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Equity Policies in Tertiary Education, The Case of the  
Universidad Autónoma Chapingo, Mexico. Analysis from  
Public Policies Theories

**Master's thesis**

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## Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 03/05/2023

Jesús Arturo Medina Varela

**Length of the thesis:** 202,390 characters with spaces, without abstract, summarize and references.

## Abstract

Despite efforts to increase enrollment and democratize public tertiary education in Mexico, educational inequality persists. Students from families with higher incomes remain the primary beneficiaries of tertiary education. The Universidad Autónoma Chapingo (UACH) is an exception to this trend, its equity policies have helped low-income and indigenous students access and succeed. Although there are reports and evaluations of these policies, no research explains why they were implemented at the UACH, especially when other public universities in Mexico took a more meritocratic approach. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the variables that led to implementing equity policies at the UACH. The research finds that the beliefs and ideas of the actors inherited from the history of the institution are the most significant explanatory variable. In combination with other factors, including stable parameters, external events, long term coalition opportunities. The study also highlights the leadership role played by a policy entrepreneur at the UACH and how his coalition implemented a unique approach to reform university admissions policies. The study shows that the success of equity policies at the UACH was not due to a single variable but a combination of circumstances, strategies, and access to key resources adopted by an advocacy coalition. Overall, this research provides valuable insights into how educational institutions in Mexico can work towards implementing equity policies that facilitate access and success for low-income students in tertiary education and into the challenges and difficulties that arise from this experience.

## Keywords

Equity Policies in Tertiary Education, Universidad Autónoma Chapingo, Advocacy Coalition Framework, Admission Equity Policies.

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## List of Acronyms

Acronyms	Meaning
ANUIES	Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior  National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions
PAIDEIA	Student School Performance Program UNAM
UACH/Chapingo	Universidad Autónoma Chapingo
UAEH	Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo
UdeG	Universidad de Guadalajara
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
UPOM	Unidad de Planeación, Organización y Métodos de la UACH UACH Planning, Organization and Methods Unit
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
IDP	Institutional Development Plan
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática National Institute of Geography and Informatics Statistics
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional/ Zapatista Army of National Liberation



## Summary

Chapter 1 of the text focuses on the problem of educational inequality in Mexico, specifically in tertiary education. Even though the country has a large number of enrolled students, the social policy of the last decades has expanded enrollment in favor of students from high-income families, which has perpetuated the inequality of educational opportunities. In the case of the Chapingo Autonomous University, its educational equity policies have diminished the relationship between school success and the social origin of students, allowing students from low-income families and of indigenous origin to enter the university.

The theoretical framework used to explain why UACH admissions equity policies happened is the Advocacy Coalition Framework, which focuses on the beliefs within coalitions competing to shape the agenda based on their beliefs and convictions. ACF's approach considers the policy subsystem as the primary unit of analysis for understanding policy processes.

Chapter 2 focuses on educational equality and theories of justice, equity, and equal opportunities. Rawls's theory holds that the institutions of society, including those that provide public education, should be just. Equal opportunities imply that society must guarantee equal educational opportunities for all, regardless of family income, and that educational policies must use all their resources to counteract inequalities of social origin.

The author Bolívar Botía distinguishes between Rawls' difference principle and the compensation principle in relation to educational policy. The first prioritizes more resources for public education, while the second seeks to provide additional resources to compensate for social deprivations and balance the playing field.

This chapter identifies four ways of understanding equal opportunities in education, which Bolívar Botía groups into two blocks: the meritocratic-conservative and the social-democratic belief systems. The first opposes redistributive action based on meritocracy, while the second promotes universal and equal opportunities and compensatory measures for the most disadvantaged.

Bolívar Botía proposes adding the ideology of "recognition and justice" as a complement to equality. This ideology promotes positive discrimination towards groups that have historically been marginalized or discriminated against, especially in post-colonial regions where the original communities demonstrated exclusion and dispossession. Finally, the tensions between meritocracy and educational equity are examined, which can generate problems and differences in the visions of tertiary education due to the fact that political ideologies and values present in society influence the configuration of educational policies.

In Chapter 3, a comparative analysis of the equity policies of four universities in Mexico is carried out: UACH, UNAM, UdeG, and UAEH. These universities were selected because they are recognized as quality institutions and enjoy autonomy and self-governance. The analysis evaluates equity in access, permanence, and results, as well as how recognition policies address historical marginalization, particularly of indigenous communities in Mexico. The study aims to give the reader a comparative perspective on how public higher education institutions in Mexico implement measures for educational equity and the ideological motivations behind their policies.

UACH's equity policies prioritize social democratic principles, emphasizing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their origin. Unlike other Mexican universities, UACH strongly emphasizes access, permanence, and results, as highlighted by Farrel's (1997) dimensions. The UdeG and the UAEH adopt a meritocratic-conservative model that prioritizes academic performance, while the UNAM adopts a hybrid approach. UACH excels in recognizing indigenous communities, creating an inclusive and equitable environment for all students.

Chapter 4 uses the Advocacy Coalition Framework to explain the admissions equity policy reform at the Autonomous University of Chapingo in 2008. It analyzes stable parameters, external events, and the degree of consensus required for significant changes in the university admissions policy. In-depth interviews were conducted with a wide range of stakeholders within the university to explore why the university produced educational equity policies that differ from other public universities in

Mexico, and insight was gained into the role of learning in driving this change. The interviews provided valuable information about the coalitions, including their composition, ideas, beliefs, and strategies to advance the 2008 equity reform.

This chapter explains why the actors at the Universidad Autónoma Chapingo in Mexico promote social democratic equity policies, despite the fact that most of the country's public higher education institutions promote conservative meritocratic policies. The Advocacy Coalition Framework of the theories of the public policy process is used to achieve this.

The explanatory analysis finds that no single variable explains this phenomenon. Rather, a series of circumstances have led the university actors to combine strategies to become an institution that promotes equity policies at multiple levels. Among these circumstances are relatively stable parameters such as the high levels of educational inequality in Mexico, the population's preference for wealth redistribution, and the legal conditions that guarantee educational equity. In addition, external factors, such as the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the San Andrés agreements, and the democratic transition of Mexico, have also influenced the exercise of the university's autonomy and the motivations of actors and coalitions from UACH.

The leadership role of Dr. Roberto Rivera del Río in promoting equity policies at UACH and how the coalition led by him implemented a unique strategy to reform university admissions policies are highlighted. In addition, the university's commitment to equity, the coalition's expertise, and strategic positioning contributed to the successful implementation of the policy.

The 2008 reform marks a significant milestone in the university's history, reflecting its continued evolution and commitment to address equity and social justice issues. However, the tensions between the two groups with different visions for the university's future highlight its ongoing challenges as it navigates its complex history and identity.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

One of the challenges of public higher education institutions is to offer quality public education with inclusion and equity. In Mexico, in the last 40 years, significant efforts have been made to expand education opportunities for many young people. This thesis analyzes from a perspective of public policy theories the policies for equity at the Autonomous University of Chapingo (From now on, UACH).

I have chosen UACH as a case study because, since 2008, a group of academics and educational entrepreneurs have taken on the challenge of implementing admission policies and policies of results that strengthen equity and promote educational justice. A coalition of researchers and leaders implemented measures to promote educational equity, despite facing an environment in Mexico that traditionally responded to meritocratic criteria.

As a researcher, I find the case study inspiring because it assesses the learning and results achieved by UACH 14 years after implementing these policies. The evidence shows alternative paths to delivering tertiary education in Mexico.

It is vital to highlight that UACH is a prestigious public institution that, in various academic rankings, appears among the five universities with the best educational quality in Mexico. Consequently, the case is more interesting since it is an institution that has managed to maneuver intelligently between the tensions generated by the search for indicators of excellence and, at the same time, skilfully implement educational justice and equity measures.

As expressed by Rivera del Río., R. & Buendía-Espinosa, A., (2010), UACH has incorporated recognition measures for groups historically marginalized from education, such as the indigenous communities of Mexico, as an act of social justice. Their model selection breaks the traditional criteria that only consider standardized tests as evaluation criteria to determine who enters the university.

The policy change at UACH occurred on May 12, 2008, through its governing body made up of academics, students, and administrators. The advocacy coalition proposed an integrated student selection mechanism by various criteria that will not be limited to assessing students' profiles by a standardized test.

To analyze the belief system and the dimensions of policy analysis, I use the work carried out by Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) following (Crahay, 2003). In their compilation of equity theories, they argue that distributive justice must tend to educational equity; therefore, policies must serve to favor the most disadvantaged students. Botía, A. (2005) mentions different approaches to assessing educational equity, such as access to tertiary education, survival (permanence), results, social consequences, and social recognition. Those will be the dimensions taken to consider equity policies for this thesis.

This thesis aims to explain why current promoting educational equity policies have changed at the UACH if no external pressures forced them to implement these measures and their promoters did not emulate other state universities or nationals. Therefore, the general objective of the thesis is to explain why policies for equity arise in the UACH case. In addition, I have set 6 specific objectives.

1. Categorize the policies for equity in the UACH and compare them with a sample of public universities in Mexico.
2. Determine the coalition of actors that have promoted the change reforms for educational equity in UACH.
3. Detail the beliefs of the advocacy coalitions for equity and explain how these actors took these ideas to influence the change in the tertiary education model.
4. Distinguish if the coalitions opposed to the change in 2008 reached an agreement in the university governing bodies to maintain high-quality standards in exchange for implementing the change for equity policies.
5. Establish to what extent there could be learning between actors and the promoting coalitions based on the access and permanence reforms in the analyzed period.

6. Deduce if the actors' learning has changed their ideas and beliefs in public policy.

According to the Advocacy Coalition Framework and from the set objectives, the following primary research question stem:

Why do the actors in the Autonomous University of Chapingo promote social-democratic equity policies if there are no external pressures to do so, and the majority of the public higher education institutions in Mexico promote meritocratic conservative policies?

To answer the main question, I use those established in the ACF by Weible et al. (2011). What is the role of scientists and technical information in policymaking? How do people mobilize, maintain, and act in advocacy coalitions in UACH? To what extent do coalitions learn, especially from their allies and opponents? What factors influence both minor and major policy changes?

The methodological design consists of three phases:

1. An analysis of the literature on policies for educational equity in Mexico.
2. A comparative analysis of social policy.
3. An analysis of a case study on advocacy coalitions of the equity policies of the UACH with the ACF approach.

Finally, the thesis concludes by describing the findings and conclusions, combining the information and the empirical elements of the three research phases to answer the research questions through the evidence by connecting the different methodological phases.

### Definition of the problem

The equity in education is one of the central premises of the welfare state. In Mexico's case, is a human right embodied in the political Constitution. The Mexican Constitution refers that education provided by the State must be free, equitable, inclusive, and intercultural. In particular, the Constitution, tacitly says that public education must consider the social characteristics of individuals and eliminate barriers that inhibit access to learning and access to education.

Mexico's public higher education system is very diverse and broad; According to the statistical yearbooks of Anuiés (2022), Mexico has an enrollment of 5,068,493 students in higher education. In the private sector, there is a total enrollment of 1,816,659; in the public sector, there is a total enrollment of 3,251,834 students.

The tertiary education system is highly complex. It has universities belonging to the Federal Government, State Public Universities, Technological Universities, Solidarity Support State Public Universities, Polytechnic Universities, Intercultural Universities, Public Normal Schools (Schools for elementary school teachers), and private sector institutions that provide higher education.

The levels of educational delivery within tertiary education are Doctorate, Specialty, Master's, Bachelor's, and Technological degrees. The study modalities are full-time and part-time, face-to-face and virtual, as well as a significant boom in universities teaching blended learning classes as of the 2022 pandemic.

In the Mexican educational system, the policies for equality in the last decades have decided to focus economic resources and efforts on the expansion of enrollment. However, the increased public spending on education has generated a paradox because those who have been the primary beneficiaries are young people from high-income families. As revealed by Barone, C. (2019), *following (Triventi, 2013; Ichou & Vallet, 2011). "...with the massive expansion of higher education in recent decades, these differences (inequality of educational opportunity) have become more important, and the upper classes may be able to exploit them to their advantage."*

For instance, Mexico has had a policy of expansion in higher education enrollment in the last decades; it has expanded its gross enrollment rate exponentially in recent years. In 1971, the enrollment rate was barely 5.3%, and it had a substantial gap between women and men. In 2018, its gross enrollment rate was 41.5%, with higher women's participation in this educational sector.

		Gross enrollment rate in tertiary education, by sex					
		1971	1980	1990	2000	2010	2018
Both genders		5.3	13.4	15.4	20.5	27.6	41.5
	Men	8.5	18.3	...	21.5	27.9	40.7
Women		2.1	8.6	...	19.5	27.3	42.3

Figure 1. Percentage of gross enrollment rate of students in Mexico tertiary education. Source: ECLAC, United Nations, (2020)

The expansion of higher education in the last five decades in Mexico is a considerable achievement. Nevertheless, higher education has not been developed equitably for students from low-income families. In figure 2. It shows how tertiary education has expanded; however, it is not distributed evenly with the low-income population.

Year	I	II	III	IV	V	Total	Total students
2010	4.20 %	10.20	14.30	27.20	43.70	100.00	4,137,302
2014	3.40	9.90	17.70	27.20	42.10	100.00	4,556,044

Figure 2. Distribution of enrolment at Tertiary Education in Mexico by quintile of income Source: (2016). National Report - Mexico. CINDA - Higher Education in Ibero-America Report.

Figure 2 shows how university enrollment in Mexico is concentrated in the quintiles with the highest purchasing power; for 2014, 69.3% of tertiary education students in Mexico came from quintiles IV and V. It can also be observed that there was an increase in university enrolment from 2010 to 2014 of 418,742 students. However, we did not keep positive student growth from the first and second quintiles.

As Veselý, A. (2012) points out, that to understand better how the phenomenon of inequality behaves in the educational field, scholars should not only focus on exogenous factors of the students, such as the relationship of their parents education and the performance of young people students. In the words of Veselý, A. (2012), "*... Unavoidably, we should delve into a vast array of other factors behind educational*



*processes such as the education system's institutional design, parents and peers, teachers and teaching methods, school processes, school climate, and many others."*

Alternatively, in the most recent report, inequality and meritocracy, Rivera del Rio, R., & Buendía-Espinosa, A. (2022) reported that in the case of the UACH, the policies for educational equity had decreased the relationship between school success and social origin of the students. In other words, students from low-income families have better chances of entering the university due to positive discrimination policies. Once inside, they have compensatory policies that allow them to remain in the university and bring them closer to equality of results. Consequently, to understand how these mechanisms have emerged, the theory of public policies is proposed to interpret why currents promoting policies for equity have occurred within the UACH.

#### [The Theories of Public Policy](#)

The birth of the public policy discipline occurred in the United States. The book that can be considered the beginning of the discipline is the policy sciences: Recent developments in scope and method, edited by Harold D. Lasswell and Daniel Lerner, Stanford University Press, published in 1951.

According to Potucek (2007) public policies are *"defined as a discipline which elaborates and applies the interpretive framework of sociology, economics, political sciences, law, management theory, and other disciplines in analyzing and foresighting the processes of formation and assertion of public interest with respect to solving differentiated social problems. It primarily deals with the institutional mediation of those processes by the public sector, the civic sector and, to some extent, also the commercial sector, in a form that is useful for political practice"*.

For his part, Ruvalcaba-Gómez, E. A. (2019) mentions that, within the study of public policies, various intellectuals have tried to establish multiple models of analysis that explain how policies are produced and transformed. In the same idea, Ruvalcaba mentions that it has been necessary to create different theories that can explain the dynamic character of the diversity of actors that participate in public policy processes to face the complexities of social reality.

The study of public policies has not remained static. It has evolved, and various theories have emerged that explain different phenomena; one of the most exciting compendiums on public policy theory is found in Weible, CM, & Sabatier, P. (2017).

For their part, Ruvalcaba-Gómez, E. A. (2019) suggest to review the literature of Heikkila, T., & Cairney, P. (2018) where eight of the most notable theories are integrated and summarized in a quite illustrative way. According to Heikkila, T., & Cairney, P. (2018) they describe in each theory the elements of Actors making choices, Institutions, Networks or subsystems, Ideas or beliefs, Policy context, Events, in order to describe the interactions that occur between these and allow explaining the systems where public policies are produced.

1. Actors making choices: Policy theories categorize and describe the key actors involved in the policy process; these actors can be collectives, individuals, interest groups in governance schemes, among others.

2. Institutions: Institutions can be defined in a few words as the game's rules. These are the rules, norms, and practices that define collective behavior. To a certain extent, the actors' decisions are explained and understood from how they abide by specific rules. Rules can be formal or informal, depending on the context and organization.

The following table allows us to understand the interactions between actors and institutions in a more illustrative way.

Level of formalization	Actors		Institutions
	Individual	Composite	
<b>Formalized</b>	Political leaders Bureaucrats Policy analysts	Political parties Government, public administration bodies Firms Civic sector organizations Think-tanks Media	Constitutional-legal system Territorial and administrative structure / division of the state Administrative procedures
<b>Non-formalized (unwritten)</b>	Opinion leaders Policy entrepreneurs	Interest groups Policy networks Epistemic communities	Ethical norms, social norms, expectations, customs

Figure 3. Actor and Institutions. Source: Potůček, M. et al. (2017) Public Policy: A Comprehensive Introduction. Karolinum Press, Charles University.

3. Networks or subsystems: In Heikkila, T., & Cairney, P. (2018), following Jordan, Halpin, and Maloney (2004). They describe the element of Networks or subsystems as the relationship between the actors responsible for the formulation of public policies and the "pressure participants" such as interest groups with which they consult and negotiate.

4. Ideas or beliefs: In Potucek (2017) mentions that ideologies are diverse opinions in different societies about where to direct society's collective efforts; these values are reflected in various political ideologies. Contemporary societies are characterized by being eminently plural in their opinions on how the Governments should address problems, making it explicitly challenging to understand and manage public policies.

5. Policy context: In Heikkila, T., & Cairney, P. (2018) Following (Hofferbert 1974) describe the element of policymaking as the often changing political conditions that decision-makers must consider when identifying problems and how problems will address it. The context can include characteristics such as the demographic profile, the economy, and the behavior of society in a given political system, among other factors.

6. Events: In Heikkila, T., & Cairney, P. (2018) following Weible (2014) describe that events can be routine and can be anticipated, such as elections that produce limited changes. But also, events can be incidents that cannot be expected, such as social crises, technological changes, or scientific innovations. These exogenous factors are crucial to theorize public policies, so it is essential to incorporate them to interpret how actors make decisions and why they make them.

#### [The Advocacy Coalition Framework as a theoretical approach for the analysis of policies for equity at the UACH](#)

According to Weible, CM, & Nohrstedt, D. (2012), following Laudan (1977: 70–120) and Ostrom (2005: 27–9), the frameworks serve as platforms for groups of scholars to work together toward common understandings and explain phenomena. Frameworks also help provide assumptions, specify the scope of the inquiry, and establish general definitions and conceptual categories. The frameworks offer a favorable environment to develop hypotheses and postulate causal relationships among concepts through the theories.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework is an analytical framework that assists in explaining the change in public policies in moments of stability. This model considers the policy process's complexity but adds beliefs and ideas as an explanatory variable.

According to Weible, CM, & Nohrstedt, D. (2012), the Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (ACF) advocacy coalition framework results from dissatisfaction with the policy cycle and the need for explanations of policy processes that they take more seriously the scientific role and technical information, beyond the interpretations of rational actors in microeconomics. Gómez Lee, M. (2012) points out that the ACF has been influential since it does not only consider the power relations of the interest groups in the configuration of policies but rather an important aspect is the learning that occurs between the coalitions of cause. This framework has made it possible to explain policies' complexity in many case studies.

## Definition of Advocacy Coalition

Coalitions are groups that share a core of beliefs and can coordinate and organize to influence the configuration of policies. Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017) mention that coalition participants seek to form alliances with people from different levels of government, organizations, and institutions that share similar beliefs and ideas. An Advocacy Coalition consists of diverse actors from various levels of government and institutions who share common beliefs and values. These actors work together to guide policy decision-making and align their beliefs with modifying rules and budgets to create policies that enable them to achieve their long-term objectives.

## The Belief system

Heikkila, T., & Cairney, P. (2018) states that there are three main types of beliefs: Deep core beliefs that consider a hierarchical set of ideas and values that are very difficult to change. At an intermediate point are the policy core beliefs, which group normative beliefs which correspond to those ideas to analyze in the policy subsystem in which the members of the coalitions try to configure their policies. These policies are also resistant to change. However, they are apt to be modified under specific parameters and assumptions. Finally, secondary aspects are susceptible to change, like the instrumental decisions of policies.

