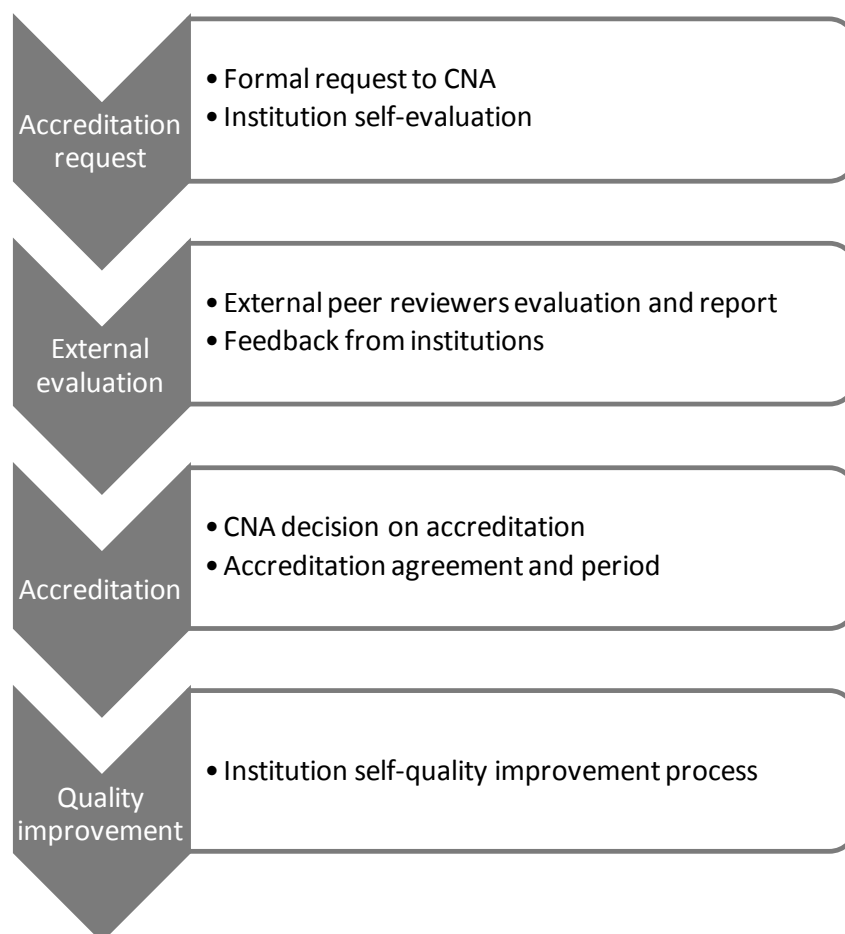
Since 2006 higher education institutions in Chile have had the choice of entering a process to seek institutional accreditation. CNA is responsible for institutional accreditation and its mission in relation to it is to publicly certify the quality of an institution and its ability to manage its quality and standards. Since it is a voluntary process, institutions willing to be accredited have to make a formal request to CNA to agree on the accreditation calendar and areas to be accredited. After that, the institution has to elaborate a self-evaluation report, pointing out institution's strengths and weaknesses. An external evaluation is conducted by expert peer reviewers, who are responsible for producing a report to be delivered to the CNA. With these reports and the institution's feedback, the CNA has to decide on the accreditation period to be awarded to the institution. The accreditation period can be of a minimum of one and a maximum of seven years. In practice, the CNA uses four grades:

1. Insufficient (No accreditation)
2. Satisfactory (3 years)
3. Appropriate (5 years)

4. Optimal (7 years)

Accreditation renewal is also voluntary. Once accreditation has been awarded, quality improvement becomes HEIs responsibility (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 The Institutional Accreditation process



Source: self-elaboration, from CNA, 2012.

While the approach to institutional accreditation has some merit and has supported some favourable quality developments which will be discussed further below, it has been of very limited use as a tool for assuring the quality of higher education for two reasons:

- 1) **It is voluntary** and to date only 46% of institutions are accredited (SIES, 2012). High variability is observed according to the institution type: 100% CRUCH institutions are accredited, 74% among private universities, 38% of IPs and 16% of CFTs. While there are reputational and financial benefits to accreditation, at a time of rapid change and with a significant private contribution to the costs of education, these incentives are not strong enough to make the accreditation system a robust quality lever.
- 2) **There are weak consequences flowing from non-accreditation.** Aside from the loss of marketing advantage and students eligibility for public funding (grants and loans), there are no consequences

in terms of the overall institution from not being accredited. Again, this diminishes the importance of the institutional accreditation as a tool to assure quality.

To address these issues the review team recommends that institutional accreditation be renamed institutional quality review and be made mandatory. It also recommends that institutions that are found not to be meeting the expectations of the institutional quality review process be returned to provisional licensing status and placed under supervision. Such institutions should have a period of time to improve their systems to the required standards or lose their license.

In making these recommendations the review team recognises the significance of what is proposed, but believes that the identified weaknesses in the quality assurance system warrant such action if Chile is to address current concerns about the quality of provision. Although this is a significant change in the current approach and may well be seen as a significant infringement on institutional autonomy, there are existing international examples. All HEIs that are part of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) are subject to regular mandatory reviews. Ministers of the Bologna Process signatory states invited the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) to develop the standards and guidelines to be followed in the EHEA, among which periodic reviews of HEIs are found. This specific standard proposes that external quality assurance should be undertaken on a cyclical basis and that the length of the cycle and the review procedures should be defined and published in advance. The main guideline is that subsequent external institutional reviews should take into account the progress made in reference to the previous review (ENQA, 2009).

