

# Advocacy coalitions in Brazilian higher education: the role of the main stakeholders in shaping the new social contract for Brazilian higher education\*

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## Abstract:

This paper explores the dynamics of coalition building that unifies different stakeholders inside the Brazilian policy system related to higher education using the conceptual framework of the *advocacy coalitions* as proposed by Sabatier and collaborators. It discusses how “democratic governance” was established as a core value inside some of the coalitions and how it has been converted into a policy taboo (Tannenwald, 1999) against which no “respectable” domestic actor may fight, no matter what international bench marking says. It also explores the constraints this framework has imposed over the development of new policy instruments in the country.

Key words: Brazil, higher education policy, advocacy coalitions, democratic governance, policy taboo

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***Introduction: main features of the Brazilian higher education landscape:***

A distinctive feature of higher education in many countries is the high differentiation of types of institutions and stakeholders. This is also a main feature of Brazilian higher education. Brazilian higher education is a known case of extreme diversity, in terms of both institutional settings and ownership. Among its more than 2,300 institutions, one can find examples of almost everything: from small, family-owned, isolated professional schools to huge research universities with annual budgets of more than two billion dollars. As one would expect, this institutional maze gives rise to an extremely diverse institutional environments. While in general, public universities are better endowed and more institutionalized, there are strong differences even among institutions belonging to this sector: universities with a stronger commitment to graduate education (either Federal universities or state universities) tend to have a more active research profile, and thus are more susceptible to values and expectations linked to disciplinary cultures. Public universities committed to undergraduate education (also to be found as Federal universities or state owned universities) are more susceptible to the agenda supported by the union movements (both academic and staff unions). Federal institutions (and the most part of the state owned institutions) are more vulnerable to pressures coming from governmental bodies. Nevertheless, some state owned universities show strong autonomy and are almost independent from the pressures posed either from the Federal or regional governments. This is the case of the powerful São Paulo state universities, for instance.

Inside the private sector, market forces and governmental regulations are the main drivers for growth, differentiation and institutional development. Even inside this sector one will find diversity. As a rule, private institutions are confined to a mass education market where the low tuition is the main differential. In this segment, the most usual institutional format is the small isolated professional school offering few undergraduate programs in the same professional track. Nevertheless, in the last 10 years, this segment experienced a strong consolidation process that gave origin

to a number of large for profit universities. These universities are able to offer dozens of different undergraduate programmes in a diverse array of fields, and to explore new market niches such as life-learning and taught master's programs. These large mass oriented universities, some of them attending hundreds of thousand students, are still under the iron law of the commodity like market they operated. They compete offering the lowest tuition they can afford because the market they target is composed by children of middle-lower income families that have attended low quality public secondary schools and cheap private secondary schools. The other relevant segment in the private sector is composed by a small number of elite private institutions. These institutions charge high tuitions fees and target students coming from the upper middle-class. They tend to be highly innovative both in teaching and in exploring their academic staff's competences to offer professional masters programs and other graduate programmes, as well as consulting services for enterprises and private clients. These institutions operate in a more differentiated market where quality and not price is the main differential.

Data for this paper come from official documents and studies produced by different stakeholders and published at the Internet, and from articles published in the major newspapers and magazine. These documents were analyzed in order to produce an accurate picture of the ongoing national debate regarding higher education policies<sup>1</sup>.

### ***Conceptual framework:***

This paper explores the dynamics of coalition building that unifies different stakeholders inside the Brazilian policy, using the conceptual framework of the *advocacy coalitions* as proposed by Sabatier and collaborators (Sabatier 1988; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993, 1999; Weible, Sabatier and McQueen 2009).

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The three main premises of the Advocacy Coalition framework are: first, all policy areas with a substantive scope are conceptualized as a “policy system” where the focus is the interaction of actors from different institutions with interest (stake) on it. Second, public policies are conceptualized as belief systems. In this sense policies are not only a set of goals, programs and instruments. They rather express implicit “theories” about the nature of the problem that is (or should be) addressed by the governmental action. In this sense, they incorporate perceptions of causal relationships. I.e., the way a given policy, program, or instruments will operate and how they will change the reality towards a more desirable state.