The actors who share thoughts are grouped within the same promoting coalition against other actors grouped around different ideas and compete to determine the agenda-setting. The institutions where they compete with each other are the arenas where the rules of the game are defined, and they compete to influence and shape the agenda based on their beliefs and convictions

	Deep Core Beliefs	Policy Core Beliefs	Secondary Aspects
Characteristic	Normative and ontological axioms	Fundamental positions linked to a certain policy subsystem	Necessary instrumental decisions aimed at how to implement public policies
Scope	Public Policy Subsystem	Specific to a subsystem	Specific to a subsystem
possibility of change	Very low: Equivalent to a religious conversion	Very hardly: Motivated by factors external to the subsystem	Relatively easy, depending on the available information
learning type	Social Learning	Social Learning, Intermediate instances of conflict	Instrumental Learning: Technical Forums

Figure 4. Belief System, Source: Gómez Lee, M. (2012), following Jenkins Smith (1999).

#### Relatively stable parameters

According to González Barroso, F. (2015). The stable parameters are the structural rules of the game whose change requires long periods. Therefore, they define the playing field and the actors' behaviors, capacities, and resources in the political game. In other words, the variations in the "relatively stable parameters of the system" concern changes in the essential attributes of the problem, such as social and cultural values, the distribution of resources, and the social and constitutional structure.

#### External Events

Another set of variables is external events of a dynamic nature, such as changes in a governing coalition, abrupt changes in socioeconomic conditions, and changes in public opinion. Durán-Báez, A. (2017) states that external events impact the constraints and resources that the actors have because changes in this area can generate the opportunity for more significant change.

#### Long Term Coalition opportunity structure

Durán-Báez, A. (2017) mentions that the category of variables "Long term structure opportunity structure" acts as a mediator between the relatively stable parameters

and the policy subsystem since they affect the resources that a coalition sustains to mobilize to for them to occur requires long periods, at least a decade.

#### Constraints and Resources of the Actors in the Short Term.

This variable establishes that the Advocacy Coalitions have access to a series of resources that allow them to influence decision-making. Durán-Báez, A., (2017) following Sabatier., (2007) lists them.

1. Access the legal authority where policies are made, and budgets are distributed. A dominant coalition has more members in positions of formal authority than a minority coalition.
2. Access to public opinion, a fundamental part of the efforts of advocacy coalitions, focuses on seeking the support of public opinion through the deployment of narratives.
3. Information regarding the seriousness of a problem and potential courses of action to address it. Coalitions use their information as a valuable resource to steer the conversation, win more supporters, and unite key stakeholders around the cause. Durán-Báez, A., (2017) emphasizes that stakeholders usually use or distort this information to reinforce their arguments.
4. Social demonstrations are another resource that Advocacy coalitions have. Political elites generally have members who express their beliefs through electoral campaigns and political activities. On the other hand, coalitions that lack resources usually use street mobilizations through playful actions to gain attention and be low-cost resources.
5. Financial resources: coalitions with the most funding have access to think tanks to produce information, finance research, or even finance candidates for elected positions to make their reasoning and political positions from the public domain.
6. Finally, as in other public policy theories, one of the resources considered in the ACF is the role of leaders. Policy entrepreneurs play an essential role in driving policy change forward.

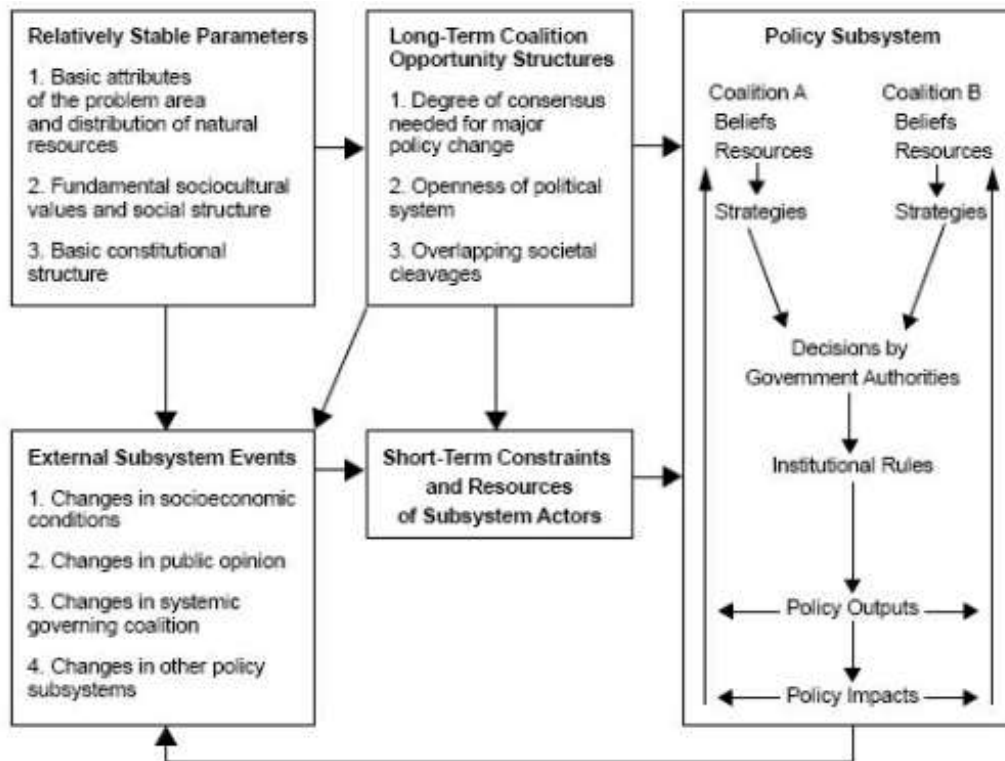


Figure. 5. Modeling Advocacy Coalitions Source: Potůček, M. et al. (2017) Following Veselý, Drhová Nachtmannová (2005) following Sabatier, Jenkins-Smith (1999) adapted.

### Learning

Another explanatory variable of ACF's approach is that it incorporates the learning of promoting coalitions during long-term processes into policy analysis. Durán-Báez, A., (2017) following Sabatier., (2007) mentions that learning can influence policies and change behavioral intentions. Groups with information derived from scientific analysis and high-level academic forums allow them to justify in the long term the political position they hold.

Durán-Báez, A. (2017) refers that change through learning mainly affects secondary aspects of the belief system. On the other hand, coalitions can reach agreements that represent a substantial change in the configuration of the core policies. In this situation, it is relevant to understand under what circumstances learning generated a change in a moment of stability without external disturbances.



#### Justification of the selection of the ACF

Weible and Nohrstedt (2012) set the assumptions underlying policy analysis using the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The first assumption is that understanding the change process requires a long-term perspective, at least a decade. Sabatier (1993) argues that short-term observations cannot fully explain changes in socioeconomic factors. In the case of UACH, the change took place in 2008, and more than a decade has elapsed since then, providing a suitable timeframe for analyzing learning.

The second assumption in Weible and Nohrstedt (2012) that the policy subsystem is the primary unit of analysis for understanding policy processes. Sabatier (1998) states subsystems are semi-autonomous, nested, and interdependent. These characteristics accurately describe the current configuration of tertiary education institutions in Mexico. Although universities enjoy autonomy, they are not isolated entities but interdependent and subject to external audits and fluctuations.

The third premise in Weible and Nohrstedt (2012) is that the set of relevant subsystem actors includes anyone who regularly tries to influence subsystem affairs. Weible and Nohrstedt (2012) emphasize that the ACF broadens the scope of actors involved in the subsystem to include such individuals. The actors to take into account, according to González Barroso, F. (2015), should be of diverse origins, from different levels of government and a plural variety of activities because they all participate in the learning process, reformulate ideas, and influence public policies. For this reason, this thesis considers students, academics, scientists, administrators, workers, unions, student organizations, and leadership that form the advocacy coalitions in the governing bodies of the UACH.

The fourth assumption in Weible and Nohrstedt (2012) is that individuals are boundedly rational, have limited ability to process stimuli, and are motivated by belief systems. To analyze the belief system, Fernández, M. (2003) classifies four ways of understanding equal opportunities in education: the system of natural freedom, meritocratic equal opportunities, universal or egalitarian equal opportunities, and compensatory equal opportunities. The analysis should also consider recognition

policies for historically vulnerable groups, such as indigenous communities and Afro-descendants.

The fifth assumption in Weible and Nohrstedt (2012) is that aggregating actors simplifies subsystems into one or more coalitions. Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) identifies two large coalitions that influence the guidelines for educational equality and equity in Mexican universities: one influenced by the meritocratic-conservative belief system and the other by the social democratic belief system.

The sixth assumption in Weible and Nohrstedt (2012) is that policies and programs incorporate implicit theories reflecting the translated beliefs of one or more coalitions. To analyze ideas in four dimensions of policies, namely equity in access to tertiary education, equity in permanence, equity of results, and equity in benefits of the results, following Bolívar Botía, A. (2005).

Finally, the last assumption in Weible and Nohrstedt (2012) is that scientific and technical information is essential for understanding subsystem affairs. Therefore, the technical and scientific data I use for the analysis is provided by Rivera del Rio, R., & Buendía-Espinosa, A. (2022) Inequality and meritocracy. The case of the UACH. They organized academic forums, seminars, and collaborative work with other higher education institutions to balance the equity policies 13 years after its implementation.

Therefore, the ACF is chosen for its alignment with the assumptions underlying policies for equity in the UACH. The ACF's emphasis on the central role of beliefs and learning in advocacy coalitions provides a sound framework for explaining changes in public policy, making it a relevant tool for studying equity policies in the context of the UACH.

#### [Limitations of the Advocacy Coalition Framework](#)

Durán, A. (2017) has pointed out several limitations of the Advocacy Coalitions Framework (ACF) that should be considered. Firstly, it has been argued that the ACF does not fully explain political change and is more descriptive than explanatory. Secondly, the model fails to integrate all the various components that explain

changes in politics, such as institutions and individual choices, attributing an excessive preponderance to ideas, socioeconomic conditions, and networks. Thirdly, the role of interests and strategies deployed by coalitions is underestimated, while the emphasis is placed on external factors and shocks. Finally, the ACF was developed based on the interactions in the democracy of the United States, which may not be compatible with nations where political communities and actors have limited influence or do not participate in policy-making.

## Chapter 2 Belief System

### Equity policies, equity education, theory of justice

#### Theory of justice

The objectives set out in this research based on the Advocacy Coalition framework on policies for educational equity in the case of the University of Chapingo in Mexico require a complete understanding of the ideas and beliefs of the actors involved in shaping policies in the tertiary education subsystem. As Heywood (2012) expresses, political ideologies can act as social cement and unify collective beliefs. This social cement can contribute to the construction of public policy alternatives. Hence, starting from the previous assumption, this research work requires establishing how the various actors interpret educational equality from different ideological notions.

A first approximation to understanding social equality is through the theories of justice, through one of its leading exponents. John Rawls and his 1971 work, *A Theory of Justice*, positioned the theory of social justice at the center of contemporary political science debates. According to Gargarella., R (2013), following Rawls., J. (1971) the institutions of society "should not be distinguished simply by being orderly and efficient: they must be, above all, fair. And if they are not, then they must be *reformed or abolished*." Although Rawls does not mention the higher education subsystem explicitly in his book, from this criterion, it is clear that the institutions of society, including the systems that provide public education, must be fair. If they are not, they must not exist or must be reformed.

From the perspective of Gargarella., R. (2013), to talk about the theory of justice, Utilitarianism must first be understood. Rawls's theories of justice., J. (1971) arose

as a response to the dominant thought of his time: Utilitarianism. Utilitarianism, in the words of Mill J. (1984), is defined as "The creed that accepts as the foundation of moral utility or the highest principle of happiness, it holds that actions are correct to the extent that they tend to promote happiness, wrong if they tend to produce the opposite of happiness. So Utilitarianism is a doctrine that promulgates that the best decisions contribute to the majority's happiness. Faced with situations that must be submitted to political decision criteria, Utilitarianism justifies collective dilemmas under the argument of promoting happiness for the majority.

Utilitarianism suggests that when decision-makers have doubts about which policy to adopt in a conflict of interest situation, different alternatives are evaluated, taking the one that maximizes the general interest. As Gargarella, R. (2013) expresses, Utilitarianism is particularly attractive since it apparently takes people's preferences into account, and decisions are made based on this.

At first, it seems that the characteristics of Utilitarianism are irrefutable since it seems to show itself as a doctrine that is free of prejudices in the face of conflicting scenarios. However, Rawls., J. (1971) shows how Utilitarianism, when applied in society as a whole, the individual benefit has little or nothing to do with the benefit of a collective.

#### [Utilitarianism review](#)

Rawls., J. (1971), made one of the most interesting reviews of Utilitarianism refuting it almost completely. From this perspective, Gargarella., R (2013) expresses that Utilitarianism simplifies society by reducing it to a body in which it is possible to sacrifice one of the parties for the benefit of the others.

One of the forceful criticisms of Utilitarianism by Rawls., J. (1971), according to Gargarella., R (2013), is that it opens the door to "offensive preferences or tastes," for example, discrimination against another person, or to reduce the freedom of others. In this sense, Utilitarianism ceases to represent a suitable position since its neutral characteristic causes preferences to enter that could harm minorities. These examples, such as racism, or religious worship preferences, lead to questioning the principle of neutrality defended by Utilitarianism.

Gargarella., R (2013), based on the reflections of Rawls., J. (1971) concludes that Utilitarianism is compatible with systematic human rights violations on behalf of the majority. On the other hand, he mentions that we have to be careful with given preferences. For example, women who have been taught for centuries, through a dominant patriarchal thought, that they are inferior to men. These preferences, even if they were from a majority, must be questioned since they affect people's freedoms and lacerate the possibility of a dignified future for the historically violated population.

From this point of view in Utilitarianism, arguments on behalf of slavery could arise from a majority that justifies a minority of enslaved people, thinking about the maximization of the benefits that they would obtain from the enslaved. Therefore, it is concluded that it is unfair to distribute the resources of a society based on the doctrine of Utilitarianism.

Nevertheless, how could this be related to the educational equity theories of this research? According to Bolívar Botía, A. (2005), the doctrine of Utilitarianism defends that, in educational systems, the idea of school failure must be accepted for the system to work. A few do not make it and are thrown out of the system to benefit a talented majority that deserves to excel. From this perspective of the utilitarian principle in the educational field, people are discarded without understanding their context.

As previously mentioned, Rawls., J. (1971) does not give a proper place to tertiary education in A Theory of Justice. However, Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) mentions that applying the theory of justice has decisive consequences in educational equity and the elaboration of compensatory measures. Notably, Rawls, J. (1971) provides us with a way of elaborating on principles of justice for society; he proposes that the principles that govern social justice do not depend on the idiosyncrasies or interests of the groups involved. In addition, Rawls understands justice as fairness, and this principle is done through the "veil of ignorance." Our societal decisions should be made impartially, without being influenced by personal interests.

The "veil of ignorance" is a hypothetical scenario where members of a society who do not know their social position would seek to reach a fair agreement for all. Rawls.,

J. (1971) affirms that when the members of a society already know their social position, they always defend their interests, for which it is essential to think of a scenario where nobody has class privileges.

The defense of the particular interests of groups does not allow the generation of fair consensus since the members with greater purchasing power or factional power can intervene in the elaboration of the laws and regulations for their benefit and to the detriment of the majority. Consequently, a social contract would not represent the interest of the majority. However, in the hypothetical scenario of the veil of ignorance, in a pluralistic society, according to Rawls., J. (1971), the members of the society would reach a fairer social contract for all through an overlapping consensus. In other words, a society where all the actors agree that the intermediate point is that the institutions provide justice to balance the most disadvantaged members of society.

Rawls' reflections on Utilitarianism lead him to define that the first principle of the theory of justice is freedom. However, to deepen this work, the second principle is of interest, the so-called principle of fair equality of opportunity and the principle of difference.

According to Rawls., J. (2002), equitable equality of opportunities means "society must establish equal educational opportunities for all regardless of family income." The idea defends that fair institutions cannot nullify natural talents or pre-existing social inequalities; however, a theory of justice can try to correct inequalities in a way that benefits the most disadvantaged.

From this perspective, and transferring it to a fair educational system, the policies implemented for education should not discriminate against people based on the fate of their social origin. According to Bolívar Botía, A. (2005), the educational system must actively extend all its resources and means to counteract inequalities of social origin.

### [The difference principle](#)

Rawls' difference principle., J. (1971), mentions that inequalities can only be justified if they cause the benefit of the most disadvantaged. For example, the collection of

progressive taxes, which produce primary goods and services such as public education, the health system, and social policies, which improve people's quality of life. In a sense like this, inequality in macro terms can be accepted since said inequality operates to benefit the principle of redistribution and favors the least advantaged.

### Compensation principle and difference principle

Bolívar Botía, A. (2005), following Rawls (1979), makes a distinction between the principle of difference and the principle of compensation. The "difference principle" would put more financial resources into public education, which would favor the less advantaged in the long term. However, the principle of compensation goes beyond an equal distribution of resources. However, this principle seeks to provide additional resources to the less favored, to compensate for deficiencies of social origin, and more or less to balance the conditions of the game.

In this regard, Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) makes a highly relevant clarification, for Rawls., J. (1979), the principle of compensation is not about solidarity; compensation is strictly based on the principle of justice. Charity and solidarity should not be confused with social justice

John Rawls's theory of justice has aroused various fronts and critics. However, there is no doubt that he placed justice as a premise of social institutions at the center of political science and philosophy debate. In the following section, I explore how the ideologies and criticisms that awakened through Rawls's theory of justice can shape the policies of educational institutions.

### Political ideologies on equal opportunities

The political configuration of the institutions, according to Potůček M. et al. (2017), depends on political ideologies and value orientations present in a plural society; each society defines through its ideologies what is correct for the common good and public interest. Therefore, to understand the configuration of educational policies, we must keep in mind the values, ideas, and ideologies at stake in the dispute for the leadership of the educational configuration.

Interesting is the classification made by Fernández, M. (2003) following Rawls, J. (1971), who identifies four ways of understanding equal opportunities at stake in the educational battlefield.

1. The system of natural liberty,
2. Meritocratic equal opportunity
3. Universal or egalitarian equal opportunities.
4. Compensatory equality of opportunity.

Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) mentions that these different ideological conceptions are present jointly in the configuration of educational policies. He rightly groups them into two large blocks: the meritocratic-conservative belief system and the social democratic belief system.

#### Meritocratic-conservative

- **System of natural freedom:** this belief system opposes the redistributive action of the State; it is the tacit denial of equal opportunities. Critical ideologues of John Rawls, such as Nozick, defend this type of equality

As Gargarella, Roberto (2013) expressed, Nozick's theory is based on a minimal State that focuses on the exclusive monopoly of force in the care of private property, the rights and freedoms of people, and a very modest intervention almost minimum in terms of economic policy.

Nozick's ideas leave the welfare state in the hands of the free market, minimizing state intervention. In the case of education, these ideas are related to early diversification (Tracking). Students are separated from an early stage into different educational models according to their competencies, education is left in the hands of the private sector, and it is believed that, under free market competition, high levels of educational quality are reached.

- **Meritocratic equal opportunities:** it is one of the most widespread ideas of the capitalist model and the neoliberal State. It symbolizes that the social origin of people should not condition the school career; all that should be evaluated is merit.



Meritocracy is continually symbolized as the social ladder that leads to the top of success. According to Bolívar Botía, A. (2005), following Dubet (2004), the democratic school is usually based on merit within a race toward academic success.

In this model, social policies such as scholarships are focused on the most talented young people with the best academic performance. It uses objective selection mechanisms such as standardized tests to determine who receives an education and who does not.

### Social democratic

**-Universal or egalitarian equality of opportunity:** universal equality of opportunity corresponds to a social democracy. From this conception, it seeks to promote more significant educational equity and social equality through free and universal educational policy, which seeks more democratic, egalitarian, supportive, and equitable results. Continuing with Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) mentions that under these principles, all students must be treated equally through public education, regardless of their talent, wealth, and social origin. In the early stage, all must receive the same education through a standard and comprehensive curriculum.

**- Compensatory equal opportunities:** Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) mentions that this ideology promotes affirmative actions and positive discrimination, which seeks to compensate the most disadvantaged citizens. This belief system is the one that is aligned with the theories of justice of Rawls., J. (1971) since it seeks to generate compensatory measures for those at a social disadvantage.

The following table allows us to synthesize equal opportunities from the point of view of the four ideologies at stake, mentioned by Fernández Mellizo (2003) and classified by Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) in the groups; of conservatives and social democrats. Both classifications will allow me to identify with the analytical framework of the process of public policy theories how the actors are positioned in the case of the tertiary education system in Mexico.