Implementation Issues

If implemented, the recommendations above could put significant pressure on the capacity and capability of the quality assurance system. In order to build public confidence that the quality issues in the Chilean system are being addressed, it will be necessary to quickly review institutions which are being seen to be the source of most concern in terms of quality. Given this and the proposed mandatory nature of the process, the volume of quality review activity could be considerably higher than that experienced in the accreditation process to date. In order to maintain confidence in the quality of the review process and also proceed as quickly as is desirable, it will be necessary to develop clear criteria to prioritise review focus and also develop and access review capability. Use of international review agencies could continue to be a useful supplement to Chilean resources. Even though CNED and CNA are already in contact with some international organisation such as the *Red Internacional de Agencias de Aseguramiento de la Calidad en la Educación Superior* (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) (INQAAHE), *Red Iberoamericana para la Acreditación de la Calidad de la Educación Superior* (Iberoamerican Network for Quality Accreditation of Higher Education) (RIACES), *Red de Agencias Nacionales de Acreditación* (National Accreditation Agencies Network) (RANA) del Sector Educativo MERCOSUR and *Red de Administraciones de Universidades Iberoamericanas* (Latin American University Authorities Network) (RAUI), further advice and guidance might also be sought from bodies such as the *European University Association* (EUA) – in particular its Institutional Evaluation Programme -, the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA) and the *Council for Higher Education Accreditation* (CHEA), which has just established a new International Quality Assurance entity.

Findings and Recommendations

The observations and analysis of the review team can be summarized as follows:

- Using a licensing process, incorporating a probationary period, in order to establish the authority for new providers to operate is a good approach. However, once licensed the

institution is not further checked on its capability to maintain quality on a larger scale of operation. The review team suggests that the licensing for institutions should be for an agreed scale and scope of activity. Expansion in operations beyond this agreed scope should trigger further review.

- The present licensing timeframe (the 6+5 formula) may be reviewed in order to accommodate the needs of the diverse types of HEIs integrating the higher education system. While this timeframe may be adequate for a large university it might be too long for a new smaller provider into the system. Thus, greater flexibility in the time frames of the licensing process is proposed.
- There is a need for continued monitoring, and sanctions, to make sure autonomous HEIs are performing as expected in the initial licensing. The review team recommends the implementation of a mechanism to regularly check the quality of teaching and learning. Institutional accreditation has been limited in its effectiveness as a tool for assuring the quality of higher education, mainly because of its voluntary nature and weak consequences flowing from non-accreditation. The review team suggests that accreditation – perhaps renamed institutional review – should be mandatory and periodic. If expectations of the institutional quality review process are not met, the institution should be placed under supervision and return to provisional licensing status. After a period for improvement, if required standards are not attained the institution would lose its license to operate.
- If regular reviews are to be implemented, the development of clear criteria to prioritise and develop review capability is required. Advice and guidance from international bodies, as well as methods that have previously been used by CNAP, is recommended to do so.
- The review team welcomes the establishment of a *Superintendencia* to monitor basic compliance of institutions with a range of financial, legal, information and reporting requirements.

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CHAPTER 5. ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF PROVISION AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Although the key elements to promote quality improvement are in place, there are some areas for concern regarding the concept of accreditation, the diverse nature of higher education institutions and the lack of guidelines and standards to support institutions in the quality assurance process. This chapter proposes some recommendations for improvement in what is currently known as institutional accreditation in order to support continuous quality improvement. It also acknowledges the challenges in implementing the changes to the system and how to address them during the transitional period.

The previous section has discussed how the basic components of quality assurance are working and how they can be strengthened. The other critical goal of a quality system is that it promotes continuous improvement. This section looks at the effectiveness of current practice with respect to promoting continuous improvement at an institutional level.

What is currently known as institutional accreditation has already been introduced in the previous section. In some respects the underlying intent of the accreditation system was well informed from a quality improvement perspective. It does formally have at its heart an improvement focus and it is evident from comments made to the review team during the team's interviews in Chile that the accreditation system has led to some improvements in both the approach to developing and the actual implementation of quality systems within Chilean HEIs. But it is also obvious from both interviewee comments made to actors interviewed and wider discussion that the design and operation of the accreditation system is flawed in a number of respects. Without significant change there is a likely to be little further gain from the system and, indeed, the potential for it to have impacts which are counter to its original purpose.

Some of the areas for concern include:

- The very notion of accreditation, which implies a tick of approval rather than a focus on future improvement. Even though it is formally designed to foster quality improvement in reality the accreditation attention has focused in funding. Comments were made to the review team that staff at an institution questioned why it was necessary to continue to focus on quality systems once accreditation had been received.
- The lack of any requirement for institutions to develop an improvement plan as part of the accreditation process and by necessity the absence of any follow up to see if any improvements had been made.
- The link between institutional accreditation and approval to access government and student funding which has the effect of raising the stakes in the accreditation process and also diverting attention away from improvement. It has also put some pressure on CNA for accreditation in order to facilitate funding to students.

- The current practice of accrediting for a number of years has facilitated the use of accreditation as a marketing tool rather than an improvement one. Even though CNA theoretically previews four possible accreditation trams (detailed in Chapter 4), the practice of accrediting an institution running multi-year programmes for only one or two years has happened and become highly problematic in terms of its impact on students.
- A lack of specific clear quality standards and guidelines. Such standards and guidelines would make it clearer for institutions what they should be aiming for in terms of quality. Their current lack of specificity reduces transparency and understanding of accreditation decisions.
- The criteria for assessing institutions do not allow enough flexibility to take account of the different context and operating needs of different types of institutions.
- The impartiality, training and fit of some peer reviewers used in the accreditation process is also questioned.

Proposals for Improvement

Taken together the factors listed above suggest that the institutional accreditation process, however well intentioned, is not fulfilling the purposes set for it. The review team believes that it is possible to address these concerns and deliver a strong system of quality improvement, drawing on recent Chilean experience and insights from international practices.