Third, the political beliefs that are supported by different stakeholders are articulated into a three-tiered hierarchical order. In the first tier there are the normative dimensions which articulate the general values and attitudes guiding actors’ views on the policy process as a whole (for ex. beliefs regarding the roles of State versus Markets in regulating provision of public goods, liberalism, nationalism, and so on). In the middle there are the core policy beliefs or ‘logic’ that span across the entire policy subsystem (Maasen and Stensaker, 2011). Examples of this kind of belief are the desirability (or not) of institutional diversity in higher education, the relative importance of assuring equal representation for all internal stakeholders in the university’s decision-making process, and so on. Finally, the lower tier is composed by the secondary beliefs linked to the operation of the policy: the supposed consequences of different policy design, such as the adoption of different models for university’s autonomy or the use of quotas for expanding access. Also, according to this framework, most change in the beliefs that inform decisions inside a policy subsystem (and thus, policy learning) occurs in the last tier and thus have only minor impacts over the core beliefs sustained by each advocacy coalition.

The most relevant contribution of AC framework to the stakeholder analysis is related with understanding the nature and patterns of coalitions that organize different stakeholders inside a policy system. This framework supposes that the main stakeholders tend to be specialized in one policy system and that they tend to seek alliances with other stakeholders who held similar beliefs (beliefs from the first

and second tier). Stakeholders in the same coalition tend to engage in a “non trivial degree of coordination” (Weible 2009, p. 99) in order to promote policy venues favoring their preferred institutional design for the system and policy alternatives.

ACF also supposes that stakeholders’ options are bounded by cognitive constraints that both organize their perception of what is at stake in the policy arena and what are the gains and losses associated to policy alternatives. It is the strength and long lasting nature of these beliefs that explain the relative stability of these coalitions inside a policy subsystem, which in turn explain the long lasting nature of the politics dynamics that characterize a given policy system.

From the perspective of this framework, changes in policy dynamics may be produced by three different sources: first, changes in the overall social parameters of the country in question; second, by political events that impact the distribution of political resources inside the policy system; and third, by the impact of the policy outputs. These sources of change end up in redistributing resources, or mobilizing new actors or even creating opportunities for learning that may impact parts of the beliefs systems that organize the conflicts inside the policy system.

In the next sections, we will use the conceptual framework presented above to analyze the policy dynamics in Brazilian higher education and the role of various stakeholder groups in it. We will start by describing the social and political environment resulting from the country’s experience with the democratization process<sup>2</sup> and the effects of the economic reforms since the late 1980s. Afterwards, we will reconstruct the patterns of alliances that organize the country’s higher education policy. This paper’s main argument is that “democratic governance” has been developed in the years of the fight for democracy; nevertheless, it persists until the present as an overall reference for the country’s policies in the area. It is held substantively by one coalition, and instrumentally by other coalitions, but in either way, it imposes relevant constraints in the way domestic actors faces the

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<sup>2</sup> From 1964 until 1984 Brazil experienced an authoritarian regime where the military were the main rulers. The democratization process started in 1974 and lasted 10 years. The election of a civil president, in 1984 is usually taken as the end of the military dictatorship in Brazil. The enactment of a new Constitution (the “Citizen Constitution, as it is know in Brazil), in 1988, is another milestone in the process of the Country’s democratization. For an overview of the period, see Rouquié, Lamounier and Schvarze, 1985.

challenges posed by the new demands brought by the entry of new stakeholders in the policy system.

### ***Core issues in Brazilian higher education policy***

In the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brazilian society was re-shaped by the combined forces of two long lasting macro-political and economic processes. The first is the democratization process, which lasted from the end of 1970s until the end of 1980s. The second is the long lasting economic crisis that hit the country in the 1980s and the economic reforms that helped the country to overcome the crisis. Recounting the history of the process of democratization is beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out two key features with major impacts on the country's higher education policy system. First, there is the relevant role played by some of the key actors within the public universities in the struggle for democratization. As noted by Schwartzman (1993), political activism in Latin American universities is an ingrained tradition, dating back to the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the fight for democracy in Brazil mobilized all organized sectors in the society. High among them, there were leaders of the student movement and some of the most prestigious academics in the country.