Equal opportunities	Natural freedom	Meritocratic	Egalitarian/ universal	Compensatory
<b>Conservatives</b>	- Early diversification (tracking) - Private Education - Competition (market)	- Diversification - Objective selection mechanisms - Scholarships to the most talented		
<b>Social-democrats</b>			- Comprehensiveness - Gratuity - Common curriculum	- Compensatory actions - Positive Discrimination - Overcome Social Disadvantage

**Figure. 6** Equal opportunities in the educational policy system according to political ideologies.

Source: Bolívar Botía, A. (2005). Educational Equity and Theories of Justice.

Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) proposes adding one last ideology of "recognition and justice" that has emerged strongly in recent decades. In the words of Bolívar Botía, A. (2005), following Vallespín., F., (1999), he mentions that "If equality is a matter of justice, recognition is of identity." This approach promotes positive discrimination, or affirmative actions, towards groups historically marginalized or discriminated against for reasons of race, ethnicity, culture, or gender.

The identity recognition of those who have historically been excluded acquires particular relevance in post-colonial regions and countries, which to date, their original communities continue to suffer the ravages of exclusion and dispossession, which is why the ideas of "recognition and justice" have been integrated into social justice and compensation policies. Recognition and justice in Mexico are found at the constitutional level, which is why it is also relevant to consider it in this research on policies for educational equity as proposed by Bolívar Botía, A. (2005).

### Definition Equity Education

Once explored the ideologies and philosophical thought that has put educational justice at the center of the debate. I have decided to use the concept of "educational equity" proposed in the work of Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) following Crahay., et. Al. (2003), educational equity is understood by the following definition "*an equitable educational system would be one that treats all students as equals and tries to promote an equitable society, in which essential goods are distributed according to the rules of justice, and that favors cooperation on an equal footing.*"

The previous definition suggests that an educational system of this nature is found under Rawls's principles of justice, where educational goods guarantee that school success does not depend on the social origin of the students. Resources are used in a compensatory way for the most disadvantaged students, implementing policies that prevent external inequalities from conditioning student learning or performance.

### Policy Analysis Dimensions for Equity

To distinguish the policies for equity implemented by the University of Chapingo, we will base them on the four dimensions proposed by Farrell, J.P. (1997).

1. The equity in access to tertiary education
2. The equity in permanence
3. The equity in results
4. The and equity in the benefits of the results.

According to Bolívar Botía, A. (2005), the proposal of Farrell, J.P. (1997) is relevant since he distinguishes equity in access. In addition, he considers that inequality continues throughout the educational stage. Hence, a fair school creates the conditions for students to remain in the educational field until the end, regardless of their social origin.

### The tension between quality - merit vs. equity

Implementing policies for educational equity has aroused interest in various academic groups, and numerous efforts have been made in Latin America to tackle inequality. However, its implementation is not immune to resistance that may arise. According to Chiroleu A. (2013), the efforts to expand higher education in Latin America have had positive effects in recent decades. Unfortunately, the expansion of tertiary education per se is not linked to the principles of equity and educational justice; the expansion requires complementary measures that release a democratizing capacity.

In the same sense, Chiroleu A. (2013) highlights that implementing measures for equity unleashes the classic excellence vs. equity dilemma in decision-makers in the educational subsystem. One of the most recurring positions is that if tertiary education eliminates elitism, the ideal of academic excellence is lost. Therefore, here

arises a first tension to overcome in the implementation of equitable and fair education

On the other hand, modern schools, particularly universities, have been placed within the ideology of merit and equality rules. Universities are open to all under conditions of equal access without considering aspects of social origin; that is, the meritocratic school ponders the value of individual merit, which only the best students will access, as a principle of justice. According to Dubet., F (2000), there is tension between a democratic and meritocratic school since, although education has been expanded or universalized at various levels, the educational subsystem persistently classifies, distinguishes, and selects students according to the rules of merit.

Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) relates the tension between meritocracy and educational equity following Dubet, F., and Martuccelli, D. (1999). The meritocratic and equality situation is apparently fair; however, it is a narrative that legitimizes social inequality. Since apparently, in the educational system, everyone is equal, then the subject that fails is because he did not try hard enough and therefore is responsible for his own failure or success.

Meritocracy has gained special prominence in the era of modern capitalism. Rivera del rio, Roberto & Buendía-Espinosa, A., (2022) following Littler., (2018) mention that the meritocratic narrative has justified the large inequality gaps in today's society.

The current capitalist culture found the main source of legitimacy in the meritocratic narrative. In other words, the merit model has triumphed in the current economic model since it justifies the success of a few employing an apparently coherent explanation that legitimizes the abysmal social inequalities. Merit is a potent ideological instrument that legitimizes the advantage of a few, convincing the majority that their failure and social situation are directly linked to their lack of talent and does not allow society to understand that inequalities originate from structural, political, and historical reasons.

In the educational field, the idea of meritocracy impacts the configuration of policies, generating consequences and tensions. Bolívar Botía, A. (2005), following Dubet and Duru-Bellat., (2004), raises the problems associated with a meritocratic school:

a) *“Social inequalities alter fair competition in the meritocratic school. The competition at school is not like in sports since the competitors at school are in situations of social inequality.*

b) *The meritocratic school configuration is not designed for equal opportunity. On the one hand, schools depend on the context of the place in which they are located. Therefore, the school produces success and school failure beyond merit.*

c) *Merit is so subjective that it is difficult to assess and define, and it gives way to arbitrariness.*

d) *Finally, even if meritocratic equality of opportunities were possible, it is still a cruel rule of justice”.*

From the previous points, Bolívar Botía, A. (2005) reflects that in order to build a fair and equitable school system, exogenous factors and those of social origin should not affect school inequality. Therefore, there is nothing more unfair than evaluating the unequals as equal. Students who do not thrive in this system are not understood because of their context or because they are victims of social injustice. On the contrary, they are seen as solely responsible for their own failure since the school provided them with meritocratic equal opportunities. This situation has an impact on the motivation of young people and affects the free development of their personality.

The meritocratic ideas present in modern capitalist society are opposed to the ideas of universal or egalitarian equality of opportunity and those of compensatory equality of opportunity. Therefore, so far, I have identified at least two possible tensions that can be found between the ideas and ideologies at stake in the dispute over the configuration of educational policies in the tertiary education policy subsystem in Mexico; the coalitions that defend the idea of excellence and merit, classified in the

conservative meritocratic defense group, and their social-democratic counterpart who defend the ideas of compensatory and democratic educational equity.

### Chapter 3

## An Analysis of Equity Policies at the Autonomous University of Chapingo: A Comparative Study"

I analyze equity policies at UACH based on three of the four dimensions proposed by Farrell, J.P. (1997): equity in access to tertiary education, equity in permanence, and equity in results, to categorize them and compare with a sample of public universities in Mexico, fulfilling the first objective of the thesis as outlined in Chapter 1. I then compared these dimensions of equity policies with three other public universities in Mexico: the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo (UAEH), and the University of Guadalajara (UdeG), to obtain a broader perspective on equity policies in higher education in Mexico.

### Equity policies at the Autonomous University Chapingo

The case of the UACH is unique due to its ability to balance both educational quality and equity in access to education. The university has provided educational opportunities to young students from low-income families and historically marginalized groups while maintaining high-quality standards. According to QS World University Rankings (2022), the Autonomous University of Chapingo has been recognized as the fourth-best public university in Mexico in the last two years. It has obtained first place in academic reputation in agriculture and forestry.

The UACH is an educational institution with a diverse and plural enrollment. According to the Planning, Organization, and Methods Unit (from now on UPOM), in 2022, the UACH had 11,222 students, of whom 47% were women and 53% men, distributed in 55 academic programs. The educational offer includes one agricultural high school, 22 engineering, five bachelor's degrees, 14 master's degrees, and 12 doctorates.

One of the most interesting characteristics of the UACH is the representation of the indigenous community among its enrollment. According to UPOM (2022), 21% of students belong to an indigenous community and 50 different indigenous languages are spoken at the university, which is equivalent to 74% of indigenous languages in Mexico. The three most representative languages are Nahuatl, Zapotec and Mixtec. In addition, the student community comes from 1,493 municipalities of the 32 states of Mexico. The UACH has 266 students who identify themselves as Afro-descendants.

UACH also has the highest percentage of scholarship students in a Public University in Mexico. According to UPOM (2022), 84.36% of the enrollment has a scholarship, of which 692 are awarded scholarships by the National Council of Science and Technology (Conacyt); 1926 are internal scholarship holders, that is, they live in the facilities of the university, 6849 are external scholarship holders, they do not live at the university but receive an economic and food scholarship. To grasp the source of the university's exceptional equity outcomes, it is imperative to assess the equity-focused policies implemented at UACH. In particular, the policies through the dimensions of access, permanence, results, and benefits established by Farrel, J.P. (1997). In addition, it is necessary to analyze the ideologies at stake in these policies through the classification of Fernández Mellizo (2003) and Bolívar Botía, A. (2005). Finally, to better understand, it is interesting to compare the equity policies of the Autonomous University of Chapingo with those of other educational institutions in the country to identify substantial differences.

#### [Admission policies at UACH](#)

The UACH introduced a new student selection model in 2008 to reduce inequality in access to education for students from low-income families and indigenous communities. The reform proposal, as suggested by Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa (2022), was designed to depart from the traditional emphasis on academic merit and instead focus on equity and educational justice policies through less exclusive processes.

It is worth noting that UACH is an institution specializing in agricultural training, unlike other public universities in the country, offering a wider range of programs. Education at UACH begins in high school, with a strong emphasis on agronomic training. Agricultural high school students can directly access tertiary education at UACH without undergoing additional admission processes.

On May 12, 2008, the university senate approved the UACH equity access policies, which have since served as the admission rules. According to Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa (2010), the admission process comprises four stages: issuing the call, administering the admission exam, applying selection criteria, and final selection.

#### Issuing the call

The UACH issues a call annually; according to Buendía-Espinosa, M., & Rivera del Río, R. (2010), an average of 18,000 students apply, and the university can accept 1800 students per cycle. The call is disseminated and made public on the UACH website. Notably, the Commission for the Rights of Indigenous People and radio stations from the National Institute of Indigenous Languages share the call in regions of Mexico without a solid internet connection.

#### Administering the admission exam

The second stage of the admission process involves the administration of a free admission exam, which is available at 88 offices throughout the country. These venues are provided for applicants who may not have the financial resources to travel to the State of Mexico. A team of expert professors from the University has designed the exam. It consists of three main areas: specific knowledge, verbal reasoning, and mathematical reasoning, as described by Rivera del Río, R & Buendía-Espinosa, A. (2010).

#### Applying selection criteria

The third stage consists of 9 selection criteria that aim to eliminate institutional barriers that standardized exams create. According to Reardon, S. F., Baker, R. B., & Klasik, D. (2012), to reduce the racial and economic gap in university enrollment, it is necessary to focus on changes in the application, admission, and enrollment



processes, instead of on improving the academic preparation of minority students. This is essential to democratize access to higher education.

Standardized tests tend to benefit students from wealthier families, as those students have access to better academic preparation, parental education, adequate nutrition, private tutoring, library access, and technology at home, compared to those from rural areas or low-income families. According to Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa (2010), the selection criteria at UACH seek to provide educational opportunities to young people from disadvantaged and historically marginalized social sectors.

<i>Selection Criteria</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Selection by average exam score</i>	<i>Select all applicants with an exam score above the national average and above the regional average.</i>
<i>By State (Mexico has 32 States)</i>	<i>At least eight best applicants from each state of Mexico must represent it, and no more than 400 applicants can be selected from any state.</i>
<i>Indigenous ethnic group</i>	<i>At least the 200 best applicants from indigenous communities will be selected, and at least the four best applicants from each of the ethnic groups represented in the admission exam process must be chosen.</i>
<i>The poorest municipalities</i>	<i>At least one applicant from each municipality classified as a municipality in poverty will be admitted.</i>
<i>By agricultural or forestry school</i>	<i>Select for each agricultural school at least the two highest qualifications.</i>
<i>Secondary education through televisión</i>	<i>Select by school of origin (secondary education TV) the two highest ratings by site.</i>
<i>Selection by average regional exam score</i>	<i>Select for high school the 100 with the highest qualifications from each region (north, center, and south) and who are above the corresponding regional average until completing 300 admissions.</i>
<i>By score</i>	<i>Once the selection is covered by the above criteria, up to 1,375 shortlisted for high school will be completed, for the highest knowledge scores in the admission exam.</i>

Figure 7. Selection criteria for admission to the Autonomous University of Chapingo. Source: Rivera del Río, R & Buendía-Espinosa, A. (2010) Selection Model for admission to Higher Education: The Case of the UACH. High School magazine

#### Final selection

The fourth stage of the admission process is the final selection phase. According to Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa (2010), students who score above the national average on the admission exam are eligible for selection. Selection criteria include

affirmative action policies such as being indigenous, belonging to a poor municipality, or being the best in their state. In case of a tie, students in greater social marginalization are given priority by the selection committee.

To assess the students' socioeconomic background, UACH uses a multidimensional poverty test. The exam, designed by UACH professors, measures various aspects of the family's educational background, home characteristics, and income level through multiple-choice questions. Additionally, the test collects information about the people living at the applicant's address, including their relationship, age, schooling, occupation, and any indigenous language they may speak.

The test also inquires about the family's ethnic origin, the employment status of the head of the family, and any farming activities. It also collects data about the family's health, including chronic degenerative diseases, available medical services, and any disabilities they may have. Open-ended questions are also included, allowing students to mention any social disadvantage or family problems not covered by the multiple-choice questions.

#### Equity in Permanence (Policies for Survival)

Permanence policies are essential measures designed to support students who have entered tertiary education through entry equity policies to complete their studies and achieve academic success. As Bolívar Botía (2005) noted, these policies are designed to ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have equal opportunities to continue and complete their studies without dropping out.

At UACH, one of the fundamental aspects of the permanence policies is providing free education to students. Unlike other public universities in the country, UACH does not charge fees for services such as registration, selection, procedures, and tuition. For greater depth in financial characteristics, I analyse how the budget is distributed in the UACH in Chapter 4.

In line with this, Rivera del Rio and Buendía-Espinosa (2022) suggest that UACH focuses on three key aspects to guarantee the permanence of students from low-

income families. These include supporting students, strengthening teaching practices, and ensuring adequate infrastructure.

UACH helps students overcome any academic or personal challenges that may hinder their progress by providing assistance support. Strengthening teaching practices ensures students receive a high-quality education that meets their educational needs. Lastly, adequate infrastructure ensures students access to the necessary resources and facilities to support their academic success.

#### Assistance Support

The UACH has a comprehensive scholarship system funded by the university's budget. The distribution of scholarships is determined through the multidimensional examination of poverty conducted during the selection process. The UACH offers three types of scholarships: internal scholarship recipients, external scholarship recipients, and external students.

Internal scholarship recipients are students from low-income backgrounds and marginalized social sectors who live in campus facilities. According to Rivera del Rio and Buendía-Espinosa (2022), these students receive a monthly monetary scholarship for three years of high school and four years of undergraduate studies, as well as access to various assistance services, including accommodation, food, medical care, laundry, hairdressing, psychological support, and a shoe store.

External scholarship recipients receive a monthly monetary scholarship for three years of high school and four years of undergraduate studies and access to low-cost food and health care services. External students, on the other hand, do not receive a monetary scholarship but have access to free food services and medical care.

Category	Enrollment	Accommodation	Medical service	Meal three times a day	Monetary scholarship
Internal scholarship	1632	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 dollars approx.
External scholarship	6576	No	Yes	Yes	120 dollars approx
External student	1106	No	Yes	Yes (fee 13 dollars per month)	No

Figure. 8. UACH Scholarship System. Source: Rivera del rio, R & Buendía-Espinosa, A. (2022)

According to the statistical files available on the UACH institutional page, between 2014 and 2018, 93% of undergraduate students and 82.4% of high school students received scholarships.

#### Improving Teaching Quality

The teaching staff at UACH is highly qualified, according to research by Rivera del Rio, R. & Espinosa, A. (2022) and UPOM (2022). With 94% of academics employed full-time and a significant percentage holding doctoral and master's degrees, the university has a distinct advantage over other institutions in Mexico. Additionally, many of the professors are members of the National System of Researchers, further indicating their expertise and commitment to their field. In contrast, public universities in the country typically have only 38% of their teaching staff working full-time, with the remaining 62% being part-time contracted professors (López Damián, et. al., 2016).

#### Adequate Infrastructure

UACH offers a range of services to cater to its students' needs, as identified by Rivera del Rio, R & Buendía-Espinosa, A. (2022). The university has an extensive food service network, which includes a central dining room that caters to 75% of the demand, a country restaurant that meets 18% of the demand, and a vegetarian dining room that provides nutritional advice.

Furthermore, the university provides medical services, such as disease diagnosis and monitoring, a medical unit, an ambulance, and a mental health care unit, all of which are free of charge for students.

#### Equity in results

Students' socioeconomic background can significantly impact their academic achievement as not all students have equal access to opportunities. For example, students from families with a history of higher education, residing in urban areas, or attending private schools tend to have an advantage over others. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (2008), students with higher cultural capital possess a distinct advantage over their peers. Therefore, educational policies are necessary to reduce these social inequalities and educate educators and institutions about

providing equal opportunities to all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

The 2008 educational reform aimed to provide access to higher education for students from low-income families, those facing high social marginalization, and indigenous students. However, as Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa (2022) and Tinto (2004) highlighted, this move towards inclusivity can become counterproductive, leading to a high dropout rate due to a lack of preparation compared to students from urban areas or private institutions. The UACH has implemented a preparatory course as a core result policy to prevent this from happening. The one-year program provides the necessary theoretical and methodological foundations for successful higher education in agricultural fields.

According to Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa (2022), the preparatory course includes financial support through scholarships and access to all the institution's services and compensation policies. Furthermore, the UACH has established an awareness and academic support program since 2017, which includes several features. These features include a sensitization project for academic staff, a peer counseling project, counseling and accompaniment in groups, performance monitoring in individual, and tracking individual educational trajectories.

The academic support and awareness program is a crucial strategy aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for all students. As noted by Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa (2022), this program comprises a seminar for teachers, which encourages them to reflect on the inequalities that exist in access, retention, and graduation rates, and develop interventions that address these issues. In addition, the program includes peer counseling sessions where top-performing students provide academic assistance to those who are struggling, particularly in courses with high failure rates. The program also includes monitoring and tracking of individual academic progress to identify potential risks of dropping out and provide personalized support. The ultimate goal of the UACH results policies is to ensure that students' success is not determined by their social background but by their efforts and dedication to their studies.

### Comparative Analysis of Policies for Equity in Tertiary Education in Mexico

This analysis aims to compare the equity policies of UACH with other public universities in Mexico to identify any significant differences. To achieve this objective, I will conduct a comparative policy analysis, which involves comparing theoretical concepts with their practical application to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. This approach has been described by Bulcourf and Cardozo (2008) and Sartori (1984) as an effective way of establishing a link between theoretical concepts and real-world realities.

In this study, I have selected four universities to compare: UACH as a case study, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the University of Guadalajara (UdeG), and the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo (UAEH). These universities were chosen because they all enjoy budgetary and government autonomy.

The UNAM is widely recognized as the leading public university in Mexico and frequently features in the rankings of the best universities in Latin America, UACH and UNAM receive their budgets from the federal government. On the other hand, UdeG and UAEH are state universities that receive funding from regional and federal governments while generating resources independently.

University	Enrollment			Budget			
	Tertiary Education	High school	Total	National	Regional State	Total amount MX	Allowance per student
UACH	5,899	4,631	11,222	100.00%	0.00%	\$ 3,072,453,627.00	\$ 273,788.42
UAEH	34,048	21,293	56,041	59.54%	40.46%	\$ 2,544,501,594.00	\$ 45,404.29
UdeG	140,348	183,992	324,340	50%	49.64%	\$ 13,113,303,595.00	\$ 40,430.73
UNAM	263,033	106,574	369,607	100%	0.00%	\$ 48,802,369,865.00	\$ 132,038.54

Figure 9: Author: Medina Varela, J (2023). Comparison of Annual Budget and Enrollment. Sources: UNAM Planning (2022), UPOM (2022), DGSEU, and SEP (2022).

These four universities appear in the top ten of the QS (2023) ranking of public higher education institutions in Mexico and are considered quality schools in their indicators. UNAM is in first place in the ranking and is the only one in Mexico that is in the top 100 universities in the world, according to the QS World University Ranking. The UACH is in fourth place, the UdeG dropped from 6th to 8th place in the

last year, and the UAEH appears for the first time within the top 10 universities in Mexico. Comparing these four universities provides:

- Valuable insight into public higher education institutions in Mexico
- Their focus in educational equity
- The ideological motivations behind their policies

This comparative analysis evaluates equity in access, permanence, results, and benefits of results, as proposed by Farrell (1997). I also examine the concept of equal opportunities through the lens of the four ideologies defined by Fernández Mellizo (2003) and categorized by Bolívar Botía (2005) as conservative or social democratic. Furthermore, the analysis identifies how recognition policies at tertiary education institutions address historical marginalization, with a specific focus on indigenous communities in Mexico.