First and foremost, it should be affirmed that the purpose of this part of the system is to develop a quality culture that promotes continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning for students, wherever and whatever they are studying within the Chilean higher education. In addition, the following system changes are recommended:

- Every institution, as a condition of its operation, should be expected to implement a strong system of self-review to continuously improve the quality of its offering. Previous reviews recommended encouraging institutional accreditation as a way to ensure that HEIs are regarded as well-managed organizations that offer quality to students (OECD/WB, 2009).
- Periodic external institutional quality reviews should be conducted with a view to assessing the adequacy of organisational quality systems and identifying areas for improvement.
- Rather than making a simple accredited/not accredited decision, the institutional quality review should issue an assessment of the quality of institutional systems, make recommendations for further improvement and highlight features of good practice. It is suggested that the assessment focus on a three point scale with the lowest rating triggering referral back to the licensing authorities for further review - as discussed in the previous section. The review team's recommendation that the process be renamed institutional quality review rather than accreditation is intended to reinforce this change in focus.
- All institutions should be required to implement an improvement plan in response to the review. Implementation of the improvement plan should be monitored.
- In order to regain and maintain public and sector trust and confidence in the system and in its processes for assuring and enhancing quality, all institutional review reports should be publicly available along with the institution's action plan for improvement. The publication of review reports which highlight recommendations and features of good practice and state conclusions and

judgements that are evidence-based, consistent, robust and transparent is commonly held as good practice internationally. After a period of time, such reports can be used to provide thematic analysis of trends, issues and good practice across the sector thus providing a valuable resource for enhancement. There should be thought as to how to make the language of all reports as accessible as possible to all interested stakeholders.

- The standards and guidelines to inform both the institution's own self-review and the external institutional quality review should be revised to ensure that they are clear, comprehensive and supportive of quality improvement. The standards and guidelines that have been developed internationally by associations such as ENQA may usefully inform this (see Box 1, in Chapter 3).
- The pool of peer reviewers should be broadened and deepened. More peer reviewers would reduce the risk of actual or perceived conflicts of interest and also ensure that more people had the opportunity to build their knowledge of quality improvement through participation in the review process. Careful selection and regular appraisal of their work can help to reduce the risk of biased peer reviewers' reports (OECD/WB, 2009). When international peer reviewers are included, their participation and views should be fully integrated into the overall review team and its report, rather than providing a separate review report, even if they cannot participate in the institutional visit. Some consultation with the rest of the review team should take place before delivering the final review report. Training of peer reviewers should be strengthened and intensified (see Box 5.1), as already recommended the 2009 OECD/WB review. International experience suggests that two or three days training should be mandatory, as opposed to the current half day in Chile.

Box 5.1 E-TRAIN project: Guidelines for Training of Experts

The European Training of Quality Assurance Experts project (E-TRAIN) aims at facilitating experience and knowledge sharing at the European level. The main objectives are: 1) develop a European training programme for experts in quality assurance procedures and 2) develop a programme to share experts among quality assurance agencies in Europe. To do so, some common guidelines for training experts are proposed, which are the result of the discussion of a Stakeholder Group.

- **Target group of the training:** when designing a training programme the target audience defines the content and extent of it. While experienced experts with solid knowledge on quality assurance are required to develop a peer review, the side-effect of narrowing too much this group of experts can lead to an unintended homogenization and become a "closed job". A wider solution proposed is that less experienced experts join the training after undergoing basic on-line modules, leading to the entry level. Nevertheless, the final training should provide the same level of expertise for all, with similar cognitive and interactive skills.
- **Structure of the training:** e-learning and direct interaction approaches are proposed to be combined during the training. The on-line part is suggested as the starting point and to be divided into several modules, aiming to be used as a leveling up tool. The later face-to-face sessions gather all trainees together, where the same contents are taught and discussed, including theoretical and practical lessons.
- **Awareness dimension:** the intention of the training is not to prepare peer reviewers for any possible situation, but to raise situations that experts will have to deal with. Some of the areas in which the training should raise awareness are: 1) the notion of quality, which can differ between (and even within) HEIs, 2) the biased perception of each individual based on prejudices and stereotype way of thinking that can affect the review, 3) dealing with different cultural approaches and kinds of communication, especially for international peer reviewer teams.
- **Certification:** the idea of taking a voluntary test after the training was proposed, aiming to obtain a certificate to prove it. This can be of especial interest for those less experienced participants.

Source : Zwießler, S. 2011, www.eacaconsortium.net

Catering for Diversity

The review team is also very much aware of the increasing diversity of the Chilean higher education. There are concerns that the current accreditation process is acting as a constraint on appropriate development of accessible provision by imposing requirements for certain types of institutions that are either not particularly relevant or appropriate (e.g. in the technical and vocational sectors) or too costly. The OECD/WB 2009 review already pointed out that institutional accreditation criteria should be appropriate to the nature of the institutions seeking for accreditation. Peer reviewers interpretations of criteria should be flexible enough to accommodate their different missions, though sticking to certain core principles.

The review team believes that the focus on quality improvement and review should be uniform across the system. All institutions should be expected to be clear about the learning outcomes sought for their students and the ways they are seeking to deliver and assess those outcomes. All institutions should have processes for assessing their effectiveness in these dimensions.

But how institutions give effect to this will vary greatly depending on the students they serve and the type of learning they are promoting. Institutional quality reviews should be able to accommodate these diverse approaches and focus on whether the management and quality systems within each institution are delivering in ways appropriate for its context, not in some uniformly prescribed manner. This capability within the review system will become increasingly important as modes and types of provision continue to expand (e.g. on-line learning, continuing education).