It was in those years that the academic unions came to exist in almost all public universities and the national association of academic unions (ANDES) was created. The 1970s also witness the re-birth of the students' movement, recovering from the almost de-organization promoted by the military regime in the end of the 1960s. Fighting for democracy unified all the political forces inside the public and catholic universities: the unions, the students' movement and the main leaders of the scientific community. One of the legacies of this experience is the great visibility and strong legitimacy public universities have vis-a-vis other political actors.

The so-called "democratic pact", which provided legitimacy to the country's new political regime, from 1984, also encompassed a strong demand for equity and social inclusiveness. For most Brazilians, the struggle for democracy was also a fight for a brighter future. Thus, the issue of social inclusiveness has strong

legitimacy in Brazil, being present across all policy systems (including higher education). As a result, it faces no resistance, i.e. it is deeply institutionalized (c.f. Olsen 2010).

The second process pertains to the long lasting effects of the economic, financial and fiscal crisis that hit Brazil in the 1980s. A major root of the crisis is the exhaustion of the growth strategies based on import-substitution policies (Bacha, 1986). In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the policies related to higher education and science and technology can be traced to this import substitution heritage (Schwartzman et al. 1995). At that time, the primary goal of the country's science policy was to develop scientific capabilities in all fields, even when achieving this goal implied scattering scarce resources among a large number of small research groups and across all fields of knowledge. From the point of view of the educational policies, this goal led to a "trickle-down" perspective where all efforts were concentrated in training the elite of scientists and engineers. This, in turn, led to policies that concentrated resources and quality control at the top of the educational pyramid, while paying little attention to the lower levels. Thus, it comes to no surprise that in the 1970s, the efforts for building a strong and well organized system of graduate education inside the public universities were concomitant with the abandon of basic education (c.f. Castro, 1990), a situation that persists to these days.

The so-called "lost decade" of the 1980's, when the economic crises deeply hit the country, had a strong impact over the country's science and higher education landscapes. The struggles for preserving the budget in a scenario of diminishing resources and high inflation rates created dangerous dynamics for the governmental agencies in charge of science and higher education. When the crisis finally ended, in mid-1990s, these agencies were disorganized, depleted from their best human resources and disconnected from the country's core policies. For the public universities, the 1980's were years of penury, when academic salaries and resources for maintaining the infra-structure conditions for teaching and research were drastically reduced. Once again, the struggle for sustaining the level of

support for the public universities unified all internal stakeholders and created strong links with other societal actors.

When the country's economy finally recovered, the scenario was totally changed. New actors were mobilized to the higher education policy arena. First, there was the business sector, interested in the competences and knowledge produced by higher education, as a tool for increase the country's competitiveness in the world economy. Second, there was the new lower middle-class, interested in the opportunities for social mobility open by higher education. Finally, there were the federal and regional governments, interested in the roles higher education and science could play in the path for regional development. The country's political elite also were interested in the political dividends produced by policies supporting access to higher education.

The governmental science agencies recovered from the lost decade's experience by developing a new, more pro-active, profile; which supported a more strategic approach to funding science. The harsh times lend a lasting lesson to their high bureaucracy: in order to ensure access to the funds required for their operation it was not enough to trust in the prestige of science. Support for science should be connected to the central policies related to economic development. In order to fulfill this role; science should be steered to address the relevant problems perceived as central in the country's quest for economic development. At the end of 1990s, the Science and Technology agencies (S&T agencies) evolved to become *corporate actors* (c.f. Braun 1998), with an identity and a policy agenda of their own, separated from the ones supported by the science elites.

These developments set the framework for the reforms in the S&T policies that took place by the end of the 1990s. These reforms had a strong impact over the public research universities, where graduate education and research is better institutionalized<sup>3</sup>. Their main features were the adoption of instruments for steering

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<sup>3</sup> By law, all public universities, either owned by Federal or state governments have the same status and are supposed to be research universities. Nevertheless, as said above, only in a small number of them research is fully institutionalized. In Brazilian experience, commitment to research is linked to the growth of graduate education, especially doctoral programs. Thus, universities with a high



research toward economic and societal relevance, imposing a more competitive environment for research support, and reinforcing the instruments for evaluation. The reforms enlarged the space for autonomous decision-making by the agencies' specialized bureaucracies, amplified competition, and put a premium in team-networking, and the publishing profile of researchers. In the reformed arena for science policy, new players have also gained leverage: the public universities' authorities and senior management and the regional interests. In fact, the 1990s saw many initiatives from regional and, subsequently, some local authorities. Into the 2000's many states launched or strengthened regional research foundations, and established new administrative branches in charge of local S&T policies.