The four universities analyzed in this study are ranked among Mexico's top ten public higher education institutions by the QS (2023) ranking. They are recognized as quality institutions in their respective indicators. UNAM occupies first place in the ranking and is the only Mexican university to appear in the top 100 universities worldwide, according to the QS World University Ranking. The UACH ranks fourth, the UdeG dropped from sixth to eighth place last year, and the UAEH appears for the first time within the top ten universities in Mexico.

This comparative analysis provides valuable insights into public higher education institutions in Mexico, including their focus on educational equity and the ideological motivations behind their policies. The analysis evaluates equity in access, permanence, results, and results' benefits, as Farrell proposed (1997). Additionally, the study examines the concept of equal opportunities through the lens of the four ideologies defined by Fernández Mellizo (2003) and categorized by Bolívar Botía (2005) as conservative or socially democratic.

Moreover, the analysis identifies how recognition policies at tertiary education institutions address historical marginalization, with a particular focus on indigenous communities in Mexico. By examining these factors, the study sheds light on the efforts of these universities to promote educational equity and inclusivity.

#### *Equity in access to tertiary education*

In Mexico, the process of admission to tertiary education often involves a standardized exam, such as the College Board exam or the CENEVAL. It may also include other criteria, such as exams created and administered by the universities, interviews, or additional evaluations of academic or personal achievements. It is important to note that admission criteria and processes can vary significantly depending on the institution and program.

#### *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*

UNAM has an admission process for students from other high schools, including taking an admission exam in Mexico City and paying 450 pesos for application. One of the requirements is to have an average of over 70/100 in high school, and some programs have additional requirements. The UNAM does not have affirmative actions for admission, but according to the General Direction of School Administration, School Services (UNAM, 2022), it offers prerogatives for high school graduates, such as regulated access. In other words, UNAM high school graduates have direct access to tertiary education.

#### *Universidad de Guadalajara*

According to School Services. (UdeG 2022) The UdeG carries out the College Board admission exam in 109 municipalities of Jalisco with a cost of 805 to 912 pesos. It contemplates affirmative actions for children of academic workers and leaves 10% of spaces in undergraduate degrees for them. In addition, it has expanded its educational offer in regional areas with its university network model. Still, the access model continues to be meritocratic, and the exam is more expensive than in other public universities, which can hinder access for low-income youth.

#### *Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo*

The UAEH utilizes the National Higher Education Entrance Exam (EXANI II), administered by the National Center for the Evaluation of Higher Education



(CENEVAL), for its admission process. Candidates pay a fee of \$600 to take the exam, which consists of multiple-choice questions and lasts 4.5 hours. The university requires a minimum GPA of 70 and conducts a socioeconomic census but does not employ affirmative action in the admission process.

In summary, the admission processes at UNAM, UAEH, and UdeG universities rely on merit, without considering affirmative actions for vulnerable groups or the students' social backgrounds. As noted by Fernández Mellizo (2003) and Buendía Espinosa and Rivera del Río (2010), this selection model reinforces a highly meritocratic society, limiting access to tertiary education for students from marginalized sectors and ignoring policies for recognizing indigenous communities. Moreover, these exams are not affordable for low-income families.

Equity in Permanence Comparative Policies  
*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*

One of the main strategies employed by UNAM to ensure its students' academic success and retention is its robust scholarship program, which has been significantly strengthened over the past two decades. According to UNAM Statistics (2022), in 2000, the university offered only 11,096 scholarships to its entire student population. However, by 2022, it had provided a staggering 250,035 grants to university students, indicating a remarkable growth in the number of scholarships available to assist students with the costs of their studies.

	2000-2001	2010-2011	2019-2020	2020-2022
High School	568	62,115	110,044	114,027
Tertiary Education	6,756	36,344	84,060	108,442
Postgraduate	3,772	8,872	31,983	27,566
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,096</b>	<b>107,331</b>	<b>226,087</b>	<b>250,035</b>

Figure 10: UNAM Scholarship Recipients by Academic Level (Source: SISBEC, UNAM)

UNAM's scholarship program consists of two categories: 53,344 merit-based scholarships awarded to students with exceptional academic achievements and 94,151 need-based scholarships granted to low-income students (conditional and of

limited duration). This information is readily available through a review of scholarship calls.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS FOR STUDENTS BY PROGRAM 2022	Men	Woman	Total
<b>INITIATION</b>	0	3	3
Scholarships for Student Athletes of Representative Teams of the UNAM		3	3
<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>	69	97	166
Scholarships for Student Athletes of Representative Teams of the UNAM	69	97	166
<b>PROFESSIONAL TECHNICIAN</b>	1	1	2
TV UNAM Scholarship Program	1	1	2
<b>BACHELOR'S DEGREE</b>	9,502	16,616	26,118
Scholarship for Academic Strengthening for Undergraduate Studies and Scholarship for High Academic Demand	6,324	11,434	17,758
Scholarships for Degree High Performance Graduates	966	1,726	2,692
Scholarships of Excellence Bécals UNAM Undergraduate	788	881	1,669
Scholarships for Student Athletes of Representative Teams of the UNAM	563	620	1,183
Graduation Scholarships of the Linkage Program with UNAM graduates-Extemporaneous Graduates	325	652	977
Academic Strengthening for University Women		574	574
Social Service Scholarship (Science Scholars)	86	158	244
Training Scholarships in Information and Communication Technologies	99	95	194
International Student Mobility UNAM-DGECI	161	206	367
UNAM-DGECI Scholarships Initiation to Research	82	100	182
UNAM-DGECI Scholarships Academic Linguistic Strengthening	16	35	51
Scholarships for Research Projects for UNAM	45	64	109
Pilot Program for Degree Scholarships in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters	16	26	42
TV UNAM1 Scholarship Program	15	18	33
CUAIEED Scholars	7	22	29
Perimeter of Mexico Scholarships	9	5	14
<b>POSTGRADUATE</b>	13,588	13,467	27,055
Incentives for Timely Graduation in the UNAM Postgraduate Program	344	273	617
Support for Graduate Studies PAEP - Academic Activities	176	211	387
Graduation Scholarships of the Linkage Program with UNAM graduates- Specialty	62	85	147
Scholarships for Student Athletes of Representative Teams of the UNAM	11	2	13
Training Scholarships in Information and Communication Technologies	2		2
TV UNAM Scholarship Program	0	1	1
Postgraduate Study Scholarships - Master's	288	349	637
Postgraduate Study Scholarships - Doctorate	42	49	91
Fellows in Medical Specialties (SSA)	6,425	7,116	13,541
CONACyT National Graduate Scholars - Specialization	271	367	638
CONACyT National Graduate Scholars - Master's	3,212	2,804	6,016
CONACyT National Graduate Scholars - Doctorate	2,755	2,210	4,965
<b>TOTAL</b>	23,160	30,184	53,344

Figure 11: Total Scholarships merit-based by Level of Study (Source: SISBEC, UNAM)

UNAM provides a range of scholarships to support underrepresented students, including those from low-income households, indigenous communities, Afro-descendant backgrounds, and people with disabilities. The "maintenance scholarship" is awarded annually to 55,555 students with selection criteria favorable to these groups and an academic average of 80/100. UNAM also offers a "Tablet with connectivity scholarship" to reduce the digital divide, conditional on not receiving other financial support. Another scholarship available to students from "marginalized areas" also requires an academic average of 80/100. Additionally, the scholarship

for indigenous youth at UNAM provides a monthly amount of 3,000 pesos for up to 5 months, conditional on not receiving other financial support.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS FOR STUDENTS BY PROGRAM 2022			
	Men	Woman	Total
<b>INITIATION</b>			
Scholarship to support Vulnerable Groups from marginalized areas of the country	488	437	925
Scholarship tablet with connectivity <sup>1</sup>	185	176	361
<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>			
Scholarship tablet with connectivity <sup>1</sup>	4,287	5,169	9,456
<b>BACHELOR'S DEGREE</b>			
Maintenance Support Scholarship	23,261	32,294	55,555
Nutritional Support Program (UNAM Foundation)	484	424	908
Scholarship to Reduce Low Academic Performance	4,480	4,132	8,612
Scholarship tablet with connectivity	4,674	5,982	10,656
UNAM Scholarship System for Indigenous and Afro-descendant Students	510	550	1,060
Scholarship to support Vulnerable Groups from marginalized areas of the country	1,945	3,588	5,533
Academic Strengthening for University Women		574	574
<b>POSTGRADUATE</b>			
Scholarship tablet with connectivity	252	255	507
UNAM Scholarship System for Indigenous and Afro-descendant Students	3	1	4
<b>T O T A L</b>	<b>40,569</b>	<b>53,582</b>	<b>94,151</b>

Figure 12. Total Scholarships for Educational Equity by Level of Study (Source: SISBEC, UNAM)

UNAM offers 17,758 annual academic strengthening scholarships for undergraduate studies. Requirements include merit-based selection criteria with a monthly stipend of 950 MXN for one year, with the possibility of renewal for up to 4 additional years if criteria are met. The UNAM scholarship program plays a crucial role in promoting equality among students. However, it is not a purely social democratic system, as its conditions and limitations create a blend of social democracy and meritocracy.

#### *Universidad de Guadalajara*

The UdeG offers a moderate scholarship and financial incentive program for outstanding students. According to School Services. (UdeG 2022) Its program awards 289 scholarships to high school students and 507 to undergraduate students who balance work and study. The program aims to provide economic motivation for students to maintain academic excellence. This motivation comes from a monthly monetary scholarship of 4250 MXN for up to ten months. The scholarships are categorized into research motivation, library and information systems human resources training, civil protection, high-performance sports, student welfare, and career coordination support.

UdeG bases its scholarship system on the meritocratic model and requires scholarship recipients to work part-time at the university. They only award scholarships to students with a minimum average of 90/100, primarily those with the highest grades. UdeG bases its scholarship system on the meritocratic model and requires scholarship recipients to work part-time at the university.

*Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo*

The scholarship system at UAEH operates on a merit-based model, where students receiving resources are required to maintain high academic performance, as shown in Figure 13. However, the Chemistry scholarship is an exception, as it is a limited scholarship exclusively for female students in that field, supported by chemistry researchers and teachers. In the last edition, only seven students benefited from it. However, despite offering scholarships, UAEH still lacks a solid policy to ensure students' retention in the institution.

Scholarship	Target population	Ideology of the Scholarship
RECOGNITION OF ACADEMIC MERIT	To the undergraduate students who graduated and obtained the best average of their generation.	Excellence/Meritocratic
ADRIAN PEREDA LOPEZ AWARD	Aimed at students graduating from undergraduate programs in Industrial, Electronic and Telecommunications Engineering who have obtained the best averages of their generation.	Excellence/Meritocratic
<b>MINEROS SCHOLARSHIP</b>	Aimed at students with the best averages of the Bachelor's Degree in Metallurgical Mining Engineering, Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Geology Engineering and the Bachelor's Degree in Engineering in Mineral Resources Processing.	Excellence/Meritocratic
<b>ARACELI SIERRA SCHOLARSHIP</b>	Support students from the Chemistry Area who are going through an unfavorable economic situation.	Altruistic scholarship
<b>FRAY DIEGO RODRIGUEZ SCHOLARSHIP</b>	Fray Diego Rodríguez Scholarship is a scholarship that arose with the purpose of supporting students who are going through economic problems and that have been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.	Temporary, Equitable, but conditioned.

Figure: 13 Types of scholarships awarded by the UAEH, SOURCE: Scholarship Department of the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo.

### Equity in results Comparative Policies

The Mexican Ministry of Public Education (SEP, 2016) aims to enhance educational equity by introducing tutorials to reduce dropout rates in upper secondary and higher education. The National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) recognizes the crucial role of tutors in improving approval, retention, and graduation rates in university studies.

### *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*

The academic lag of students has become a concern for UNAM's community of academics and administrators as they seek to combat desertion through result-oriented policies. A notable example is the Commission for Attention to Lag at the Faculty of Sciences of UNAM, which diagnosed the issue and proposed measures to tackle it.

In their study, Arnaud Bobadilla et al. (2022) conducted a diagnosis at the Faculty of Sciences of UNAM. They found that students face a structural academic lag, lacking study skills, low motivation, and an expectation of passing courses by merely attending. Teachers attribute the problem not entirely to themselves, but some acknowledge that their teaching methods are inadequate and require new strategies to motivate students. The study recommends implementing four areas of result-oriented policies at UNAM: individual, academic, institutional, and labor.

On the other hand, the UNAM created the Student School Performance Programme (PAIDEA)" to combat academic lag in students from low-income families and with health problems related to obesity, drug use, and domestic violence. Morales-Ramírez, M. (2014) mention that PAIDEA aims to help students with disadvantages that put their permanence and completion of studies at risk and improve their academic performance. The plan includes six lines of action in the educational, cognitive, socio-emotional, health, school, cultural, and sports spheres to reduce or eliminate non-approval and school lag and increase terminal efficiency. It composes six different phases:

- School and graduation trajectories: The student's academic behavior is analyzed during the admission, permanence, and graduation phases to help the student conclude his educational program in the established time.

- The program provides personalized academic counseling to improve academic performance by working on the motivational and cognitive aspects of learning, encouraging academic achievement, self-concept, and learning regulation, and teaching learning strategies. It also has monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to adapt processes and procedures.
- Graduation support: Students are guided in choosing, developing, and completing the most appropriate modality for their professional conditions and expectations to help them achieve the procedures, costs, and difficulties in the graduation processes to get the diploma
- The Institutional Tutoring System: focuses on individual interventions for students with educational lag through its consolidation program. The program trains tutors using a humanist, constructivist, and sociocultural approach.
- Induction and integration for new students: A full insertion in the initial university stage of students is sought through introductory courses that contribute to the construction of professional identity, to the recognition of the characteristics of the study plan, to the dynamics of learning and the services that the institution offers
- Healthy University: A culture of health prevention is promoted through self-care and addiction prevention to prevent and counteract unhealthy habits that students with academic lag may have, and awareness is raised about the importance of healthy life in learning and complete development

#### *Universidad de Guadalajara*

The UdeG provides tutorials to higher-level students to reduce the educational gap and improve students' terminal efficiency. According to UdeG Transparency (2020), tutors seek to identify the factors that hinder learning. In 2020, 90,937 students received tutoring at university centers, representing 64% of university center enrollment. In addition, 143 Indigenous students received assistance from the tutorial programs of the Unit for the Support of Indigenous Communities. The UdeG also offers psychological services to provide emotional first aid for anxiety, depression, stress, and family problems for students, as well as tools to optimize

their academic performance. In 2020, 28,141 students received educational counseling or psychological support services.

According to Rivera, L., Hernández, R., Salcedo, M., Briones, M., & Lucas, B. (2018), the UdeG has implemented the Base Semester in the high-school system to combat academic lag. The Base Semester is a modular course taught in a mixed modality (face-to-face and virtual) for 15 weeks, covering strategic areas such as social responsibility, cognitive skills, mathematics, reading and writing, English, and chemistry. However, this program only applies to high school students, not at the tertiary level.

The University of Guadalajara's network model enables each campus to tailor its strategies for promoting equity in permanence. However, while helping students overcome academic challenges, the university's tutoring system does not always account for external factors that may impact their success, such as personal or social stability issues. This can result in unequal treatment of students, with those facing more obstacles being unfairly penalized and those with favourable circumstances being favoured.

#### *Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo*

The UAEH has an Institutional tutoring program to combat academic lag, which includes psychological care, educational guidance, academic counseling, and vocational guidance. According to the Institutional tutoring program UAEH (2022). The program focuses on accompanying students in their academic trajectory to promote permanence and comprehensive training. The tutorial consists of four phases: Diagnosis, Planning, Intervention, Follow-up, and Feedback.

The Diagnosis identifies the needs of the students; the Planning elaborates a semester Tutorial Action Plan in collaboration with other programs; the follow-up measures the effectiveness of the tutoring through reports, and the feedback allows for improving the program through reflection and the exchange of information of good practices.



Comparing Recognition Policies for Indigenous Communities and Vulnerable Populations.

Indigenous Community Recognition Policies:	Recognition in access policies Recognition in retention and permanence policies Recognition in results policies Overall evaluation	UACH	UdeG	UAEH	UNAM
		Positive discrimination	Segmented Indigenous High School/Bachelor of Indigenous Education	Not positive discrimination	Not positive discrimination
		Universal Scholarship	Conditioned economic stimuli	Yes, marginally	Conditioned economic stimuli
		Yes	Yes, partially	Yes, partially	Yes
		Full recognition	Partial recognition	Marginally recognition	Partial recognition

Figure 17: Author: Medina Varela, J (2023). Comparison of Policies on Recognition of Indigenous Communities

*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*

UNAM, through its University Program for the Study of Cultural Diversity and Interculturality, offers scholarships and tutoring to around 1,000 indigenous students, teaches elective courses on the multicultural nation, and has been taken by more than 30,000 students. In addition, indigenous students receive specialized tutoring and special classes in English and mathematics. The program has been in operation for 14 years and has awarded scholarships to 700 graduates of all degrees. The UNAM recognizes as an outstanding debt the lack of tertiary education in indigenous languages and the eradication of discrimination against young people of indigenous ethnic groups in the institution.

*Universidad de Guadalajara*

According to the UdeG (2022), the University of Guadalajara's northern Jalisco campus has made efforts to cater to the needs of indigenous communities through various initiatives, such as providing accessibility in the Wixárika language, establishing a bilingual and intercultural Bachelor's Degree in Indigenous Education, and opening an indigenous, high school in San Miguel Huaixtita. However, indigenous students are still underrepresented at the university, making up less than 1% of total enrollment. UdeG has a scholarship program to support these students, which is



open to indigenous and disabled students with a minimum grade point average of 83.

#### *Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo*

The UAEH Intercultural Education Program for Social Inclusion is a comprehensive initiative that aims to support indigenous and disabled students in various ways. The program offers courses, workshops, awareness campaigns, scholarship management, and infrastructure support to ensure these students have the necessary resources to succeed.

The program has enrolled 951 indigenous students, 42 receiving economic aid through the PIEIS scholarship. This scholarship is just one of the many ways in which the program is helping to create a more inclusive educational environment for all students.

#### *Discussion*

The UACH adopts social democratic principles in its equity policies, which are highlighted by Farrel's (1997) dimensions of access, permanence, and results. The university places great importance on providing equal opportunities to all students, irrespective of their backgrounds, setting it apart from other Mexican universities. For instance, Figure 15 illustrates that UdeG and UAEH adhere to a meritocratic-conservative model that emphasizes academic performance and limits opportunities for lower-performing students. In contrast, UNAM adopts a hybrid meritocratic/social democratic approach.

Furthermore, UACH is distinctive in its recognition of indigenous communities, while other universities demonstrate only partial recognition in specific dimensions. This underscores the university's commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable environment for all students. It is worth noting that public universities with a federal budget, like UACH and UNAM, tend to favor social democratic models, while state universities with state budgets tend to adopt meritocratic-conservative policies. This trend emphasizes the importance of funding and resource allocation in shaping universities' equity policies.

In the following chapter (Chapter 4), theories of the public political process are used as an explanatory framework to elucidate why the politics of equity occur at the UACH.

<b>Equity Policies</b>	<b>Autonomous University of Chapingo</b>	<b>National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)</b>	<b>Universidad of Guadalajara (UdeG)</b>	<b>Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo</b>
<b>Equitable access or meritocratic</b>	<b>Social-democratic</b> -Standardizes test that consider a Multidimensional Poverty Analysis -Direct entry high school students. -Positive discrimination for low income communities -No fee exam	<b>Conservative/ Meritocratic</b> Standardizes test/ exam fee. Direct entrance to high school students/No fee for high school UNAM students	<b>Conservative/ Meritocratic</b> Standardized test. -Exam fee	<b>Conservative/ Meritocratic</b> Standardized test -Exam fee
<b>Policies for students survival (permanence) or meritocratic</b>	<b>Social-Democratic</b> - Care support -Internal scholarships with accommodation, and food for students for low-income students, no conditional monetary transfer per month.	<b>Meritocratic/Social Democratic</b> -Robust system of conditional targeted scholarships for low-income students. - Scholarships for outstanding students- -Food service at market prices.	<b>Conservative/ Meritocratic</b> - Scholarships for outstanding students -Food service at market prices	<b>Conservative/ Meritocratic</b> -Scholarships for outstanding students. -Food services at market prices
<b>Policies for results</b>	<b>Meritocratic/Social Democratic)</b> - One year, preparatory course for first admission to a bachelor degree. -Awareness program and academic accompaniment -Do not allow repeat courses.	<b>Social Democratic</b> Comprehensive Support Plan for Student School Performance They allow young people with academic lag to repeat courses.	<b>Conservative/Social Democratic</b> - Decentralized Tutoring Program -Base semester -Allow students with academic lag to repeat courses.	<b>Meritocratic/Social Democratic</b> -Centralized Institutional Tutoring Program -Psychological attention -They allow students with academic lag to repeat courses
<b>Gratuitousness</b>	<b>Social democratic</b> -Universal Egalitarian -No service fees.	<b>Social Democratic</b> -Universal Egalitarian -No service fees.	Meritocratic- Conservative Tuition fee Semester and fees for some services.	<b>Meritocratic- Conservative</b> Tuition fee Semester and fees for some services.