The link between the current accreditation process and access to funding

As noted in chapter 2 and 3, institutional accreditation currently gives institutions access to funding (DVIESUP/MINEDUC, 2012; CNA, 2012). Students enrolling in an accredited institution are eligible for state funding, in the forms of: grants (BEA (*Beca de Excelencia Académica*, Academic Excellence scholarships), BNM (*Beca Nuevo Milenio*, New millennium scholarship) and BB (*Becas Bicentenario*, Bicentenary scholarships) and loans (FSCU (*Fondo Solidario de Crédito Universitario*, University credit solidarity fund) and CAE (*Crédito con Aval del Estado*, State guaranteed loan system). While CRUCH (*Consejo de Rectores de las Universidades Chilenas*, Council of rectors of Chilean universities) students are eligible for all, non-CRUCH students are not eligible for FSCU loans. Although the direct beneficiaries of the funding are individual students, it consists of a very important indirect form of institutional funding, since students pay a non-negligible part of the tuition fees thanks to state grants and loans. This link is less than ideal because it raises the stakes of accreditation and diverts the focus from improvement.

In time it would be desirable to shift the trigger for funding from the institutional quality review process (previously accreditation) to licensing. However it is recognised that, because the gap in quality assurance between licensing and accreditation has allowed significant numbers of providers to greatly expand their offering, such a shift in the short term could lead to the extension of funding to many programmes of questionable quality.

So, the review team recommends that, for the immediate future, the trigger for funding remains with the outcomes from the institutional quality review, but that the possibility of shifting it to the licensing decision is to be reviewed once all institutions have been subject to a first round of review.

Transitional Issues

The changes proposed above build off the foundations of the current system, but represent significant change. There are significant capability and systems development issues associated with operating the system in the manner recommended.

In addition, there is a specific transitional issue that warrants comment. The proposal to refer institutions not demonstrating adequate quality assurance systems back to the licensing process represents a significant sanction. It could be seen that this runs counter to the openness and trust that successful improvement systems are required to build, both because the agency running the system might focus more on sanctions and institutions mask their weaknesses because of the fear of consequences.

These are risks that need to be acknowledged but can be mitigated through effective management of the system. Central agency and institutional leadership will need to buy into the overall objectives of the system and quality engagement processes will be required to build confidence and trust, particularly in the short term. In the end, the development of a strong improvement culture requires confidence on the part of all the players that poor quality will not be accepted.

Findings and Recommendations

The observations and analysis of the review team can be summarised as follows:

- It has to be made clear that a major purpose of this part of the Quality Assurance system is quality improvement. In order to do so, a strong system of self-review as well as external periodic institutional quality review should be implemented. Rather than making an accredited/not accredited decision, the reviews should propose recommendations for further improvement and suggest good practices. These reviews should be followed by the institution design of an improvement plan. For the sake of information and transparency, reviews and improvement plans should be publicly available and accessible for different audiences.
- The lack of clear standards and guidelines is one of the main weaknesses of the system. Revision, agreement and consensus in common and clear standards and guidelines are key elements to ensure comprehensive and supportive quality improvement.
- The review team recommends broadening the pool of peer reviewers in order to reduce the present concerns of conflict of interests. Moreover, peer reviewer training should be enhanced to meet international standards.
- Institutional accreditation should also be flexible enough to cater for the diversity of HEIs. Even though the principles of quality improvement and review should be uniform across HEIs, the way in which they are achieved may greatly vary according to the type of students serving and the type of learning provision of the HEI.
- The link between accreditation and funding diverts the focus from quality improvement. In the long term it is suggested to switch the funding eligibility from the accreditation to the licensing decision once all institutions have been subject to a first round of external institutional review. For the immediate future, funding may still be linked to institutional accreditation, so to avoid funding institutions of questionable quality.

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CHAPTER 6. ENSURING PROGRAMME QUALITY

As it is the case for institutional accreditation, programme accreditation is also voluntary, the exception being teaching and medicine. The voluntary nature of the process has not encouraged its use as a quality improvement tool, but as a marketing strategy in most cases. One of the main areas of concern in relation to programme accreditation is the role and performance of private accreditation agencies. The following chapter aims at providing some recommendations to strengthen the role of programme accreditation, following clear guidelines directed to quality assurance and enhancement. Consideration of compulsory programme accreditation is suggested in other professional discipline areas, as well as the continuation of the already started work to establish a national qualifications framework.

Promoting programmes quality improvement

Systems and processes to ensure the quality of individual programmes are also essential in any system. This is particularly the case in Chile, where the quality of individual programmes, sometimes offered by accredited institutions, is also attracting considerable attention and comment. Concerns appear to be arising because of a number of related issues:

- Variable content in programmes that purport to be delivering similar learning. Although some variation in content is inevitable - and indeed desirable - it should not reach the point where students are unsure of what skills and competences different programmes will give them.
- Variable quality of programmes in terms of what is actually delivered to students.
- A poor fit between some programmes and the requirements of employers and the labour market.

The result of this is some students incurring significant costs to participate in programmes of study but failing to achieve the expected value from the study in return. One specific area of concern that was cited on a number of occasions during the review discussions with stakeholders was the fact that a high percentage of graduates from teacher education programmes were not passing the INICIA test, the newly introduced test of desired competencies for teacher graduates.

It is hard to judge how widespread concerns such as that raised by the results of the teacher graduate test are. What is evident from discussions is that employers, professional bodies and other stakeholder groups appear on the whole to have relatively limited opportunities to input into the design of programmes (SOFOFA, 2012). This is of concern given that for most professions there are not further entry criteria to the profession other than the completion of university programme of study (*carrera*). And while the review team heard from some rectors from CRUCH (*Consejo de Rectores de las Universidades Chilenas*, Council of rectors of Chilean universities) institutions descriptions of quite robust processes for programme development at a system level, there are no specifications or regulation of the processes an institution will follow to ensure quality and relevance in the development of new programmes.