In the same period, also the Ministry of Education, in charge of the Federal Universities and for overseeing all the private sector, experienced a strong process of professionalization, developing new capabilities for institutional and programs' evaluation.

### ***Policy dynamics in Brazilian Higher education: the interplay amongst the main advocacy coalitions***

In spite of the added complexity created by the entrance of new players in the field, a careful examination of the main cleavages and the patterns of alliances in the area points to the presence of *three* main advocacy coalitions.

The first is the *utilitarian coalition*, which encompasses the perspectives from the private higher education providers, a relevant part of the business interests that are mobilized for the debate around the policies of higher education, and the professional oligarchies. The main value unifying the participants of this coalition is the conception of higher education as a private good<sup>4</sup>, which legitimates the adoption of a utilitarian perspective for managing higher education institutions on

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commitment to graduate education (usually with more than 30% of their enrollments at this level) also have a high commitment to research. For in depth analysis, see Balbachevsky, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> In conceiving higher education as a private good, a stakeholder tends to emphasize the private gains students and users have from higher education. This perspective also reinforces the "rival" quality of higher education services, meaning that granting access to it to someone means, necessarily denying it to others because of the very nature of this service that cannot be consumed by everyone at the same time. See Mora and Vila (2003).

the one hand, and supports the use of market mechanisms as the best way to steer higher education institutions (Teixeira et al., 2008). According to this coalition, decisions about higher education content and format of learning ought to mainly be informed by the needs of the labor market in order to address the demands for employability, and these needs should be at the forefront of evaluation procedures. The second coalition may be termed the *egalitarian coalition*. The main forces present here are the unions across the public sector, student groups, a relevant part of the central authorities at teaching-oriented public universities, authorities linked to the Judiciary, and some relevant political actors, in particular those placed in the leftist side. While the members of this coalition sustain the perspective of higher education as a public good<sup>5</sup>, and sees the university primarily as an instrument for addressing social inequalities. This coalition also favors the institutional mode of governance based on the representative principle (Olsen, 2007). Accordingly, the university's main authorities should be chosen through internal elections counting with the participation of academics, students and the non-academic staff, organized under the principle of "one person, one vote". Unions also sustain that all public universities should be manned by a staff (academic and non-academic) sharing a similar career structure in which seniority, not merit, should be the main criteria for promotion. For the members of this coalition, entrepreneurship and the private providers of higher education are evils that should be eradicated, or, if not possible, at least strongly restrained. Thus, one relevant issue for this coalition is to curb all entrepreneurial initiatives inside the public universities. For the unions, this issue is tactical, since it is related with preserving equal income to everyone, so the fight for better salaries have the same relevance to everyone. For the external stakeholders in this coalition, this issue is strongly linked with the core value of the public good nature of the university. The access to second and third streams of sources (Clark, 1998, p. 6) means that at least part of the university's facilities and products would be privatized.

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<sup>5</sup> In conceiving higher education as a public good a stakeholder focus on the social consequences of higher education, mainly its effects for the country's development and more cultural gains of having a better educated population, in particular for citizenship. See Gumpert, 2000, Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004.

Furthermore, it also creates alternatives for institutional diversification, which configures another sin that should be eradicated. For this coalition, the ideal system of higher education should be one composed only by tuition-free equal public universities, supported exclusively by public funds. All sorts of hierarchies organizing the institutional field of higher education should be eliminated. All universities should be treated as equal institutions and ranks are only admissible when spelling the goodness nature of public universities against the evilness of the private sector.

Finally, the last coalition articulates the values and perspectives of the so-called *academic entrepreneurs* (c.f. Meyer, 2003; Jain, George and Maltarich, 2009, Etzkowitz and Ranga 2010), which encompass the perspectives held by the scientific community but also by a relevant part of the high bureaucracy from the agencies in charge of funding science and graduate education, as well as by some of the central authorities at public research-intensive universities. For members of this coalition, the university is conceived as mainly the place for supporting science. Forming the next generation of scientists is the main objective of higher learning and merit is the best way to organize hierarchies within and across institutions. Higher education is thought to be a public good because of the social relevance of its knowledge content and the role it should play in the country's path to development (c.f. Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2002).