- Table 15. Author: Medina Varela, J (2023). Compared Policy in Access, Permanence, Results, Dimensions at UACH, UAEH, UNAM and UdeG.

Finally, the comparative table highlights the unique position of UACH, which fully embraces a social democratic model, setting it apart from other public higher education institutions. This suggests that the university is deeply committed to advocating for equitable policies voluntarily, unlike most Mexican universities that prioritize conservative merit-based policies.

## Chapter 4

### The Case of the Autonomous University of Chapingo, Mexico. Analysis from Advocacy Coalition Framework

This chapter utilizes the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Weible & Sabatier, 2017) to explain the 2008 policy reform concerning equity in admission at the Autonomous University of Chapingo.

Firstly, the study examines the relatively stable parameters by analyzing academic research sources that determine the levels of educational inequality in the higher education subsystem and the Mexican population's preferences for wealth redistribution. Additionally, a review of the fundamental constitutional architecture of Mexico, including the Constitution, the Law that created Chapingo, and the University Statute, is conducted to determine its relationship with educational equity.

The second section of the chapter examines external events in the education system, with a focus on changes in the Mexican economic system, particularly the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and its impact on critical areas such as the dynamics of agriculture and education in Mexico. Additionally, the chapter analyzes public opinion on higher education in Mexico over the past 20 years. It explores the significance of signing the Treaty of San Andrés, which resulted in agreements between the Mexican government and the Zapatista movement for national liberation in their quest for recognition of indigenous communities in Mexico, and the repercussions that this agreement had on the educational sector. The changes related to the government coalition are explained by the fall of the state-party regime "Partido Revolucionario Institucional" (PRI), which governed Mexico for

70 years without interruption, and the transition to democracy. Furthermore, the chapter analyzes the role of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in defending policy changes in higher education in Mexico.

In the third section, the text addresses the degree of consensus required for significant changes in the politics of the Autonomous University of Chapingo, as well as the opening of the political system.

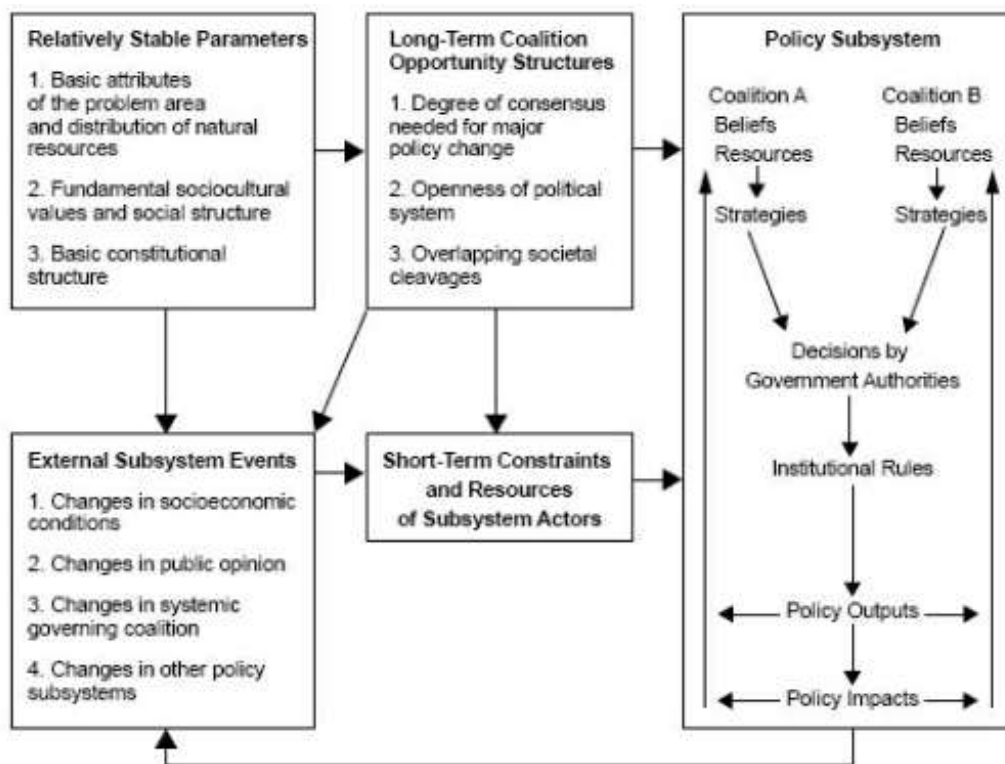


Figure. 16. Modeling Advocacy Coalitions Source: Potůček, M. et al. (2017) Following Veselý, Drhová Nachtmannová (2005) following Sabatier, Jenkins-Smith (1999) adapted.

I conducted the first three sections of the Advocacy Coalition Framework using official information, academic sources, and public documents. However, I conducted in-depth interviews for the last two sections of this study to gather information that is not publicly available. I used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and adapted them as we obtained additional information. Although I only managed

to conduct 14 interviews due to the limited availability of some interviewees, I concluded the interview process when I got all perspectives of the various sectors of the UACH on the issue. To ensure a diverse view, I interviewed a broad range of actors within the Universidad Autonoma Chapingo, including professors, researchers, members of the university Senate, students, administrative workers, unions, the promoting coalition, and the opposition coalition, as shown in Figure 17.

Actor Type External to the UACH Interns at UACH	Interviewed Actors	Number of interviewees
External	Academic expert in policies for equity	1
UACH	Entrepreneurial policy groups	2
UACH	Administrative Workers Union	1
UACH	Academics Union	2
UACH	Student Organization	2
UACH	Opposing groups of Academics	2
UACH	Member of the University Senate	2
External	Graduated from UACH	2
UACH	Member of the National System of Researchers	2

Figure 17. Actors interviewed through in-depth interview (semi-structured, Open-Ended) at the Universidad Autonoma Chapingo.

I explained the aim of our study to the interviewees: to investigate the changes in the admission selection policy at the UACH that took place in 2008 and to analyze its evolution over the past 15 years. I recorded the interviews for academic purposes only and ensured the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. I also informed the interviewees that they could decline to answer any questions or even end the interview if they felt uncomfortable. Before starting each discussion, I clarified the purpose of our investigation with the interviewees.

Through the interviews, I sought to explore why the university has adopted educational equity policies that differ from other public universities in Mexico and gain insights into the role of ideas and learning in driving this change. We discussed various topics during the interviews, including the perception of the problem, the decision-making process and consensus, and the learning process.

After conducting interviews, I analyzed the short-term limitations and resources of the subsystem actors. This involved assessing their access to legal authority for political decision-making, public opinion, and relevant information on the seriousness of a problem and potential solutions. I also explored whether advocacy coalitions used social demonstrations as a resource to achieve their objectives. Additionally, I identified access to financial resources as a critical factor and analyzed the crucial role played by political entrepreneurs in obtaining them.

The interviews provided valuable information about the coalitions, including their composition, ideas, beliefs, and strategies to promote equity reform in 2008. I also assessed the constraints and resources of subsystem actors, external events, stable parameters, and long-term coalition opportunity structure.

All phases combined allowed me to explain why the UACH adopted the equity reform in 2008, while other public universities in Mexico focused more on educational expansion, excellence, and merit in recent decades, as shown in the previous chapter.

#### Relatively Stable Parameters

González Barroso (2015) argues that stable parameters are the structural rules that shape the political game, and changing them can take significant time. According to Weible and Sabatier (2017), these stable parameters are referred to as the Basic Attributes of the Problem Area, which includes the distribution of natural resources, fundamental sociocultural values, and the basic constitutional structure. These parameters define the playing field and affect the actors' behavior, capabilities, and resources. In other words, modifying the relatively stable parameters relates to changes in the fundamental attributes of the problem.

### *Basic Attributes of the Problem Area*

According to Silva-Laya (2012), there are three primary stages in the 20th-century social policies regarding educational equity. The first stage occurred between 1950 and 1980 when attempts were made to universalize access to primary and secondary education and expand coverage at the tertiary level. The second stage took place in the 1990s, introducing compensatory programs that improved the educational conditions of the poorest sectors. The third stage began in the early 2000s, with the emergence of affirmative action policies to benefit historically vulnerable sectors and communities.

Silva-Laya (2012) emphasizes that in the region, there is a consensus on the necessary lines of action to promote educational equity: equity in access, equality in conditions, equality in achievements and results, and equality in social achievement. Despite efforts to eliminate barriers to access to education in Mexico, significant inequalities still exist, particularly for marginalized communities such as indigenous groups and people with disabilities, as well as for children whose parents lack tertiary education. While there have been improvements in some indicators, there are still challenges to overcome to dismantle the power structures that perpetuate injustices and transform them in favor of young people from low-income families and historically vulnerable sectors.

Didou, S. (2011) states that in the 1970s, educational equity policies aimed to expand educational opportunities throughout the country to counteract the high concentration of enrollment in the capital, which represented 52.5% of the total number of students at that time. However, according to ANUIES (2022), by 2022, the enrollment rate in Mexico City has significantly decreased, accounting for only 16.82% of the total nationwide enrollment.

The Ministry of Public Education manages educational policies in Mexico, which change every six years depending on the government's stance. For instance, during the six-year term from 1994 to 2000, the government implemented a policy to expand educational coverage. As Didou (2011) observed, this period witnessed the

establishment of technological, polytechnic, and intercultural universities, facilitating the growth of public higher education institutions in Mexico.

<b>Denomination</b>	<b>Number</b>
-Technological universities	104
-Public State Univ.	35
Higher Normal Education (Pedagogical)	273
Pub. Research Centers	27
-Public Univ. Federal	9
-State Public Universities with solidarity support	23
-Technological institutes	126
Decentralized Technological Institutes	130
-Polytechnics Univ.	51
-Intercultural Univ.	11
Open and Distance University of Mexico	1
Others	105
Total	669

Figure 18. Composition of the Higher Education System in Mexico. Source: Ministry of Public Education.

Recognition and justice policies in tertiary education are relatively new in Mexico, with intercultural universities playing a significant role. These universities provide learning models based on an intercultural perspective and curricula designed to address local needs rather than market demands. While these universities are a positive initiative, there is a risk that they can create segmentation and limit the quality of education. Other initiatives to promote equitable access to education include the creation of technological institutes in indigenous municipalities, scholarships, and tutoring programs for indigenous students at various universities. Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain, with the percentage of



indigenous language speakers in Mexico declining. According to INEGI, only 6.1% of Mexico's population speaks an indigenous language, with 70 indigenous groups speaking 68 languages other than Spanish, as shown in Figure 19.

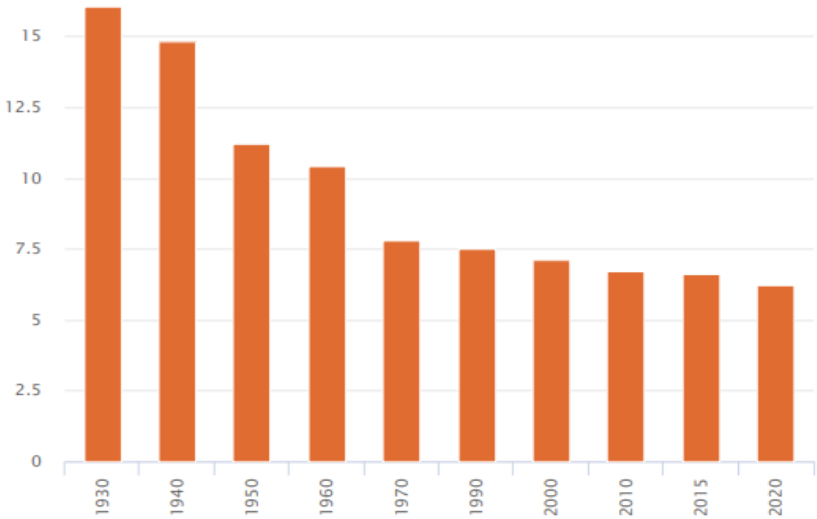


Figure 19. Population over 5 years of age speaking an indigenous language in Mexico. Source. National Institute of Statistics and Informatics.

The enrollment of indigenous language speakers in the public sector of tertiary education in Mexico, as reported by Anuies (2022), is only 1.8%, with a total of 60,092 students. This figure indicates an underrepresentation of indigenous students in higher education, highlighting the insufficiency of recognition and justice policies to ensure this population's equitable access to tertiary education.

Total National Public Tertiary Education Enrollment	Total Enrollment Speakers of Indigenous Languages
3,251,834	60,092

Figure. 20, Comparison of Higher Education Students who speak an indigenous language and the total national enrollment of Higher Education students. Source: ANUIES (2022).

Indigenous students in higher education are often found in intercultural and technological schools, particularly in municipalities with significant indigenous

populations. However, these young people remain excluded from the highest-quality universities in major metropolitan areas.

#### *Distribution of natural resources*

High dropout rates have prompted the Ministry of Public Education to implement compensatory educational policies. The principal strategy of the Government of Mexico was the PRONABES scholarship program, launched by the government in 2001 during the administration of President Vicente Fox. The program directly provides financial assistance to students rather than tertiary education institutions. To qualify for the scholarship, students must be enrolled in a higher education institution, have no other sources of public or private financial support, have parents whose salary does not exceed three minimum wages, and maintain an average grade of at least 80 on a scale of 0 to 100 (García Urquidez, 2015).

One of the main criticisms of the PRONABES program, according to García Urquidez's (2015) research, is that the financial support granted to students has remained the same since the scholarship was created in 2001. Inflation accumulated during the period from 2001 to 2014 was 65.86 %. The author points out that, in general terms, the PRONABES scholarship has weakened as a compensatory social policy instrument because the purchasing power of the scholarship has decreased by two-thirds, which does not contribute to the terminal efficiency of low-income students. Additionally, García Urquidez mentions a significant disparity in the distribution of scholarships, with only five of the 32 states of the Republic monopolizing the majority of the program's economic resources.

During President López Obrador's administration from 2018 to 2023, Mexico implemented new social programs, prioritizing scholarships to reduce school dropouts. In 2019, the Government of Mexico introduced four new scholarship programs, including the "Benito Juárez universal scholarship," which provides 1,600 pesos bi-monthly to 4.2 million upper secondary and higher education students. The "Youth Writing the Future" program aims to prevent tertiary educational dropout and

benefits 259,461 students with 2,400 pesos per month for up to 40 months without additional conditions.

According to Tuirán-Gutiérrez, A. (2022), despite the increase in educational spending on scholarships, which rose from 5.3% to 8.8% in the last six-year term due to the Benito Juárez universal scholarship for upper secondary education, some programs present design errors that limit their ability to reach the population most in need. Some policies are regressive since their monetary transfers are not concentrated in the deciles of lower-income people. In this sense, the author shows that 29.39% of the scholarships are directed to the first three income deciles, while 21% of the transfers are focused on the IX and X deciles of income. In other words, the universalization of the program has meant that economic resources destined for educational equity do not reach the people in greatest financial need but rather the sectors with the highest economic income in the country.

*Comparative distribution of resources by Universities*

In 2022, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma México, (UNAM) received 43,196.00 million pesos, the Instituto Politécnico Nacional, (IPN) \$18,375.23, the Universidad de Guadalajara (UdeG) received \$16,919.63, and the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana received \$5,956.67, while the UACH 3,160.20 million pesos.

Tertiary Public institution	Budget in Mxn Pesos	% Students accepted by call
UNAM	\$ 43,196,000,000.00	7%
IPN	\$ 18,375,897,378.00	23%
UdeG	\$ 13,398,636,627.00	34%
UAM	\$ 8,261,071,000.00	10%
UANL	\$ 7,858,330,156.00	57%
BUAP	\$ 6,280,814,000.00	32%
UAEM	\$ 5,233,000,000.00	59%
UABC	\$ 4,256,095,000.00	68%
Universidad Autónoma Chapingo	\$ 3,160,000,000.00	10%

Figure 21. Comparative distribution of resources by the University and its capacity to admit the demand. Source: Comparative model based on El Informador (2018) and adapted with data from the General Directorate of Higher Education, Secretary of Public Education (2023).

Regarding the case study of the UACH, which stands out for having a high budget per student, it should be noted that it is not necessarily more prosperous than other universities. Instead, it manages its resources differently, clearly prioritizing the well-being of its professors and marginalized students. When reviewing state universities' budgets in the General Directorate of Higher Education, eleven regional universities have more financing than the UACH in 2022.

However, the university strives to ensure that the admitted students represent diverse backgrounds and experiences, including those facing socioeconomic barriers to higher education. In essence, the UACH model faces financial constraints that prevent it from admitting more than 10% of applicants. Nonetheless, it aims to provide equal opportunities for students from low income families, ensuring a diverse and inclusive student body.

#### *Fundamental socio cultural values*

A study conducted by Campos-Vazquez R. M., Krozer A., Ramírez-Álvarez A. A., de la Torre R., & Velez-Grajales, R. (2022) examined the relationship between preferences for economic redistribution, perceptions of inequality, and social mobility in Mexico. The authors measured perceptions of inequality and social mobility and their impact on economic redistribution benchmarks. The study collected data on Mexicans' desired levels of inequality and social mobility, perceptions of taxes paid, and desired taxes for different socioeconomic groups.

Campos-Vazquez et al. (2022) demonstrated that most Mexicans perceive that not everyone has equal opportunities to succeed and would prefer greater equality. However, despite recognizing the unfairness of the situation, most are unwilling to make significant personal sacrifices to address the issue. The study found that Mexicans, on average, are only willing to contribute 12% of a hypothetical additional income to eliminate poverty and inequality. The authors also observed that people in the lowest income quintiles support a progressive tax system, where the wealthy contribute more but also desire lower taxes. Conversely, higher-income individuals consider society and demand less social redistribution. These findings suggest that

different socioeconomic groups hold different values and priorities regarding social justice.

#### [Fundamental Social and Cultural Values in the UACH](#)

The study by Campos-Vazquez et al. (2022) reveals similarities between the preferences among Mexicans and the political differences at the UACH history. The university has been part of the political struggles and transformations in Mexico. Interviewees in the study suggest that the university aligns with the political left, social justice ideas, wealth redistribution, and social mobility. Returning to its founding normative values is essential to better understand the university's fundamental social and cultural values in the UACH.

The university was founded in 1854 as the National School of Agriculture (ENA), originally militarized and established to train the personnel to work on the lands of the wealthier class of the time. Although the National School of Agriculture (ENA) was initially founded as a conservative and militarized institution with Christian values, its origins prioritized the poorest students with the right to live on campus.

While the founding documents of the university state that it should uphold Christian values, they also emphasize that the values taught should not conflict with the dogmatic values of the Christian church. While the university has evolved over the years, it still upholds some of its original normative values, such as the significance of prioritizing the poorest and most marginalized classes.

In his article, García Vázquez, X. N. (N. D.) points out that during the decade from 1870 to 1880, two positions emerged in the ENA regarding improving agricultural production in Mexico. One advocated the efficient use of natural resources and support for small farmers, while the other emphasized massive capital investment and market facilities to boost agricultural growth.

García Vázquez, X. N. (n.d.) highlights the Mexican Revolution of 1910 as a significant precursor to the values and beliefs that shape the UACH. According to the author, many of the university's students and teachers actively participated in the revolutionary armies of Villa, Zapata, and Álvaro Obregón y Carranza, fighting to improve living conditions for peasants and other marginalized groups. During the

armed conflict, which claimed the lives of approximately one million Mexicans, the ENA was not a passive bystander but actively engaged in supporting the peasant people's popular demands and struggles.

In 1923, the National School of Agriculture (ENA) moved to the former Chapingo hacienda. During this change process, the school adopted the motto "TEACH THE EXPLOITATION OF THE LAND, NOT THAT OF MAN," registered in its Inauguration Act in Chapingo. This phrase reflects the values of the Mexican Revolution and the peasant struggle led by General Zapata, whose motto was "The land belongs to those who work it." This political current led to agrarian reform and the redistribution of land in Mexico, passing from the hands of a few to indigenous and peasant communities so that they could work and harvest for themselves.