The primary mechanism for supporting quality at the programme level is programme accreditation. Programme accreditation seeks to certify the quality of those programmes provided by autonomous HEIs. With the exception of programmes in education and medicine, programme accreditation is voluntary. Programmes voluntarily requesting accreditation should have at least one cohort of graduates. Similarly to institutional accreditation, the programme accreditation period awarded has a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 7 years. Postgraduate programmes can be accredited for a maximum of 10 years. The same programme provided at different schedules or branch campuses has to be accredited separately.

CNA (*Comisión Nacional de Acreditación*, National Accreditation commission) is responsible for programme accreditation, but the actual evaluation can be performed by private *Agencias Acreditadoras* (Accreditation Agencies) (AA) at undergraduate and master level, as doctoral programmes can only be accredited by CNA. The accreditation process is the same as for institutional accreditation. CNA has to authorise AAs to operate before starting any accreditation process. AAs are authorised to perform accreditation processes in concrete areas and levels. Once an AAs accomplishes the CNA requirements, the authorisation to operate lasts for seven years. CNA supervises AAs work during their operating process through its monitoring and evaluation system, run by the Executive Secretary. Sanctions are indicated if AAs do not accomplish their obligations.

Some AAs are specialised in specific disciplines, while others perform in a variety of knowledge areas. AAs can be domestic institutions, foreign or international, but need to be established in Chile. The accreditation process is performed through the peer reviewers' visits. Criteria and procedures have to match those defined by the CNA. In 2012 the CNA registers 10 AAs, providing accreditation at different areas and levels.

As with institutional accreditation, there are several concerns about how the current system is working at the programme level. A concern that is specific to the programme level is the role played by private AAs. While these agencies offer additional capability and specific expertise, concerns have arisen in two main areas:

- **The nature of the commercial relationship between the accreditation agencies and the institutions.** This has given rise to perceptions of conflict of interest, particularly when agencies subsequently do capability development work with the institutions they have been involved in accrediting.
- **The adequacy of supervision of the work of the private accreditation agencies by the CNA.** While agencies told the review team that they have heavy reporting requirements to the CNA, it was not clear that the work of the agencies is subject to regular evaluation to ensure the overall quality of the accreditation process.

Proposals to Strengthen Programme Quality

In light of the aforementioned concerns, it is clear that there is a need for measures to strengthen assurance of quality at the programme level. One option to attempt to strengthen programme quality would be to make accreditation at the programme level mandatory. Given the large number of programmes that exist in Chile the review team does not believe this is practical in the foreseeable future. Rather relatively scarce professional resources should be focused at improvement at the institutional level first.

However it is recommended that a strong focus on programme quality systems be built into the new processes for external institutional quality review. This could comprise two elements:

- Assessing the robustness of institutional wide systems for determining the content and quality of individual programmes and for assessing whether the desired content and quality is being achieved following the principles of the QA system (Box 6.1).
- More detailed assessment of individual programmes on a sample basis as part of each institutional review. Although this is not a common practice, the review team believes that including a sample of programmes to be accredited may improve quality assurance in Chile, given expressed concerns about programme quality.

Box 6.1 Irish University Quality Board guidelines

The Irish University Quality Board (IUQB) was established in Ireland in 2002 with the mission to support and promote a culture of quality in Irish higher education, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of quality processes in Irish universities. It has become a national and international relevant voice in the quality sphere. The IUQB periodically publishes a series of booklets providing good practices in key areas related to quality in higher education. In March 2012 the IUQB published a good practices booklet entitled “National Guidelines of Good Practice for Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes”. Guidelines are proposed in reference to: 1) institutional context; 2) roles, responsibilities and regulations; 3) design and approval of new programmes; 4) monitoring and enhancement and 5) periodic review. The main guidelines of the publication in reference to programme quality are:

- Programme approval and accreditation have to be guided by a set of principles stated in the institution’s mission. The desired generic competences of graduates, among other variables, have to match the vision of the institution.
- Clear guidance documentation, access to relevant information, expert help and advice should be provided to staff with ideas for new or revised study programmes.
- An institution’s procedures should facilitate the development and approval of new programmes, while ensuring high standards.
- College/faculty and university procedures should ensure high standard design of new programmes, supporting the alignment and compliance with national and international standards for professional recognition of graduates.
- Proposers and evaluators of new programmes have to take into account input from appropriate external parties: regulatory bodies, relevant graduates, envisaged employers, societal partners and academic/professional experts.
- A business plan should ensure the viability of the new proposed programme, following a prescribed format.
- Persons with a relevant conflict of interest should not participate in the approval decision.
- It is useful to have a range of defined options to choose from when requirements are specified for programme approval.
- Institutions’ procedures should ensure compliance with requirements identified during the approval process.
- After a specified number of years, new programmes require to be reviewed.

The guidelines do not prescribe how the development of an individual programme should satisfy these different dimensions, recognising that there may be several ways to achieve them according to the specific characteristics of the institution and programme.

Source : UQB (2012), www.iuqb.ie

Within revised and strengthened quality standards and guidelines, very clear expectations should be set out as to the components of a high quality process for the development of a programme. A critical part

of the proposed external institutional review should be to look at the processes institutions employ to obtain the engagement and feedback of both students and employers in order to both shape the development of programmes and monitor their effectiveness.

In the Chilean case, the review team believes that it is a good option providing the same accreditation standards and guidelines for all programmes, while ensuring they are flexible enough to adapt to different needs and characteristics of knowledge areas. Common clear standards and guidelines would facilitate the process fostering programmes to go through accreditation, at the same time that making the process as transparent and simple as possible. In The Netherlands and Flanders programme accreditation criteria are generic and do not change from programme to programme (NVAO, 2012), while in Spain programmes in the five scientific fields (sciences, health, arts and humanities, engineering and architecture and social and legal sciences) share the same criteria. In Denmark the criteria for programme accreditation are generic and do not change across subject areas, although some differences are present depending on the type of programme accredited. For instance, professional bachelor programmes (teacher education, nursery programmes, etc) have criteria addressing the quality and management of internships outside the HEIs, since this is a specific feature of this praxis oriented programmes. Some examples of subject specific criteria in programme accreditation can be found in eastern European countries.