The more efficient mode to describe the values sustained by the members of this coalition, regarding the best way of organizing the university, is to refer to the ideal type described by Polanyi (1962) in his seminal work, "The Republic of Science".

For them,

"So long as each scientist keeps making the best contribution of which he is capable, and on which no one could improve (except by abandoning the problem of his own choice and thus causing an overall loss to the advancement of science), we may affirm that the pursuit of science by independent self-coordinated initiatives assures the most efficient possible organisation of scientific progress" (Polanyi 1962, p. 3)

The strong individualism present in the perspective shared by the members of this coalition, supports the autonomy of the university and, inside the university, the autonomy and independence of the different units, that should work as “independent self-coordinated” (Polanyi, 1962, p. 2) bodies in the advancement of science. Entrepreneurialism is another strong value within this coalition, but it is linked to individuals and science teams, and not to the institution as a whole. Finally, for the members of this coalition, the social impact of science is a value with strong historical roots, since, for them, the public support for science should be justified on the basis of its contribution to the country’s quest for socio-economic and democratic development.

### ***The emergence of a new governance pact:***

Institutional governance as a representative system geared to internal stakeholders (de Boer and Stensaker, 2007), was first supported in the 1970s, as a main instrument of freeing public universities from the bureaucratic governance imposed by the authoritarian government. In this approach, it gained wide support both inside the university and also among all forces that fought for democracy in the country.

In Latin America, the so-called democratic governance model has its roots in the Córdoba Movement, a student movement starting at the University of Córdoba, Argentina, in 1918 that quickly spread through out that country, and later influenced universities around the entire region. The Córdoba Movement fought for university autonomy and also for democratic governance, imposing the principle that the decision-making process inside the university should include representatives from students, professors and alumni (Bernasconi, 2007). The Córdoba Movement by itself had small impact in Brazil. Different from the experience of the Spanish heritage in Latin America, the Portuguese heritage left no university model in Brazil. Since 1818, when the first higher education institution was established, until mid 1930s, the country’s sole model of higher education was the isolated professional school, such as Law School of Rio de Janeiro, the Medicine School of Salvador (Bahia) and the Polytechnic School of Engineering from São Paulo. These schools

offered training and certification to a small number of related professions. The first University was created only in 1931, the University of Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, merging some old professional schools with a newly created Faculty of Philosophy, Science, and Humanities.

In the 1970s, the other two governance models that competed with the democratic model were the collegial model, and the “bureaucratic” model. In the Brazilian historical experience, the collegial model was linked with the past dominance of the chairs inside the major professional schools. It was the mode of governance that sustained the power of the old professional oligarchy, i.e, the scholars distinguished by their profession profile, but without graduate training (Schwartzman and Balbachevsky, 1997). Inside the new universities, the collegial model was linked with the dominance of this old oligarchy and so was opposed by the new generation of young scientists trained abroad and organized around the first post-graduate programs created in the 1960s.

The bureaucratic model was established inside the Brazilian universities by the major university reform imposed by the military government in 1968. While the main components of this reform were intended to control the university life, some of its traits were highly progressive. Following what was then thought to be the needs of hard science – deemed as instrumental for the country’s development - the 1968 reform introduced the full time contract as the staple mode for academic contracts inside the public universities; substituted the chairs by the departments as the basic academic unity; and allowed for the split of the old Faculties of Philosophy, Science, and Humanities into specialized institutes, focused in teaching and researching in one specific discipline, usually in some hard science field. The reform also imposed vertical controls over the universities, with the internal decision making process organized around the Departmental councils – a representation of the senior academics – the Faculty’s or Institute’s senate – a representation of the Departmental councils – which ended up into the University’s senate, a representation of the University’s institutes and faculties. Contrary to the old collegial mode, the new bureaucratic model reserved strong autonomy and initiative to the rector. The rector was chosen by the government (the Ministry of

Education, in the case of Federal universities, and the state governor, in the case of state universities) among the university' full professors, from a list nominated by the university's senate.