The Mexican Revolution and the National School of Agriculture with rural communities and agricultural issues catalyzed a reform in ENA's teaching methods. The school's Inauguration Act of 1923 formally acknowledged this reform, highlighting the necessity for a humanistic approach to agriculture and education.

*"Today, November 20, 1923, the New National School of Agriculture will be inaugurated at the Chapingo Estate, reformed in its methods, purposes, and aspirations according to the fundamental idea that has animated the Mexican working class for ten years to launch a revolutionary struggle against the state of social and economic affairs prevailing in this country since the days of the conquest. (...) (...)*

*This school's spirit is not oriented towards profit or economic dogmas sealed with a heap of skulls and ruins, as seen in the sad European collapse of 1914. Instead, it advocates a human ideal of simple cooperation and peaceful companionship among men who work the land without being pushed towards the slope of large-scale agricultural exploitation that needs the suffering of countless hopeless wage earners to flourish and prosper.*

*Here, we aim for the small farmer to be the arbitrator of himself, his region, and the support and foundation of peasant citizenship. Therefore, we title the educational program modest. In its economic aspect, this school*

*will go far with the intimate desire to be guided by our social truth, knowing how to prepare the way for future generations.*

*The land has no owners; it is the affectionate and fertile mother of everyone who humbly and loyally interprets the mission of being human. We advocate a philosophy of devotion to effort without selfishness, slavery, or privileges. We believe that the supreme way to be free is to ensure that agricultural organizations dedicate themselves to producing for the common good rather than pandering to the concupiscences of the masters. If it turns out that we are not the ones called to fulfill a task as enormous as the one we have outlined, let others who are stronger and better trained than us pick up our campaign flag symbolized in the present fundamental idea:*

*TEACH THE EXPLOITATION OF THE LAND, NOT THAT OF MAN”.*

In addition, Núñez Gutiérrez, H., Ocampo Ledesma, J. G., & Reyes Canchola, R. (2010) highlight the significant role that students played in political participation during this time. They joined strikes and the popular student movement of 1968, which demonstrated the commitment of Chapingo's youth to nationalist and popular positions.

In summarize, the participation of the UACH community in the historical events of Mexico's political and economic life has shaped the institution's political and cultural values, as reflected in its founding documents, which establish that is an institution oriented towards socialist and revolutionary values.

#### *Basic Constitutional Structure*

The legal framework that governs educational policy in Mexico recognizes the right of Mexicans to receive free, equitable, and quality public education. Silva-Laya (2012) points out that Mexico is a signatory to various legal agreements that support this right, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26 of this declaration stipulates that everyone has the right to education. Similarly, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights establishes in Article 13 that higher education must be accessible to all, primarily through the gradual implementation of free education.

### [Political Constitution of the United Mexican States](#)

The third article of the Mexican Political Constitution recognizes education as a fundamental right for every individual. Additionally, the General Law of Education establishes that the State must promote and support, either directly or through decentralized organizations, all types of educational modalities necessary for the nation's development, including higher education.

The General Law of Higher Education, reformed in April 2021, establishes important obligations and principles that the Mexican State must comply with to ensure access to higher education. Article 1 stipulates the State's responsibility to guarantee access to higher education, while Article 3 mandates compliance with international treaties related to tertiary education. Furthermore, Article 4 highlights the principles of educational equity and establishes that the State must provide academic support to students based on inclusion and equity criteria. Article 7 focuses on the principles of recognition and justice and states that tertiary education should contribute to the consolidation of identity and respect from an intercultural perspective. Lastly, Article 10 emphasizes the need for educational policies to ensure equity in access to higher education.

In addition, Article 37 of the law mandates that educational authorities must coordinate to promote programs based on the principle of equity to reduce the gaps in coverage and academic excellence between regions, entities, and territories of the country. These educational programs must implement affirmative actions to eliminate inequalities and discrimination based on economic, ethnic, linguistic, gender, disability, or other factors. They must also guarantee access, continuity, and balanced graduation between women and men in higher education programs.

It is essential to highlight that Article 37 emphasizes the need for higher education institutions to eliminate any institutional barriers that may impede the right to higher education of persons, groups, or people in a situation of social disadvantage or vulnerability. Article 70 specifies that scholarships should be awarded to low-income students who excel in academic abilities based on equity criteria.



In particular, the new law's characteristics result from the legislative majority of the National Regeneration Movement. This political party has controlled both houses of representatives since 2018, enabling substantial changes to legislation in favour of equity in higher education, consistent with the new government's leftist postulates. It should be highlighted that in the past, when the UACH designed its policies for selection, admission, and permanence, it was not subject to this new legislation. However, the new legislation reinforces and protects the UACH's educational model based on equity.

#### [The law that creates Chapingo](#)

The UACH was established in 1974 through a law that remains in effect. According to the law, the university is a decentralized organism of the state with legal personality, and it is headquartered in Chapingo, State of Mexico. The university community, composed of students, professors, and researchers, democratically governs itself through designated authorities. Additionally, the law allows the university to establish policies for student admission, retention, and academic personnel, providing greater flexibility to meet the community's and environment's needs. The autonomy granted by the law has enabled actors to implement significant reforms, such as the one in 2008.

#### [Chapingo's Statute](#)

The Statute of the UACH sets policies for educational equity and broadly defines the social democratic character of the institution. Article 6 states that the university will provide boarding schools that offer care services in the Regional Units to help achieve its objectives. In addition, Article 10 states that all education provided by the university will be free.

Regarding income equity policies, Article 132 gives preference to applicants from low-income families and rural areas in selecting students. Regarding equity policies in student retention, the Statute establishes that students may belong to one of three categories: internal scholarship, external scholarship, and external student.

Article 148 of the Chapingo Autonomous University's Statute stipulates that the university will allocate economic resources to support and develop assistance

services and benefits that allow it to achieve its academic, research, and service objectives within its financial capacity and needs. Furthermore, Article 152 establishes that the university's regional units can create services and benefits to promote equity in student retention. These services may include medical assistance, dormitories, dining halls, sports facilities, childcare centers, legal advice, loans, and other minor services.

#### *Dynamic External Subsystem Events*

As Durán-Báez (2017) suggests, external events of a dynamic nature, including shifts in government coalitions, changes in other policy subsystem, sudden changes in socioeconomic conditions, and shifts in public opinion, can impact the limitations and resources of actors. Such changes may create opportunities for more significant transformations.

#### *Changes in Socioeconomic Conditions*

In the case of Mexico, the most significant change in socioeconomic conditions is associated with NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States. According to Tovar Landa (2016), trade liberalization and free trade agreements, especially NAFTA, led to significant growth in Mexico's trade levels. In the 1980s, Mexico's exports depended almost entirely on oil, but by 2001, 89% of exports were manufactured goods.

As of October 2022, Mexico has been disputing Canada's position as the United States' largest trading partner for three consecutive months, according to Morales (2022). In October 2022, Mexico exported goods worth \$40,377.1 million to its northern neighbor, and its imports from the United States were \$28,007.4 million.

These new global trade phenomena have impacted the development of policies in many fields, including the education and agricultural sectors. Therefore, it is considered that NAFTA is responsible for Mexico's most significant socioeconomic change in the last decades. To better understand the scope of this economic agreement, it is essential to analyze some of its academic evaluations.

According to Esquivel, G. (2014), there are two different approaches to assessing the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in Mexico. The

first approach analyzes the evolution of foreign trade and foreign direct investment variables since they are the variables that the agreement could influence. The second approach is aimed at evaluating the final objectives that led to the proposal, promotion, and signing of the deal, such as job creation, wage improvements, and migration reduction, as well as promoting economic growth and reducing the development gaps between Mexico and its Business partners.

According to Esquivel (2014), NAFTA has successfully expanded foreign trade and foreign direct investment in Mexico. However, trade flows and acquisitions have slowed down since 2001. One of the main goals of NAFTA was to promote economic growth in Mexico, which had experienced stagnation in previous years.

Despite being promoted as a mechanism to improve wages and eventually align them with those in the United States, Esquivel (2014) notes that empirical evidence shows that average real wages in Mexico increased by only 6.6% between 1993 and 2012, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of just 0.34%.

Rafael Garduño Rivera (2014), for his part, presents the results of a study that evaluated the effect of NAFTA on regional distribution in Mexico. The study found that the distance from the US border had a significant impact, with only municipalities close to the US benefiting from NAFTA, given their large markets, high population density, and high levels of schooling and infrastructure. On the other hand, empirical evidence shows that southern Mexico, with precarious conditions and a lack of infrastructure, did not benefit from the free trade agreement, and the regional inequality gaps in Mexico worsened.

The impact of NAFTA on the Mexican agroindustry is a crucial topic to analyze, especially for the UACH, which specializes in agronomic sciences. In its Institutional Development Plan 2009-2025, the UACH highlights the vulnerability of Mexican agriculture within the NAFTA region. One of the major concerns is the potential implications of the commercial release of primary products in Mexico, which could result in the unrestricted entry of transgenic food products. Another issue is that only large companies can compete with the United States, leaving small and medium-sized producers unprotected against tariff liberalization. Therefore, it is essential to

understand the challenges and opportunities that NAFTA presents for the Mexican agroindustry, especially regarding sustainability, competitiveness, and protecting small-scale producers.

According to Escalante Semerena and González (2018), NAFTA did not lead to a reduction in consumer prices in the farm sector. On the contrary, general inflation increased by 55.7%, while food prices increased by 77.8%. The farm sector saw an average annual increase of 8.5% in product prices, with fruits and vegetables experiencing an average growth of 9.1% between 1988 and 2016. In the same period, prices of fruits and vegetables and the sector as a whole showed an upward trend, with an increase of over 800% in the total of agricultural products.

In summarize, NAFTA positively affected economic expansion, consumption, and foreign direct investment in some regions of Mexico, nevertheless, it has also exacerbated economic inequality. Poverty has not decreased, and wages have not reached desired levels. Additionally, NAFTA has brought significant changes to the agricultural sector, promoting commercial and export-oriented practices at the expense of food sovereignty. The considerable increase in agricultural product prices has negatively impacted economically vulnerable populations.

#### *Changes in Public Opinion*

##### *Perception of Tertiary Education in Mexico*

Changes in public opinion are an essential variable that must be considered when explaining the phenomena of change in public policies. Government actors are motivated to respond to public view; therefore, when public perception changes occur, they can influence the decisions made by rulers. In Mexico, one of the most prestigious organizations in opinion polls is the National Institute of Geography and Statistics, (INEGI) which conducts annual surveys to measure the population's perception of various topics.

Since 2011, the National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics (INEGI) has conducted the National Survey of Government Quality and Impact to gather information on the public's perception of procedures and services provided by

different levels of government and Public institutions. According to the INEGI (2011), 85.4% of public higher education service users in Mexico consider that classes are taught in adequate facilities, while 75% believe there are sufficiently trained teachers.

In the latest INEGI (2021) survey, public universities, including tertiary education institutions, were the most trusted public institutions, with a national trust level of 78.9%. In the State of Mexico, where UACH is located, the results are above the national average, with 92.9% of respondents considering that the staff is adequately qualified and 84.9% believing that the facilities are adequate. However, classroom overcrowding received the lowest score among the evaluated items, with 55.1% of respondents rating it as a significant issue.

The INEGI has consistently shown for the past 12 years that universities are the most trusted institutions in Mexico. Therefore, there is no evidence of a negative perception of the subsystem of tertiary education institutions that would justify a policy change for equity at the UACH.

#### *Changes in Systemic Governing Coalition*

##### *Fall of the one-party regime*

During the Mexican Revolution, a series of popular uprisings emerged, leading to the overthrow of the dictator Porfirio Díaz. The revolution was motivated by various factors, including the demand for agrarian reform and the pursuit of democratic governance. The call for democracy included the prohibition of the re-election of officials, which was established at the beginning of the 20th century and remained in place until the 21st century.

Following the revolution and the tragic assassinations of several prominent leaders, Plutarco Elías Calles assumed the presidency, leading to a period known as the Maximato. During this time, Calles held power for three additional terms and influenced the appointment of subsequent Mexican presidents. However, the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas marked the end of the Maximato and the

establishment of a political model that would shape Mexican politics for over 70 years.

This model included the emergence of the PNR, a state party that later evolved into the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). The PRI held absolute power in cooperation with labor unions, creating a corporatist model that dominated political life in Mexico.

During the 70 years of government (1930-2000) by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico, the political model was not uniform, and the ideas promoted varied in each six-year term. Despite this, the PRI considered itself the heir to the Mexican Revolution and established institutions that still shape the country today, such as the public health system and most of Mexico's universities. Additionally, the role of the State in the economy was predominant during this period. However, the PRI evolved with international dynamics over the years, adopting technocratic and neoliberal tendencies towards the end of the 1980s.

During this period, authoritarianism and absolute control of the press and mass media stood out. Although there was no presidential re-election, as proposed in the Mexican Revolution, the hegemonic party imposed an authoritarianism that limited political plurality.

Chapingo's social vision and values was threatened by the rise of neoliberalism in Mexico during the last phase of the hegemonic party regime, which took place in 1982 with the arrival of President Miguel de la Madrid, as well as Carlos Salinas de Gortari, in the period of greatest neoliberal boom, and with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

With the regime's fall in the year 2000, a door was opened for the Universities in Mexico to claim their autonomy without receiving political pressure from the Federal Government. This situation could have indirectly influenced the actors of the UACH to revisit the ideas and past principles that gave rise to the University and triggered the 2008 reform.

### [The democratic transition](#)

After a change of government in 2000, Mexico underwent a democratic transition that enabled a conservative party, which had previously been a satellite of the PRI regime, to ascend to power with Vicente Fox Quesada as the President of the Republic from 2000 to 2006. During his tenure, there was a reduction in the PRI's control over public, political, and educational institutions, which facilitated greater representation and diversity in parliament and the emergence of new players on the national stage. However, the outcome of the 2006 elections, which saw the Conservative Party retaining the presidency of the Republic, was contested for fraud and has yet to be fully clarified.

During Felipe Calderón Hinojosa's presidency from 2006 to 2012, the Chapingo Autonomous University exercised autonomy and implemented reforms that democratized access and entirely transformed the student profile by admitting young people from underprivileged backgrounds, indigenous communities, and vulnerable sectors despite being implemented during the term of a government with opposing values.

### [Arrival of the left Government in Mexico](#)

Since the first left-wing popular government in the 21st century under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the UACH has faced the challenge of managing the pandemic, which has complicated educational management for over a year and resulted in many students abandoning their studies. The digital divide between the most remote regions of Mexico has made it difficult for students to go completely virtual. During this period, a student movement emerged at the university, leading to the removal of the rector in 2022 and an agreement to improve equity policies, including scholarships and facilities.

In summary, the fall of the one-party regime and the transition to democracy brought about greater political plurality in Mexico, indirectly reinforcing the autonomy of tertiary education institutions. Chapingo has sustained a commitment to the values of the Mexican Revolution, championing the cause of peasants and indigenous communities and promoting policies that advance income equity despite changes in political orientations and values under three different Republic governments. Since

2008, student and teacher movements have continued to emerge, advocating for educational improvements, and this trend has persisted until 2023.

#### *Changes in Other Policy Subsystems*

On the one hand, Didou (2011) states that the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) emerged on January 1, 1994, coinciding with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and associated policies of recognition and justice with Mexico's tertiary education system.

The EZLN aimed to defend the collective and individual rights of Mexico's historically marginalized indigenous peoples and promote a new national model that included democracy, freedom, and justice. The international visibility of the EZLN put significant pressure on the Government of Mexico, leading to the San Andres Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture signing on February 16, 1996—the accords aimed to address the demands of indigenous peoples for recognition and social justice.

According to Didou (2011), the international visibility of the Zapatista movement resulted in the creation of intercultural universities in Mexico's educational system years after the peace accords were signed between the EZLN and the Mexican government. These universities focus on the development of indigenous peoples, the preservation of indigenous languages, and the economic, social, and cultural advancement of native communities in municipalities with a high indigenous density.

On the other hand, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has made recommendations on tertiary education policies in Mexico in order to reorient them towards the labor market and improve their efficiency to attract foreign investment and promote regional development (OECD, 2019). The recommendations are centered on three areas:

- *“Aligning higher education with labor market needs.*
- *Supporting student success in both higher education and the labor market.*



- *Improving coordination within the higher education system to enhance labor market outcomes”.*

However, some scholars, such as Olssen, M. and Peters, MA (2005), contend that *“neoliberalism has introduced a new form of governance in higher education that prioritizes the free market economy, laissez-faire policies, and free trade, potentially leading to the commodification of higher education”*. This approach has been criticized for being ideologically driven, grounded in the political rationality of economic neoliberalism and meritocracy, and out of touch with the needs and aspirations of the broader society.

Despite the increasing international pressure for higher education institutions to become market-oriented, Mexico has experienced the rise of an indigenous movement that has gained global visibility and claims sovereignty over its territories. The EZLN and the Government of Mexico have reached peace agreements by implementing recognition and inclusion policies, resulting in the creation of intercultural universities and the government's acknowledgment of the need to take measures. In this context, the Chapingo Autonomous University (UACH) has been one of Mexico's leading institutions in implementing positive discrimination mechanisms, thus allowing the recognition of indigenous communities and their specific educational needs.

#### [Long Term Coalition Opportunity Structures](#)

According to Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017) to better understand the Long term structure opportunity structure it is relevant to comprehend the Degree of consensus needed for major policy change, the Openness of Political Systems and the overlapping societal cleavages. This category of variables influences the resources a coalition needs to mobilize, and their effects require an extended period, typically at least a decade. The University Senate of the UACH reformed its policies on equity in admission in 2008, and this reform remains in force. The time since the reform has allowed for a better understanding of its impact, the learning of the groups involved, and complementary strategies implemented post-reform.

*Degree of Consensus Needed for Major Policy Change and Openness of Political System*

According to the Statute of the UACH (1978), the University Senate is responsible for making decisions on academic and administrative matters within the institution. The Senate comprises representatives democratically elected by the university community and university departments. Each department is represented by two members: one student and one academic staff member. The university community representatives are elected in proportion to the number of departmental representatives. Each department must nominate one teacher and one student for the vote, subject to specific regulations for each department.

The Senate conducts plenary sessions and forms permanent or special commissions, requiring a majority of 50% + 1 to make decisions. The Senate is responsible for approving the general regulations of the different university dependencies. Members of the Council are elected for two years, with the possibility of being re-elected in non-consecutive periods.

The UACH is noteworthy for its universal, direct, and secret voting system to elect its authorities. Unlike other public universities in Mexico, where prominent positions are selected through a parliamentary system in the university senate, the UACH's system gives each university community member an equal voice and vote. The system's democratic openness and active participation of all university community members make it stand out from other universities in Mexico. For instance, UNAM has a governing board that operates similarly to a papal conclave, which determines the university's rectorate.

Openness of Political Systems	Degree of consensus needed for major policy change		
	High	Medium	Low
High	Pluralism	<b>Pluralism</b>	
Medium	Recent Corporatist	Westminster	
Low	Traditional Corporatist		Authoritarian Executive

Figure 22. Typology of Coalition Opportunity Structures Source: Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017) *Theories of the Policy Process*

According to the Coalition Opportunity Structure model developed by Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017), the University of Chapingo's typology can be classified as "pluralist". This model is characterized by high levels of democratic openness and a moderate level of consensus for significant political changes.

### Policy Subsystem

I formed the coalitions based on their stance on admission equity policies: those in support and those in opposition. I conducted fourteen in-depth interviews to understand better each coalition's opinions and the ideas they promote. To identify the values and ideas of each alliance, I utilized a template to analyze priority views expressed by actors within the UACH.

### **Explanation of the problem**

#### **Social Democrats**

- The problem is that the University is focusing its resources on high-income students and has lost its vision of focusing on the popular classes
- The fact that students from low-income families do not enter is a problem of the University and must be addressed

#### **Meritocratic-Conservative**

- The fact that students from low-income families do not enter is not a problem for the University.
- The problem is that the University focuses many resources on young people from low-income families, preventing it from improving academic excellence.

### **ASPECTS RELATED TO THE DEEP CORE OF POLITICS**

#### **Social democrats**

- It is essential that Higher Education be public, secular, accessible, and universal.
- It is essential that the University should compensate the most disadvantaged young people

#### **Meritocratic-Conservative**

- It is essential that Public Higher Education have mixed financing methods, both public and private.
- It is essential that the University should compensate the best students, those who are most outstanding and have the best averages.

## **ASPECTS RELATED TO THE CORE OF THE POLICY**

### **Social Democrats**

- The University must spend financial, human, and material resources to compensate for the student's social origin deficiencies.