In Chile, accreditation for programmes in education and medicine is currently mandatory. While mandatory accreditation for all programmes is not recommended at this time, consideration should be given to expanding the number of disciplines for which programme accreditation is mandatory. Additional areas could be chosen on the basis of a number of possible criteria. For instance, it could be that there are other disciplines where the quality of programmes is perceived to be critical to social and economic outcomes (e.g. engineering from a health and safety perspective) and additional assurance is sought through accreditation. Alternatively if there are discipline areas that are perceived to have greater quality issues than others, then mandatory accreditation might be appropriate (see Box 6.2). In the case of the former, the involvement of professional bodies in the accreditation process would seem appropriate. This was already proposed in the OECD and WB's Review on *Tertiary Education in Chile* in 2009, as well as introducing a wider range of independent accrediting agencies.

If the number of programmes for which accreditation is mandatory is expanded, the involvement of relevant professional bodies in the accreditation process – as happens for medicine – would be desirable. In the absence of thresholds for entry to professions other than completion of a university programme, this would provide stronger assurance about the adequacy of the professional preparation. In some OECD countries, engineering programmes are independently accredited by professional bodies and recognised at the international level (see Box 6.3). Attaining licensed or chartered status – which refers to professional recognition over and above degree completion – is either limited only to graduates from accredited programmes or at least made much more readily available to such graduates.

Box 6.2 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) in the United Kingdom

Under the term PSRBs, the United Kingdom recognises a diverse group of organisations in charge of accreditation of undergraduate programmes that lead to a profession. Accrediting a programme implies recognizing that it meets the standards set by the accrediting body. A successful accredited programme should at least meet one of the following outcomes:

- Graduates are able to practice as a professional in a specific field, and in some cases a license is required by law to practice;
- Graduates are granted chartered status;
- Graduates are granted exemption from all or part of professional exams;
- Graduates are eligible for entry to membership of a professional association or learned society;
- The programme is confirmed as meeting externally designated standards and quality.

Three kinds of accrediting bodies are recognised: Professional, regulatory and statutory. Professional bodies provide a repository of agreed good practices in the profession, but no legal requirement to practise the profession is required. Regulatory bodies are those entitled with royal charter, meaning that there is not a legal requirement to be accredited, but it is widely recognized by the labour market and wider society. Statutory bodies refer to those professions with legal requirement to graduate from an accredited programme in order to practice the profession.

The list of accrediting bodies in the United Kingdom is available in HESA website (www.hesa.ac.uk). HESA decided to provide information on the accrediting bodies due to the interests of students and their information needs.

Source : Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), www.hesa.ac.uk

Box 6.3 The Washington Accord on engineering programme accreditation

The Washington Accord (WA) is an independent agreement for mutual recognition of accredited engineering programmes. This international agreement recognises substantial equivalence in the accreditation of qualifications in professional engineering across the signing countries. Substantial equivalence refers to the fact that, even if educational programmes are not meeting a single set of criteria, they are acceptable as preparing their graduates to enter formative development toward registration. Signatories are also encouraged to identify the implementation of best practices for the academic preparation of engineers, by mutual monitoring, regular information sharing and communication (criteria, procedures, list of accredited programmes...) and benchmarking accreditation standards and policies. Regular monitoring through a periodic visit is now required every six years.

The agreement was first signed in 1989 among bodies responsible for accrediting engineering degree programmes across countries. Countries are represented in the agreement by their national/domestic engineers' accreditation body. At the moment 15 countries have signed the WA, including nine OECD countries: Australia, Canada, Ireland, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. Five more countries are holding provisional status to membership the agreement, and Germany is among them.

Source : International Engineering Alliance, 2012, www.iwagreements.com

In addition, a number of changes should be made to how the programme accreditation process works, particularly in relation to how private agents are contracted:

- In the interests of transparency and confidence in the system, AAs should be contracted by the government agency responsible for quality assurance (currently the CNA) rather than by

individual institutions. Institutions could still be given some choice as to which agency was contracted to undertake the task, either by being able to nominate their preferred providers or being able to choose from a short list of private agencies. But there would be no commercial arrangement between the institution and the accreditation agency.

- AAs that have had commercial dealings with an institution within a specified period before the review would be precluded from undertaking programme accreditation for that institution and could be required to avoid commercial dealings for a specified period after the accreditation process. Breaches of this policy should lead to suspension from the list of approved accreditation agencies.
- The CNA should conduct regular external quality reviews of the accreditation agencies in the same manner as for institutions.
- International accreditation agencies could be included amongst the list of approved agencies.
- All accreditation reviews should be made publicly available.

Finally, it is important to reaffirm that accreditation stands on a large number of quality provision factors beyond the quality assurance system proper. That is, accreditation (and licensing) instruments and practices reflect and help maintain the structure, goals and culture of higher education systems. Thus, in assessing a national quality assurance higher education system mention must be made of elements that stick out from an international perspective:

- Chile has legislated for the development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This is a very significant undertaking and we do not expect that it will be possible to advance this in the short term. Although the review team recognises the difficulties involved it stresses that the advancement of a NQF over the medium term is highly desirable. It would support programme quality and promote a better understanding of what individual programmes mean and offer to students.
- Chile has started using standardised tests to measure higher education outcomes in medicine (EUNACOM) *Examen Único Nacional de Conocimientos De Medicina*, and education (INICIA) *Inserción de nuevos académicos*. It is advisable to extend the use of these to other study programmes as a means to eliminate any sense of unfair treatment regarding admission policies as well as providing data indicative of the quality of programmes and universities. When used together with data from admission tests such as PSU *Prueba de Selección Universitaria* (University entry test) they can also give some light on the value added of different programmes.
- Furthermore, many Chilean universities have experience in the usage of competencies through their participation in Tuning and other projects. An experience relevant to the construction of a Chilean Qualifications Framework is the development of outcome tests along the lines of AHELO (Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes) (see Box 6.4), and as a means to improve teaching and learning practices.
- In addition, Chile should strive to learn from CNA's accreditation processes. At present these seem to serve only the certification purpose.