There is one relevant point that should be brought to note here. In Brazil, as in many Latin American countries, full-professorship should not be taken as always meaning a sign of outstanding academic profile. Only in few universities, the institutional rank is correlated with academic leadership. In most universities the old institutional oligarchy is mostly composed by academics with shaky academic credentials, but who have reached positions of authority inside the institution (Balbachevsky, 2005). Some of them correspond to the traditional professor, a professional distinguished in his profession and occupying the higher ranks in the faculty of a professional school. Others are academics with no particular professional identity, no academic credentials, but with large experience in the internal bureaucratic rules that govern the university.

The fight against the Military dictatorship unified four internal stakeholders inside the universities: the student movement; the internationalized and domestic academic elite - those academics with good academic credentials and well positioned inside the institution's career; the young scholars - which correspond to the scholars with good academic credentials, strongly committed to research, but positioned in the lower ranks inside the universities; and finally, the majority of the university's lecturers - whose profile is characterized by the lack of academic credentials and small or almost none commitment with research. For all these stakeholders, democratic governance coupled with an internal federative arrangement allowing for a strong internal autonomy to the smaller academic unities was the best alternative available. The election of the university's rector would weaken the Government's leverage over the university's internal affairs and reinforce the university's autonomy in front a government that was perceived without legitimacy. On the other hand, the federative arrangement would accommodate the tensions created by the differences in values and interests supported by different internal stakeholders.

### **Policy dynamics in Brazilian higher education:**

One relevant way to understand the dynamics of the higher education policies in Brazil is to observe the pattern of alliances and conflicts that articulates the three coalitions around the main issues present in the policy agenda. First, one can see how strong is the alliance that supports the notion of higher education as a public good and how it delegitimizes private higher education and any attempt to charge tuition fees at the public universities. This normative posture is rooted in the core values of two of the three coalitions, the egalitarian and the academic entrepreneurs.

On the other hand, a similar pattern can be identified regarding the debate around the mode of governance of (public) universities. Here the debate is mostly constrained by the norm regarding democratic governance of (public) universities, which is also supported by two of the three advocacy coalitions: the egalitarians and the academic entrepreneurs. For the formers, democratic governance is the most relevant tool for preserving the political leverage of the unions in the university's internal affairs, and also in the policy system as a whole.

The support of democratic governance among the academic entrepreneurs is more problematic to understand. Since early 1990s some leaders of this coalition have been known to show some discomfort with this arrangement. In fact, some experiences with democratic governance provide good examples of the dangers this arrangement can offer to the research endeavor inside the university. In many cases, democratic governance has allowed for the victory of leaders supported by alliances between academic and employees unions articulated around a populist agenda. This kind of alliance tends to undermine the merit based rules that, from the point of view of the academic entrepreneurs, should govern the access to the institution's resources. In the long run, this scenario may even threaten the researcher's autonomy regarding her/his research agenda, specially if it includes contracted research and/or proprietary rights over knowledge.

For the high bureaucracy in the science agencies, democratic governance is the main source of uncertainty in the universities' support for research and entrepreneurship. Democratic governance also creates obstacles in the way

university's respond to the external stakeholders, because it tends to close the institution's governance, making it responsible only to the internal constituencies. It also undermines the position of the more entrepreneurial sub-units inside the university, usually perceived as a threat to the egalitarian rules that should prevail inside the university.

In spite of all these hindrances, democratic governance is strongly supported by almost all members of the academic entrepreneurial coalition. Even if in some particular situations are to be deplored in private, the public defense of the democratic governance is always voiced by leaders inside this coalition. This pattern of response cannot be understood without taking into account the emergence of a normative value that sanctify the democratic governance as the only acceptable alternative for university's governance "in a democracy"<sup>6</sup>. Due to the past experience with the democratization process, democratic governance have been converted in a policy taboo in Brazilian higher education policy (c.f. Tanenwald, 1999), its desirability is never contested and all stakeholders tend to assume that this is the only way a good university is supposed to be governed. One major effect of this norm is to delegitimize any debate on different alternatives for university governance.