### **Meritocratic-Conservative**

- It is not the function of the University to spend economic, human, and material resources on the deficiencies of the social origin of the students. Those who must access University are the most prepared young people

### **Secondary Aspects**

#### **Social Democrats**

- The University must take compensatory actions and focus its resources on historically marginalized groups, for example, indigenous communities.
- The university is responsible for the success or failure of the students.

#### **Meritocratic-Conservative**

- Students are responsible for their success or failure.
- The university must incentivize merit and reward the best students. Therefore, the university must focus on improving educational excellence.

## **SECONDARY OR INSTRUMENTAL ASPECTS**

### **Social Democrats**

- The selection process is fairer with a differentiated examination by means, regions, poor municipalities, etc.
- Scholarships should be awarded to the most disadvantaged students to give them a level playing field.
- Teachers must be understanding and lax with the most disadvantaged students and understand their context.
- Welfare programs must gradually increase

### **Meritocratic-Conservative**

- The selection process is fairer with a standardized test for everyone.
- Scholarships should be awarded to the best students to encourage their best performance.
- Teachers are not responsible for students not having previous knowledge; they must evaluate it the same as the rest of the students.

Coalition	Members	Deep Core Beliefs	Policy Core Beliefs	Secondary Aspects
Coalition A (Promoter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professors</li> <li>- Researchers</li> <li>- Students</li> <li>- Organization Students</li> <li>- Senate Members</li> <li>- Graduates</li> <li>- Academic expert in policies for equity</li> <li>- Mexico Government 2018-2024</li> </ul>	Public Equity Education	Focus material, economic and human resources on providing education to students with the greatest social disadvantage	<p>Admission policies through positive discrimination.</p> <p>Results policies that allow equity in learning, regardless of socioeconomic condition.</p> <p>Permanence policies that allow low income students not to drop out.</p>
Coalition B (Opposition)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professors</li> <li>- Senate members</li> <li>- Academic Union (some members)</li> <li>- Graduates</li> <li>- Mexico Government (1988-2018)</li> <li>- Other P�ublic Universities</li> <li>- Organismos internacionales (OECD)</li> </ul>	Public Meritocratic Education	Focus material, economic and human resources in providing education to the most prepared and capable students	<p>Admission policies under equal circumstances. (Standardized test).</p> <p>Equal treatment in learning. Do not make evaluation criteria more flexible.</p> <p>Efficiently operated permanence policies.</p>

**Figure 23.** Advocacy Coalitions and critics of equity policies regarding admission, academic performance, and retention of students at the University. They are classified by deep core, policy core, and secondary beliefs.

#### Beliefs of the Coalition A

Based on the interviews, Coalition A members espouse social democratic beliefs regarding higher education. This Coalition advocates for an equitable education system at the UACH that prioritizes resources for economically disadvantaged students. The interviewees in Coalition A agree that educational policies should aim for social equity through measures such as free and compensatory education. The Coalition emphasizes that all students, regardless of their talent, wealth, and social background, should receive the same quality of education. Additionally, Coalition A promotes the idea that individuals in socially and economically disadvantaged situations should receive affirmative and compensatory actions that enable them to have equal opportunities and level the playing field during their tertiary education

When questioned about the problems that led to the 2008 reform at the UACH, the interviewee identified that *"the university was previously prioritizing its resources towards high-income students, neglecting its mission to serve the popular classes. The university was failing to adhere to its statute, which mandates providing education to the popular and peasant sectors"*.<sup>1</sup>

The interviewee have acknowledged the positive effects of the 2008 reform; however, they also recognize that admitting low-income students alone is insufficient to ensure greater equity in higher education. *"Policies are needed to support these students throughout their university journey, especially since the current dropout rate at the Chapingo Autonomous University exceeds 50%"*.<sup>2</sup>

Coalition A members firmly believe that the university's admission and retention policies must address the problem of not admitting students from low-income families to promote greater equity.

#### Beliefs of the Coalition B

It is worth noting that none of the opposition interviewees expressed an affinity for private education. All of them strongly believe in free public education. However, interviewee 13 suggests that *"the University should seek additional public and private financing through consultancies, events, postgraduate programs, diplomas, and university companies, this could help the University generate more income, which could be used to support its academic excellence and research funding"*.<sup>3</sup>

Interviewee 13 mentioned, *"Some members of the University cling to outdated radical left and socialist ideas that no longer apply in the 21st century; the University should strive for a balance to tackle modern educational challenges."*

Regarding student evaluations, interviewee 13 argues that *"professors should not be held responsible for students' lack of prior knowledge and that everyone should*

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<sup>1</sup> Interviewee Number 2. Answer about the perception of the Problem

<sup>2</sup> Interviewee Number 2. Answer about the learning process

<sup>3</sup> Interviewee number 13 answer; Do you consider that the 2008 reform and the spending on permanence policies compromise the investment of resources for educational quality?

*be evaluated equally.*<sup>4</sup>" He emphasizes that *"maintaining educational quality means striving for student excellence and giving grades without justification undermines the institution's prestige."*<sup>5</sup> In other words, the member of Coalition B believes that all students, regardless of their social background, should be treated equally, and he is not in favor of giving away grades or being lenient with students.

In the case of Interviewee 14 expressed satisfaction with the current evaluation model of the University and suggested that students should strive to improve their academic performance. He strongly opposed any modification to the current evaluation model. He also reminisced, *"In my time as a student, the evaluation model was more rigorous due to the University's militarized structure; now, the University seeks to make it too flexible, but that has not prepared students for the real-life outside."*<sup>6</sup> Regarding the admission model, "it's a failure because it restricts enrollment expansion, leaving many students without a place at Chapingo."

Interviewee 13 points out, *"We (Professors Coalition B) are not against permanence policies such as the boarding school and food scholarships; we disagree on the relaxation of the evaluation criteria, which can affect the student's academic quality and level of training."*

Interviewee 13 suggests that the university could have a better model without compromising educational quality. *"the economic scholarship transfers should be reviewed since the Government of the Republic already has a robust scholarship program for high school students, and awarding a double scholarship is unnecessary, the cost per student is exorbitant and has led to neglecting other important tasks, as well as not investing enough in university infrastructure and research or accept more students"*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Interviewee number 13 answer about the evaluation and pedagogic model of UACH.

<sup>5</sup> Interviewee number 13 answer about the evaluation and pedagogic model of UACH.

<sup>6</sup> Interviewee 14 answer about the evaluation and pedagogic model of UACH.

<sup>7</sup> Interviewee 13 answer Do you consider that the 2008 reform and the spending on permanence policies compromise the investment of resources for educational quality?

Coalition B advocates for a meritocratic approach to equality of opportunity, where merit is the sole criterion for evaluation. According to this model, policies should prioritize the most talented youth with the best academic performance. The meritocratic-conservative ideology argues that equal opportunities are achieved through individual merit and free competition, and therefore students should be treated equally when evaluated. They say that professors and universities are not responsible for compensating for the academic lags of low-performing students who entered through the reform of 2008.

Coalition B describes the 2008 reform as a failure because they believe that a model of this nature prevents the UACH from accepting a more significant number of students. This situation leads to UACH rejecting 90% of the demand. They also consider the model ineffective because most students cannot pass the subjects, leading to high drop-out rates.

Although the teachers of Coalition B support policies such as free meals and boarding schools based on results, they oppose changes in the evaluation model for low-income students. They strongly adhere to the evaluation model they knew when they were students and do not believe it should change.

#### [Resources of the Coalition A](#)

The university had already implemented two robust equity policy instruments in the institution's past: the boarding school originated from the former National School of Agriculture and has survived since the university's founding. Additionally, they have a robust program of monetary scholarships established in the Statute, which has legal origins in the Organic Law of the University that created UACH and its University Statute. The Statute mentions that scholarships should be granted to the most disadvantaged students to provide them equal footing.

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The opportunity to carry out the Educational Reform at the UACH in 2008 arose mainly due to the leadership of Dr. Ribera del Rio, an agronomist specializing in soils, a Master in Meteorology from the Postgraduate College and a doctor in Horticulture by the Autonomous University Chapingo. During his tenure as deputy director of school administration in the general academic direction, Dr. Ribera proposed to reform the university's admissions policies. Those interviewed said Dr. Ribera was this reform's leading promoter.

In addition, Dr. Angélica Buendía, a specialist in social sciences and economics and management of technological change, her experience in comparative higher education policies and policies for educational equity, provides specialized technical and theoretical support to Dr. Ribera.

Dr. Ribera, as a member of the central administration of the university, had access to the institution's governing bodies and was able to present the Reform proposal for consideration by the commissions and the university senate. In other words, the combination of leadership, specialized knowledge, and access to crucial information were key factors that allowed the Educational Reform.

The analysis suggests that the coalition advocating for educational reform has established channels of access to legal authorities responsible for policymaking and budget allocation. The advocacy coalition possesses pertinent information about the severity of the issue and potential courses of action to address it. Furthermore, the alliance enjoys robust student support, which enables it to mobilize and demand improvements in educational equity policies. This support has manifested in various mobilizations that have sought incremental improvements in conditions and budgets. It is worth noting that Dr. Ribera has played a critical role as a leader and policy entrepreneur at the UACH, contributing significantly to the success of the educational reform effort.

In summary, the Experience in permanent equity policies, the Technical and scientific information, the Strategic position in the Government of the University - Members in the University Senate, the Leadership of Dr. Ribera del Rio, and the

Support from student groups these characteristics are the resources with those counted by coalition A to promote the 2008 reform in admission policies at UACH.

#### Resources of the Coalition B

The opposition coalition, or Coalition B, has garnered support from sympathetic professors in the University Senate and internal political groups within Chapingo. Additionally, they have established connections with external political parties and the Union of Academic Professors of the University. Although they do not hold a majority in the Senate nor have a conservative rector or high-ranking official, they advocate for their beliefs through public displays and social media criticism. Coalition B is powerful among full-time UACH professors.

#### Strategy regarding guidance instruments Coalition A

The promoting coalition leveraged the institutional design, normative values of the institution, and the leadership of Dr. Roberto Ribera del Rio, who served as the policy entrepreneur for educational equity in 2008, to develop the reform proposal.

The advocacy coalition A integrate other academic institutions specialists in educational equity policies and comparative educational policy to create a proposal for equity reform in access.

*"We collaborated with Dr. Angelica Buendía to diagnose the situation of inequality in public universities. We developed a series of arguments to support the need for a fairer selection process. Together, we developed a model of an exam differentiated by regional averages, poor municipalities, and affirmative actions."<sup>8</sup>*

According to the Organ for the Publication of Agreements of the University Senate, which published it in the University Gazette No. 31, on May 30, 2008, under Agreement 824-3 the proposal includes ten criteria for selecting students:

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<sup>8</sup> Interviewee Number 2 answer Which actors have actively promoted the 2008 reform of the Autonomous University of Chapingo? Mention its role and relevance

1. *“National and Regional Average Criteria. All applicants must exceed the national average score, and those who are selected based on regional averages must exceed the respective regional average score.*
2. *The criterion by Federal Entity. The selection committee will choose high-scoring students from each of the 32 federal entities in the country based on their grades that exceed the national average. The committee must select a minimum of eight students from each state, with a cap of 400 for high school and 200 for the propaedeutic program*
3. *Criterion by Indigenous Ethnic Group. The selection committee select a proportional number of students from each indigenous ethnic group based on their high grades, which must exceed the national average. The selection will be based on 200 for high school and 100 for the propedeutic program, with a minimum of four students chosen for each ethnic group. The total number of selected students will be the sum of each level plus the complement of four for each ethnic group. They will consider the applicant's socioeconomic status in case of a tie.*
4. *Criterion for poor municipalities. The selection committee select the best exam averages for each of the poorest municipalities in the country based on the criteria established by the Ministry of Social Development. They will consider the applicant's socioeconomic status in case of a tie.*
5. *Criterion by Agricultural or Forestry School. The selection committee will select two students with the highest grades from each forestry or agronomic school in the country. They will consider the applicant's socioeconomic status in case of a tie.*
6. *The criterion for Secondary TV and High School TV. The selection committee will choose two students with the highest grades from each site. The committee will consider the applicant's socioeconomic status if there is a tie.*
7. *The criterion by Regional Average. The selection committee will divide the country's states into three regions (North, Center, and South) and calculate each region's average. For high school, the committee will select the top 100 students with the highest qualifications from each area until they reach 300.*

*For the Propedeutic program, the committee will choose the top 50 students with the highest qualifications from each region until they get 150. The committee will consider the applicant's socioeconomic status if there is a tie. If vacancies remain in the North and Center regions, they will be assigned to the South region.*

- 8. The criterion for Regional Units, only applicants who exceed the regional average will be selected, but they will only be allowed to study the courses offered in the regional units.*
- 9. The qualification criteria. the committee will complete the selection process based on the abovementioned criteria, and the admission exam will select up to 1375 high school and 910 propedeutic students for the highest qualifications.*
- 10. The shortlist criteria. the committee will generate a list of selected students that matches the 1375 high school and 910 propedeutic level quotas. If the registration for each level is incomplete, the institution will issue a second call and a second list to complete the established goal. The selection criteria for the second call will only consider higher qualifications until the group is completed”.*

The Advocacy Coalition A proposed attracting students from low-income families while still recruiting high-performing students. The admission process included access for such students through the national average exam but added positive discrimination measures, which allowed the diversification of enrollment. The selection process relied on regional and state-based criteria to prevent the concentration of applicants from the capital and promote diversity in registration.

The strategy recognized the varying academic levels of students from the south and certain northern states compared to those from the center. To ensure fairness, the committee created three national averages. It continued to recruit the best students from each state—the selection criteria aimed to promote inclusivity and avoid any ethnic group monopolizing the admission process. The requirements established at

least four places for each ethnic group, guaranteeing 200 spaces for high school and 100 for propaedeutic. Additionally, the selection committee reserved one place for the best student from each marginalized town. In addition, the Television schools, designed in the 1970s to combat illiteracy in rural and hard-to-reach areas, were also included in the criteria.

Coalition A strategy aimed to reduce tensions with the advocates of meritocratic beliefs while promoting inclusivity because the University continued to attract high-performing students but also considered the situation and context of highly marginalized and historically vulnerable communities as a vital component of inclusivity.

During the explanatory statement at the University Senate, interviewee three stated, *"Dr. Ribera skillfully demonstrated that the University was losing its sense of purpose in training the popular classes and deviating from its original mission."*<sup>9</sup> In other words, he effectively used a resource linked to the feelings of the university community. Interviewee three noted, *"Dr. Ribera employed evidence, data, and his leadership position and moral influence to push for the approval of the 2008 reform".* The University Senate approved the reform in 2008, and there were no motions against it. The interviewed 2 mentioned, *"I believed that the opposition groups were not equipped with technical arguments to combat the proposal."*<sup>10</sup> The reform passed with an absolute vote majority from the university community's representatives in the Senate.

Strategy regarding guidance instruments coalition B

Group A successfully implemented its strategy during the 2008 reform without opposition from Group B in the University Senate. This was because advocacy

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<sup>9</sup> Interviewee number 3 answer who drove and influenced the solutions? Mention its role and relevance

<sup>10</sup> Interviewee number 2 answer Was there any resistance to the 2008 Reform from interest groups? (teachers, administrators, workers, unions, students, politicians, government) If so, how was an agreement reached?

collation A's positions aligned with the beliefs of the majority of the Senate members and the university's central administration, resulting in an overwhelming majority vote in favor of the reform.

On the other hand, Group B has consistently opposed any modification or flexibility in student evaluation, citing the importance of maintaining academic excellence and strict academic evaluation, regardless of students' social background. However, this stance is contradictory as it disregards the need for substantial modifications to evaluation methods to ensure access for new students from indigenous communities and low-income families who lack prior university education. It is worth noting that historically, Chapingo's evaluation methods came from his militarized story, and thus, the university must adapt to the changing social context.

Coalition B has significant political influence among full-time professors of the University, and there is a prevailing notion at Chapingo that the university should not abandon its current evaluation model, resulting in blocked attempts to discuss the issue since 2008. Moreover, a common narrative strategy is employed to demobilize students who oppose it, with those who have complained about the situation often stigmatized and told to drop out of UACH due to their alleged lack of ability and talent.

#### Policy Brokers

Interviewee 3 states that the policy brokers *"Rectory of the University, Central administration, who have decided to remain on the sidelines, have accepted Dr. Roberto Ribera del Rio and his equity policy coalition's initiative. However, the interviewee also reveals that they have not taken any measures to modify Chapingo's evaluation system in the last 15 years "*. In other words, the policy brokers maintain an intermediate approach to avoid political attrition but admit that the situation has contributed to the high dropout rate in the university. According to Interviewee 3, *"The central administration not enough effort has been made to address the needs of the new student profiles entering the university, failing to retain students."*

### Decisions of the competent authorities

As stated in the minutes of Ordinary Session No. 823, the competent authority decided to unanimously approve the proposal of the promoting coalition in the University Senate, with a total of 34 votes in favor, no votes against and no abstentions.

No.	Name	Department	In favor	Against	Abstentions
1	Dr. Adolfo Palma Trujano	Forestry Division	X		
2	M.C. Jaime Ruvalcaba Limón	Division of Administrative Economic Sciences	X		
3	Dr. Joel Perez Nieto	plant breeding	X		
4	Aium. Eduardo Emmanuel Chiquini	plant breeding	X		
5	Ing. Marco Vinivio Bañuelos	Agroindustrial	X		
6	Alum. Fernando Elester Vazquez	Agroindustrial	X		
7	Dr. Vicente Angeles Montiel	Irrigation	X		
8	Dr. Samuel García Silva	Agricultural Mechanical Engineering	X		
9	Alum. Alejandro Mestiza Parra	Agricultural Mechanical Engineering	X		
10	Dr. Jose Alfredo Dominguez	Agricultural Parasitology	X		
11	Profa. Martha Castillo	Agricultural High School	X		
12	Alum. Nelly Lizbeth Valencia	Agricultural High School	X		
13	Dr. J. Alfredo Castellanos	rural sociology	X		
14	Alum. Samuel Jimenez Mena	rural sociology	X		
15	Ing. Jorge M. Rivera	floors	X		
16	Alum. Luis Rodrigo Gonzalez Ku	floors	X		
17	M.C. Jose Luis Blando	URUZA	X		
18	Alum. Facunda S. Sandoval	URUZA	X		
19	Dr. Mariano Gonzalez Alcorta	zootechnics	X		
20	Alum. Reyna Guadalupe Cuevas	zootechnics	X		
21	Lic. Jorge Flores Hernandez	Regional Centers Directorate	X		
22	Alum. Manuel Eduardo Tuz Colli	Regional Centers Directorate	X		
23	Lic. E. Alejandro Mendez Martinez	Academic Support Departments	X		
24	Dr. Alejandro S, Sanchez	For the community (DICIFO)	X		
25	M.C. Arturo Butron Madrigal	For the community (Agricultural High School)	X		
26	M.C. Claudia Hernandez Miranda	For the Community (Phytotechnics)	X		
27	Prof. Vladimir Berenguer Pina	For the community (Agricultural Mechanics)	X		
28	Dr. Quito López Tirado	For the community (Zootechnics)	X		
29	Lic. Arturo Gómez Herrera	For the community (DICEA)	X		
30	Alum. Rene Hernandez Espinoza	For the community (DICEA)	X		
31	Alum. Efrén Cruz Hernandez	For the community (I Agroindustrial)	X		
32	Alum. Hector Hugo Esquivel	For the community (DICIFO)	X		
33	Alum. Lucio Delesma Morales	For the Community (Phytotechnics)	X		
34	Alum. Benito Alberto Rosales	For the community (Agricultural Parasitology)	X		
<b>Total</b>			<b>34</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Figure 24. Voting process in the University Senate of the UACH with regard to the proposal of 10 admission criteria. Source: Organ for the Publication of Agreements of the University Senate, which published it in the University Gazette No. 31, on May 30, 2008, under Agreement 824-3.

### Implementation reform of 2008

Rivera del Río, R. and Buendía-Espinosa, A. (2010) highlighted in their article "Selection Model for Admission to Higher Education" the first evaluation conducted on the Autonomous University Chapingo's reform in 2009. The university

implemented several strategies to spread awareness of the reform among the marginalized and indigenous communities of the country. For instance, they used community radio stations broadcast in indigenous languages to reach marginalized areas. Furthermore, the admission exam was conducted in 80 locations across the country, allowing communities that lacked the resources to travel to the State of Mexico to take the exam at no cost. This initiative inspired many young individuals to apply to the university. According to the evaluation, there was a surge in the number of applicants from indigenous communities during the 2009 cycle at the university.

#### [Implementation of complementary measures](#)

In 2011, Dr. Roberto Ribera del Río assumed the role of Director of the Agricultural High School at the UACH. His appointment presented an opportunity to implement complementary policies to the 2008 reform that aimed to promote the retention of low-income students. As reforming the university's evaluation scheme proved difficult, Dr. Ribera del Río sought complementary measures from the Agricultural High School.