Box 6.4 Testing student and university performance globally: OECD's AHELO

For the past decades the OECD has provided reliable and comparable data across countries. One of the main contributions of the Directorate for Education to this task is the well-known Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which provides information of the knowledge and skills of 15 year olds. With the objective to expand the comparable knowledge on skills and competencies, the Directorate for Education has developed the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) and is now working on the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO).

AHELO aims at assessing what students in higher education **know and can do upon graduation**. It is looking at **1) generic skills** common to all students, such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem-solving and written communication; and **2) discipline-specific skills** in economics and engineering. Students are tested at the last years of their undergraduate programme. Universities, other higher education institutions and relevant stakeholders are involved in the project. While PISA and other OECD assessments provide information at national or system level, AHELO focuses on institutions and does not allow for national comparisons.

AHELO is currently on its feasibility study part, which aims to evaluate if it is practically and scientifically feasible to assess skills and knowledge of higher education students. This study will show: 1) what is feasible, 2) what works and does not, and 3) provide lessons and stimulate reflection on learning outcomes. AHELO is not a ranking and will not provide league tables.

Source : OECD (2012), *Testing student and university performance globally: OECD's AHELO*, www.oecd.org/edu/ahelo, accessed October 2012

There are valid concerns within Chile currently as to the nature and length of *carreras*. Qualifications and competences are not dependent only on the duration of programmes and care would be needed to ensure that the development of a NQF does not simply codify existing practice. Indeed managed well the development of the qualifications framework could provide an opportunity to focus more strongly on the learning outcomes from a programme of study and to focus less on inputs including the time served to complete. To the extent that the development of a qualifications framework promoted greater understanding of the value of individual programmes, it would facilitate greater comparison of programmes by students as well as articulation between levels of study and institutions and the mobility of students. Progress in all of these areas could improve the quality of outcomes from the system.

Findings and Recommendations

The observations and analysis of the review team can be summarized as follows:

- The main challenges detected by the review team concerning programme accreditation relate to the commercial link between Accreditation Agencies (AAs) and HEIs and the adequate supervision of AAs by CNA.
- AAs should be contracted by the CNA (or whatever equivalent body replaces it), who will be in charge of assigning AAs to the different programmes to be accredited. AAs that have had commercial dealing with an institution should not be eligible to undertake programme accreditation. These measures would provide transparency and confidence in the system, avoiding commercial arrangements out of programme accreditation. The CNA should also perform periodic quality reviews of AAs as it is done for HEIs.

- Even if in the long term mandatory programme accreditation would be an option to ensure quality improvement at programme level, the sheer number of programmes offered means that it is not a practical option in the near future. Nevertheless, in addition to teaching and medicine, mandatory accreditation could be expanded to other disciplines where the quality of programmes is perceived to be critical to social and economic outcomes. In that case, the involvement of professional bodies in the process is recommended.
- The institutional accreditation process can be used to strengthen the focus of programme accreditation. Scrutiny of a sample of programmes offered at the institution should be carried out in order to ensure that institutional policies and procedures for QA are understood and adhered to at discipline level.
- External review of programme accreditation should pay special attention to processes to engage and get feedback from students and employers. Their opinions and interests are crucial to develop and monitor programme effectiveness.
- Chile has already made some work on the development of a National Qualification Framework. The review team strongly encourages continuing on this work, since it would support programme quality and facilitate the understanding of what programmes mean and offer to students.

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CHAPTER 7. INFORMATION, TRANSPARENCY AND QUALITY

In any higher education system the quality of the information available to inform decision makers at the individual, institutional and system level is extremely important. In Chile, given the emphasis on good decisions by individuals about their study choices, information is especially critical. This chapter aims to give an overview of the construction of the current information system available in the Chilean higher education and how it is used and provided to different users. While relevant steps have been taken in this area there is still room for improvement regarding the transparency and accessibility for different information users. The need for robust and reliable data and the coordination among key information agencies require further attention.

Development of the information system

Developing higher education information systems is never a simple task since collecting, processing, and presenting data has to rely on many different sources and users, and has to be consistent and remain reliable over time. The quality of data and of data processing must be secured without loss of relevance or transparency for different stakeholders. This is especially difficult when, as is the Chilean case, the information system is introduced following a rapid increase in the number and diversity of institutions in a period when there were no mandatory or commonly agreed indicators.

It is only in the past few years that Chile has been advancing an information strategy with a view to improving the quality of information available to guide decision making by all involved. On the evidence of the first steps that have been taken, the strategy appears to be well founded and further progress can be anticipated. Law 20.129 of 2006 establishes the responsibility of DIVESUP for developing a Higher Education Information System, which was created in 2007 under the name of *Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior* (Higher education information system) (SIES).

Previously to SIES, the CNED bore the main responsibility for the information function, which it discharged through the ÍNDICES system of data collection and release. Since the development of SIES, ÍNDICES continues to be active and gathers annual information on programmes, teachers, enrolment, tuition fees and facilities, among other things. Participation in ÍNDICES is voluntary, except for those HEIs undergoing the licensing process. Participation rates have remained high and ÍNDICES covers more than 90% of all HEIs since 2008. Nevertheless, participation varies across the different institutional types: universities systematically provide more information to ÍNDICES. CNED also owns the *EligeCarrera* website (www.eligecarrera.cl) which has the objective of providing information to students and families to facilitate their educational choices. One of the most popular tools links the existing educational offer with the results of a personality test. The tool matches the interests and skills of the student with the most suitable programme and institution offered in Chilean higher education.