The third issue relates to preserving the autonomy of the sub-units inside the university. This demand is viewed as a vital issue for the academic entrepreneurs and for a strong constituency within the utilitarian coalition, the academic oligarchy. It is opposed by members of the egalitarian coalition and it is not equally relevant for other constituencies within the utilitarian coalition, hence the support for this principle cannot count with unrestricted support in the Brazilian debate on higher education.

Finally, one issue that has received increasing attention by some stakeholders is the role of higher education as a tool for enhancing the country's innovative capabilities and global competitiveness. This perspective brings together the ideas

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<sup>6</sup> As an example, at the beginning of April, this year, the Brazilian Senate started to appreciate a Project that imposes "democratic" elections for Rectors in all public universities. The main argument presented by the project's supporters is that this is the best rule for university's governance "in a democratic country" (see <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/vidae,comissao-do-senado-aprova-eleicao-direta-para-reitor-de-universidade-publica,1016216,0.htm>).



of the university as an entrepreneurial entity (Clark 1998) and the social and economic relevance of the knowledge produced by science (Gibbons et al. 1994, Lester and Sotarauta, 2007, Nilsson, 2006). These ideas are strongly supported by the members of the utilitarian coalition, but count with only partial support from entrepreneurial scientists. For the members of the last coalition, the concordance with this idea is conditional to the acceptance of the principle that the initiative for building partnerships should be left in the hands of the universities' research groups or academic heartland (Clark 1998). This pattern of support creates a very peculiar way of understanding innovation. In this view, the core innovation activity is the work done by the scientists. Science should provide the best solutions for the problems faced by society and, because of its disinterested nature (Merton 1973), science is the best judge regarding the relevant needs facing society. Thus, in order to be relevant (and innovative) science should give attention to the strategic problems faced by society and search for solutions, which should then be passed to the enterprises (preferably a public enterprise, but private is acceptable, as long as it is a national enterprise) responsible for their applications into products and services. In other words, the main instruments for innovation policy should then be the support of research programs in areas deemed strategic for the country (Stokes, 1997, Rip, 2004).

### ***Conclusion:***

This paper explores the dynamics of coalition building that unifies different stakeholders inside the Brazilian policy system related to higher education using the conceptual framework of the *advocacy coalitions* as proposed by Sabatier and collaborators. It discusses how the recent historical events, mainly linked with the country's democratization process and the peculiar layered pattern of the country's academic profession supported the emergence of the "democratic governance" as the only alternative for university's governance. This alternative was established as a core value inside some of the coalitions and have been converted into a policy taboo (Tannenwald, 1999), against which no "respectable" domestic actor is allowed to oppose without incurring in moral opprobrium of being classified as authoritarian.

Nevertheless, the changes in the Brazilian economy and society, and the new demands brought by the new stakeholders have profoundly changed the terms of the debate around higher education policies. The new agenda tend to overburden the university's decision making process, while the democratic governance increases the costs for reaching a decision, specially in conflicting areas.

For example, the new measures for increasing access into public universities have diversified the public sector student population. With the new student profile come demands for a more pro-active student support measures. This, in turn, creates pressures for a more strategic use of the funds allocated for this finality. Even with mounting pressures in this area, most public universities persist in adopting old fashioned formula which scatters the resources offering subsidy to all students in a few areas, which is not enough to support the needs of the more vulnerable profile of students the new policies are deemed to bring into the public university.

In another area, since 2004 the Brazilian government adopted a new innovation law (Law 10.973/04). The Law provides support for strategic alliances and cooperative projects; and for mechanisms for sharing laboratories and other facilities, allowing the productive sector to benefit from the existing public infrastructure for research and development, It also authorizes public institutions to hold a minority stake in technological companies and gives permission for researchers from public institutions to leave their institutions for three years (renewable for another three years) in order to form their own enterprise to explore new technological developments. Finally, it awards fiscal incentives for increase the collaboration between companies and research organizations, hiring Ph.D. holders and creating partnership with small technological enterprises and independent researchers. In spite of its strong ambitions, the Law was never effective as one should expect. While many of its hindrances are well known (Botelho and Pimenta-Bueno, 2008), some of the difficulties faced in its implementation are definitively related to resistances raised by relevant internal constituencies inside the public universities.

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