CNA provides information on accreditation decisions, making them publicly accessible. While descriptive information on the accreditation results by institution and programme are available, the CNA website (www.cnachile.cl) also makes available some agreements and reports of HEIs summarising the

accreditation decision and its rationale. However, information provided is mainly directed to HEIs and other relevant actors in the system, and it is not easily understandable to those unfamiliar with SINAC-ES.

Even if the formal responsibility for the information function relies on SIES, the CNED and the CNA are also involved (see Figure 3.1). Until the creation of SIES this information function was not centralised and different institutions provided information which was not always consistent, and which has led to misinterpretations and lack of confidence.

The review team notes that the role of SIES is still developing. Although it is too early to assess its relevance and impact, its work to develop more comprehensive outcome information and make it available to students and their families is in the right direction. The *Mi Futuro* website (www.mifuturo.cl) is a good development and offers students potentially valuable information to help inform their study choices. The number of visits has increased since its creation, jumping from 856 000 in 2010 to 1 600 000 in 2012. Information provided by SIES falls into four main areas:

- 1) *Futuro Laboral*, providing information of expected returns by programme and, in some cases, by institution.
- 2) *Ficha Financiera*, presenting indicators on institutional financial situation, indebtedness, among others.
- 3) *Ficha Académica*, referring to vacancies, enrolment rates, number of professors, etc. in academic institutions.
- 4) *SIES Técnico*, referring to vacancies, enrolment rates, number of teachers, etc. in vocational oriented institutions.

Quality, reliability and accessibility of information

Notwithstanding the advances made with the information system and the review team's broad support for the strategy undertaken by SINAC-ES, in the course of the review a number of areas for possible improvement were identified:

- It was difficult to form a clear picture of the overall quality and reliability of the information that is available. There is no doubt that most institutions are fulfilling their obligations to supply information, but there were mixed views as to the reliability of the information being provided. Even if the information is reliable, a perception that it is not can undermine the confidence with which it is used. It is recommended that further steps be taken to assure the accuracy of information provided through official channels. The *Superintendencia* will potentially have a useful role to play in this regard.
- Comments were also made to the review team that suggest there is still some way to go to ensure the systematic integration of information, particularly for management purposes, quality enhancement and strategic development. Information systems that contribute to these goals should enable HEIs, educational researchers and national agencies to generate and improve standards, compare policy performance and outcomes. At the same time the information system should allow relating all these outcomes to international trends and practices, while supporting the analysis of specific national and institutional goals and missions. They should also suggest the construction and application of alternative indicators or instruments to acquire additional pertinent information. A good example of the last is the development of *Saber Pro* in Colombia,

an exit test first applied as *Examen de Calidad para Educación Superior* (ECAES) and now compulsory at the end of the first university degree.

- There are still different data collections by different agencies and some confusion about how the different data sets relate to each other. Collection of all data by SIES in order to meet the information needs of all users might help to overcome this lack of integration. For this to work in practice other agencies would need to be given confidence that the SIES would take account of their information requirements in developing its information collections. Collective governance of information collection across agencies may assist in building this confidence, at the same time that strengthening the coordination mechanisms among the major data information services: SIES, CNED and CNA. Participation in collective information gathering projects such as INFOACES (*Sistema Integral de Información sobre todas las Instituciones de Educación Superior de América Latina*), TRESAL, Reflex and AHELO can also help develop confidence and expertise.
- At a more general level it is recommended that agencies and institutions re-commit to the principle of full information disclosure throughout the system. Transparency will not only support continuous learning and improvement within the system but help to restore the confidence and trust so necessary for the efficient operation of the system.

We also suggest that the effectiveness in terms of informing decisions by students and their families of the websites such as *Futurolaboral* and *MiFuturo* be periodically evaluated. While they appear to be very useful websites with relevant information to guide student study decisions, their impact will be limited if students choose not to access them, do not understand the information being provided or do not use it to inform their decision making. Similar tools are also being developed and implemented in a number of countries, for example in the United Kingdom with a new website *Unistats* (*unistats.direct.gov.uk*), created by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and directed to students to compare official course data from universities and colleges around the country. Its effectiveness and usefulness are still to be evaluated.

Finally, we suggest that consideration be given to introducing a national student experience survey, along the lines adopted in some other countries. For example, the Australian Council for Education Research administers a survey of student engagement with wide participation from institutions in Australia and New Zealand. In the Chilean context information from such a survey, were one to be introduced, would enable individual institutions to benchmark their students' experience of the teaching and learning process nationally, and potentially internationally depending on the design of the survey instrument. This in turn would help to reinforce with institutions the expectation that student experience should be a central focus of quality systems at an individual level, and could also provide an additional objective measure of institutional performance with which to validate an institution's own self-assessment.

Findings and Recommendations

The review team is aware that the current higher education information system has not yet fulfilled the objectives set in the information strategy. In order to contribute to undergo this work in progress, the review team recommends the following actions to be undertaken:

- The future *Superintendencia* could have a role in assuring the accuracy of the information provided by HEIs and other relevant stakeholders to the information system. The intervention of a legal authority focused on compliance may help to reduce the perception of unreliable information provided by the system.

- SIES has the role to centralise and integrate the information collected by different agencies. This will facilitate systematization, at the same time that increasing consistency and confidence in the information system. Coordination with the rest of information providers (HEIs, CNED, and CNA) is key to attain a successful system.
- Given the early stage of the information system development and coordination, periodic evaluation of the information tools provided (websites, reports) should be undertaken in order to assess their effectiveness.
- The introduction of a Chilean student survey to gather information on students' experiences in relation to teaching and learning. The analysis of the survey results would allow institutions to benchmark nationally – or even internationally – the processes experienced by students, at the same time that aligning them to students' quality expectations.

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