A recent publication by Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa (2022) discusses implementing an academic sensitization and support program. This program includes sensitizing academic staff, offering peer counseling, group counseling, accompaniment, performance monitoring of individual courses, and tracking individual educational trajectories. These policies promote equal results for all students, irrespective of their social background. The goal is to ensure student outcomes depend on their effort and not their social origins.

#### [Institutional rules, resource allocations, and appointments](#)

##### [Institutional Development Plan 2009-2025](#)

The Institutional Development Plan (from now on IDP) 2009-2025 of the Chapingo Autonomous University highlights the importance of its autonomy in decision-making in the academic, governmental, and economic spheres. In addition, the need to defend the permanence of the public university and oppose the privatization and commercialization of the educational system is emphasized, taking into account the agro-ecological and economic conditions to decide the country's future under



principles of sustainable development and national sovereignty. The UACH has the challenge of providing alternatives to achieve food self-sufficiency and solve the problems of rural areas. Regarding Higher Education, the IDP points out that education is critical to redefining its social function.

The IDP (2009) points out that free higher education is a constitutional right in Mexico. Still, it is in danger due to the current restrictive policy that imposes on institutions the search for alternative sources of financing. This has led to the establishment of quotas and tariffs for the admission of students and the granting of scholarships-credit. In addition, educational policy in Mexico has led to increasing privatization of higher education, which has resulted in a decrease in the presence of public institutions. National accreditation has also become a rigid mechanism that goes against the goals of having flexible and open institutions.

In addition, the UACH IDP (2009) considers its democratic system fundamental to configure an educational model that stands out from that of the universities that only see the training of professionals as a purely technical and dehumanized product.

Especially, the IDP (2009) mentions that the UACH is committed to providing educational opportunities to young people from low income families in rural areas through the promotion, selection, and admission of students. The university prioritizes young people from rural areas, but the participation of young people from different states has been uneven, concentrating on five entities.

According to the IDP (2009), the UACH provides most students with a vital scholarship system. Research has demonstrated that students without scholarships are more likely to drop out. However, the boarding school model used by the institution has been linked to issues such as alcoholism and violence against women. Moreover, students from rural areas require special programs that cater to their specific needs and development, mainly because they are separated from their families when they enter the institution as adolescents. Given the social and economic challenges currently affecting rural areas, the UACH faces difficulty maintaining its national character. Thus, there is a need to re-examine enrollment

policies and establish long-term measures to promote educational equity in the institution.

In summary, the IDP (2009) is a document that reflects the concerns through a diagnosis and the plan that the institution must follow for the following years; the IDP being a democratic and participatory document of the university community, faithfully shows the values of the institution. Notably, the IDP reflects the University's solid social democratic character as an institution, concerned about the socioeconomic environment and the deterioration of the agricultural sector in Mexico; on the other hand, it also objectively analyzes the internal challenges that it has as an institution to provides policies that allow low-income youth enter the institution and complete it successfully.

#### Budget

The IDP (2009) points out that the current financing scheme for higher education in Mexico has limited institutional development due to the lack of consolidation of procedures and rules for its distribution and the lack of a budget management and control system, precise monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms. This has led to the need to diversify funding sources and universities to rely heavily on federal subsidies. In the case of the UACH, its budget represents an average of 2.6% of the total allocated to the rural sector. Negotiations to increase the budget have been complex due to cuts in public education and the agricultural sector.

The IDP (2009) mentions that the State's policy regarding university financing has repercussions on the development of higher education, which translates into the little negotiation capacity of the subsidy, the minimum growth of operating expenses, the lack of resources for investment, and the insufficient hiring of personnel, as well as the late provision of resources for salary expansion.

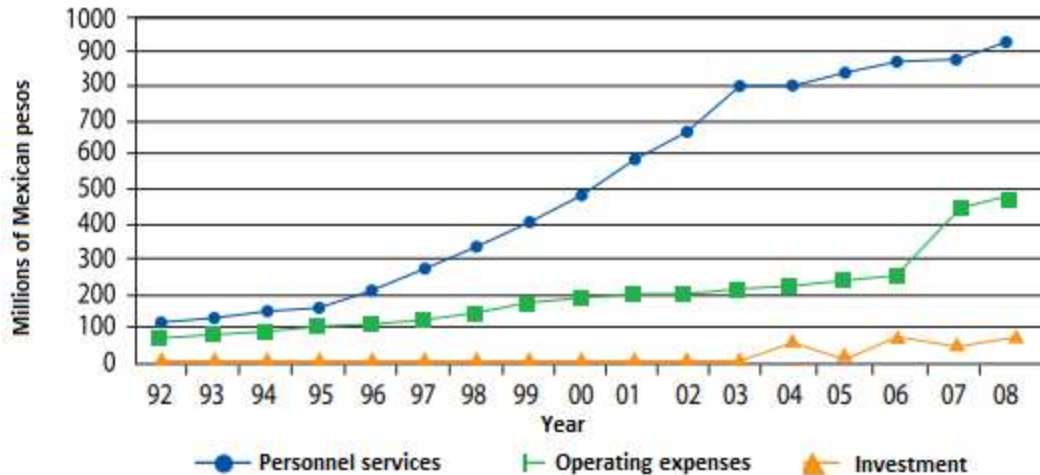


Figure 25. Distribution of the UACH Budget. Source: Universidad Autónoma Chapingo. (2009). Institutional Development Plan 2009-2025.

The IDP (2009) highlights that the UACH, as a sectorized university under the Ministry of Agriculture, faces several challenges compared to universities under the Ministry of Public Education. Between 2003 and 2008, the UACH allocated 71% of its spending towards personal services, 23% towards operating expenses, and 6% towards investments, as shown in Figure 25. Furthermore, the UACH has generated more internal resources through its academic and support services. Specifically, its own resource income significantly increased between 2005 and 2006, although it decreased by 2% in 2005. By 2008-2009, its resources amounted to 328.9 million pesos.

According to the IDP (2009), in 2007, the highest percentage of the UACH's budget was allocated to teaching, accounting for 46.3%, while the most significant operating expense was allocated to student assistance, with 58.2%. The research received 8.4% of the budget, while support services accounted for 18%. The state budget policy has presented several challenges for the UACH, such as a high proportion of expenses being directed toward salaries, a scarcity of resources for investment, an increase in the budget deficit, and a lack of authorization for staff growth. Additionally, unfunded positions have been created. The IDP (2009) points out that It is necessary to redefine the distribution of funds, reduce the accumulated deficit, and establish strategies to diversify the university's income and promote academic activities.

## Policy Outputs

The 2008 reform was an essential step in equity policies at the UACH. It configures the last link in a series of equity policies that have shaped the educational institution since its historical foundation. In the words of Rivera del Rio and Buendía-Espinosa (2022);

*“These policies did not originate through theoretical-methodological reflections on inequality, equity, social justice, and meritocracy, nor from the analysis of public policies for higher education to obtain incentives from the federal government. Instead, they emerged from the community in recognition of those who graduated decades earlier and recognized that their time in Chapingo changed their lives and provided them with social mobility. Subsequently, the theoretical-methodological dissertations have helped to understand better and learn about how to manage the problem of equity”.*

After the 2008 reform, the equity policies that make the UACH model unique in Mexico are configured as follows:

### Admission policies for Equity:

1. Admission policies with eight different selection criteria and affirmative actions allow access for indigenous communities and young people from communities of high social marginalization. (2008 reform)
2. Free admission exam distributed in 80 locations nationwide. (before the 2008 reform),
3. Multidimensional examination of poverty. (before the 2008 reform),

### Policies for Permanence:

1. Boarding School. (before the 2008 reform),
2. Food scholarships three times a day. (before the 2008 reform),
3. Assistance services. (before the 2008 reform),
4. Health and nursing services. (before the 2008 reform),
5. Mental health services. (After the 2008 reform),

### Policies for Equity in Results:

1. Sensitization of academic staff. (After the 2008 reform),

2. Peer counseling. (After the 2008 reform),
3. Advice and accompaniment in groups. (After the 2008 reform),
4. Tracking performance in individual courses and monitoring individual educational pathways. (After the 2008 reform).

#### Policy Impacts

According to Rivera del Río, R. and Buendía-Espinosa, A. (2010), the student selection model implemented by the UACH in 2008 and 2009 resulted in increased opportunities for students to enter the university, particularly for indigenous students, highly marginalized municipalities, during the first two years of application. Before the 2007 reform, the previous selection criteria favored students with more significant social and cultural capital, whereas the new measures led to greater inclusion of students from marginalized sectors.

Notably, the UACH has a significant presence of indigenous students, representing 21% of its enrollment and speaking 50 different indigenous languages. The UACH also has the highest percentage of scholarship students in Mexico, with 84.36% of their enrollment receiving economic and food support.

To assess the social outcomes of students, the UACH monitors graduate students; for instance, UPOM (2021) surveyed the graduates of the 2016-2020 cohorts to determine their social performance. The survey participated in 20% of the graduates and was equally distributed between gender and academic programs and among graduates from indigenous communities.

According to the survey results, of the 7,000 graduates between 2016 and 2020, 1,376 participated, of whom 56% were men and 44% were women. The average age of undergraduate graduates is 24 years old, and graduates are 32 years old. 24% of graduates come from indigenous communities.

	Unemployed	Studying	Working	Total
2016	17%	16%	67%	100%
2017	13%	15%	72%	100%
2018	19%	8%	73%	100%
2019	27%	8%	65%	100%
2020	61%	4%	34%	99%
<b>Average</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 26. Status of graduate students 2016-2020. Source UPOM (2021) Autonomous University of Chapingo.

According to UPOM (2021) data, 62% of UACH graduates between 2016 and 2020 are employed, 10% continue with postgraduate studies, and 27% are unemployed. Between the 2017 and 2018 cohorts, the employment rate reached 72.5%. However, the cohort of 2020 graduates directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic has faced difficulties entering the labor market, with 61% unemployed college graduates.

Compared to other higher education graduates, according to the OECD's 2019 report, the employment rate for Mexican graduates in 2017 was 80.7%, with an inactivity rate of 14.5%, figures similar to those of Chapingo graduates for the same year.

According to UPOM (2021) the survey indicates that 75% of graduates work in the private sector, while 25% work in the public sector. In addition, 1 in 10 graduates is an entrepreneur or self-employed, creating companies dedicated to agricultural or agricultural production. 51% work in a region other than the one of origin, 31% work in their area of origin, 15% do not indicate their current residence and 3% work in the United States. 87% of graduates who continue postgraduate studies do so in educational institutions in Mexico, while the remaining 13% do so abroad.

Regarding the opinion of UACH graduate students on the academic preparation obtained at the university, 48% responded that it was satisfactory, 45% considered it sufficient, 7% regular, and none considered it unsatisfactory. The results of satisfaction of the graduates of the UACH are considerable in comparison with other educational institutions. Concerning the quality of life, 80% of the students consider

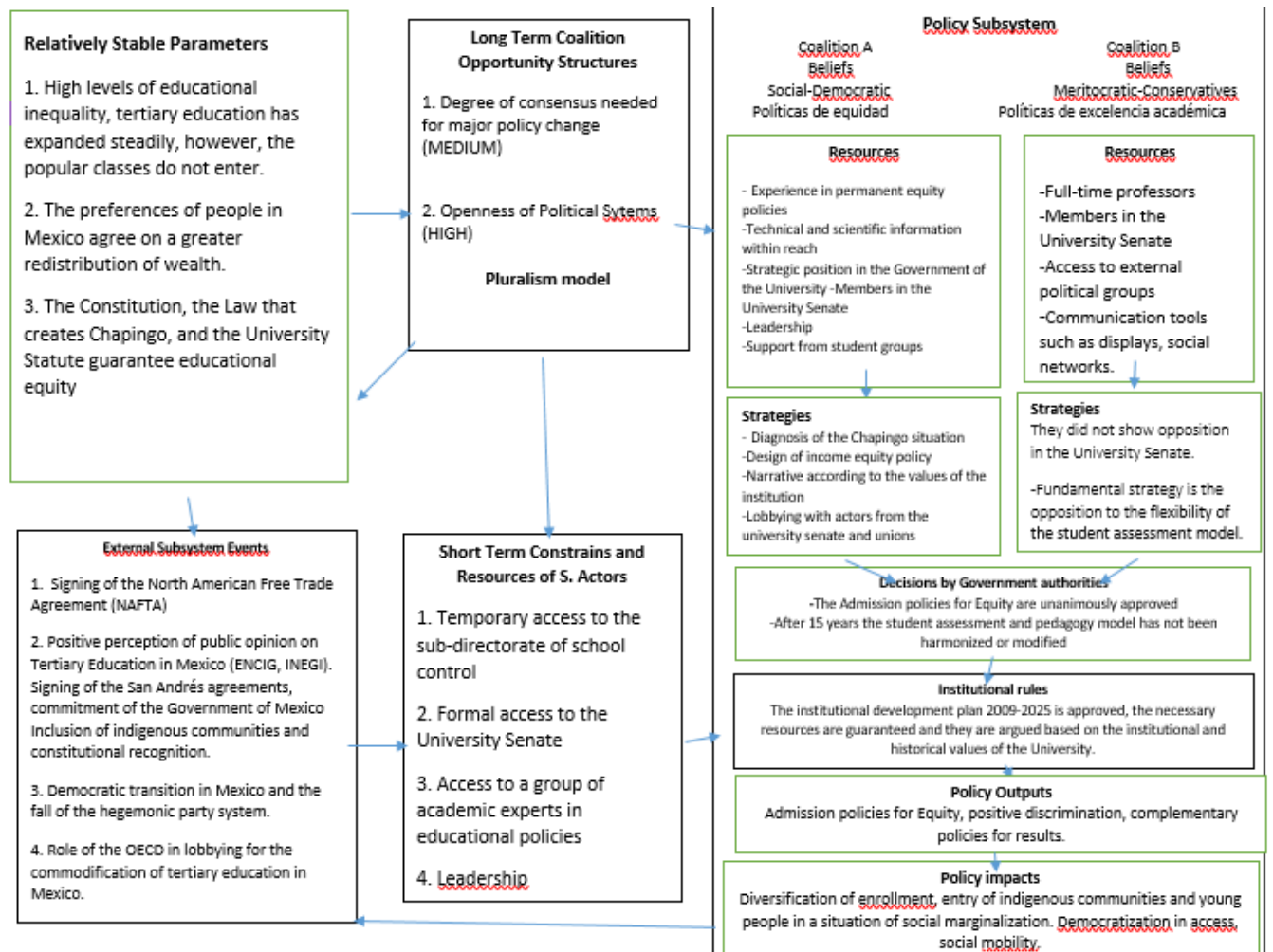
that their quality of life improved, 17% remained the same, and 3% feel that it worsened.

The UPOM (2021) report shows that 51% of UACH graduates earn between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per month, with 12% earning between \$20,000 and \$30,000, 3% earning between \$30,000 and \$40,000, and only 4% earning over \$40,000. On the other hand, 25% of graduates earn between \$5,000 and \$10,000, and 5% earn less than \$5,000 per month.

Meanwhile, the National Survey of Income and Household Expenditures (ENIGH, 2020) shows that the average monthly income of an indigenous language speaker in Mexico is 4928 Mexican pesos. According to an analysis by age group, Mexicans between the ages of 20 and 29 have an average monthly income of 5,755.33 pesos, while the average for those with higher education is 11,614 pesos.

Murillo García, Favio, & Montaña Ulloa, Paulina Yolanda. (2018) conducted a study of graduates from public and private universities in Mexico and found a significant disparity between the salaries of graduates from private and public institutions. University graduates from public institutions earn an average of 4,563.31 pesos, while graduates from private institutions earn an average of 19,285.42 pesos in their first jobs. This implies that 30% of UACH graduates earn below the national average income for higher education, while 70% earn above the average.

In summary, the policies of equality in social results show that 10% of the graduates managed to insert themselves in a postgraduate course, 80% consider that they have improved their quality of life, and 70% of the graduates with employment obtained income above the national average. It is essential to highlight that, although these data are positive, it is necessary to evaluate how they evolve in the long term and compare them with other cohorts to have a complete vision of the situation.



**Figure 27.** Flow Diagram of the Advocacy Coalition Framework Explaining the reform of Admission policies for Equity in the UACH

### Learning

Rivera del Río, R. and Buendía-Espinosa (2010) suggested that the university's admission model could be enhanced by implementing various strategies before and after the admission process. Strengthening the means of dissemination of the university, adapting them to the nature of each criterion, and monitoring students' academic trajectories could increase retention, terminal efficiency, and comprehensive training from full incorporation. The selection model implemented in the UACH in 2008 resulted in greater inclusion of indigenous and underprivileged students, diversifying the country's entities' participation and promoting income dispersion.



In their most recent evaluation (Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa, 2022), the authors note that breaking with the meritocratic logic in admission requirements and policies have guaranteed plurality, diversity, and democratization in access. However, they also acknowledge that it does not guarantee educational equity. The advocacy coalition has learned that seemingly open-door policies can become revolving doors that expel students without the right policies for equity in results. The missing policies can be found in the institution's pedagogical model and the monitoring of school trajectories. Policy entrepreneurs formally propose the coordinates to advance equity in the evaluation and pedagogical model in their most recent evaluation.

Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa's (2022) analysis reveals a significant disparity in graduation rates between students from indigenous communities (43%) and those from poor municipalities (38.46%), compared to selected students who scored above the admission exam average and those chosen by federative entity averages (60.41%). These findings highlight that students admitted through positive discrimination policies face more significant challenges in completing their academic cycle of high school and entering tertiary education.

One of the main unintended consequences of admission equity policies is the high dropout rate. While the institution has taken measures to promote equity in access to higher education and student retention, an explicit model of equity in results at the university level has yet to be established as an educational policy, despite Dr. Ribera's and his coalition's efforts, their influence is currently limited to high school. However, with the evidence and data from a second evaluation, they advocate for this issue at the university system level. Nevertheless, they face opposition from an opposing coalition that does not share their beliefs, hindering their progress.

In interviews with students and graduates, a term frequently used is "*academic terrorism*," highlighting the rigidity of Chapingo's evaluation system. Unlike other institutions, there is no possibility of repeating an academic year. Instead, students can only take retake exams, which are limited to one per year. Students have only seven retake exams available throughout their academic career, including three

years of high school and four years of undergraduate studies. Students who fail a retake exam could take a proficiency exam to accredit the subject, but repeating an academic year is not an option.

Furthermore, students and graduates of the Chapingo Autonomous University report that some classmates experience high levels of stress due to the rigor of some professors and the difficulty some students face in expressing themselves in Spanish or possessing the necessary prior knowledge.

In addition, students and graduates denounce the existence of cases of discrimination against students from indigenous communities by some professors who oppose recognition and identity policies. Interviewee number 6 mentioned *“Some professors use derogatory words to refer to students who do not speak the Spanish language fluently.”*<sup>11</sup> Interviewee number 3 also mention that the *“University has a historical culture of macho and racist professors, consequently the new admissions policies have also aroused racist attitudes in some professors.”*<sup>12</sup>. Despite the efforts to implement equity policies, discriminatory attitudes persist in some university sectors.

The students interviewed mainly criticize the student performance evaluation model, which they consider unfair and responsible for causing high levels of stress and pressure that lead some classmates to drop out of school. Students point out that this model comes from the school's military heritage, and teachers repeat patterns and behaviors acquired during their student training.

### Hypothesis

According to Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017). The Advocacy Coalition Framework has three groups of hypotheses, the hypotheses related to the Policy Change Hypothesis, the Advocacy coalitions hypothesis, Policy-Oriented Learning

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<sup>11</sup> . Interviewee number 6 answer What problems or new adversities arose with the admission of indigenous and low-income students?

<sup>12</sup> Interviewee number 6 answer What problems or new adversities arose with the admission of indigenous and new low-income students?

Hypothesis. In this section, I analyze which hypotheses show a relationship between the emerge of the equity policies at UACH in 2008 and the ACF of the Theories of the Policy Process.

#### *Policy Change Hypothesis*

- According to the Heinmiller, B. T., Osei, E. M., & Danso, E. (2021), the first policy change hypothesis suggests that in order for a major policy change to take place, there must be at least one pathway of policy change present. This hypothesis asserts:

*“Policy Change Hypothesis 1 Significant perturbations external to the subsystem, a significant perturbation internal to the subsystem, policy-oriented learning, negotiated agreement, or some combination thereof are necessary, but not sufficient, sources of change in the policy core attributes of a governmental program“*

Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017)

Hypothesis 1 There is a relationship between significant perturbations external to the subsystem, policy-oriented learning, as necessary, but not sufficient, sources of change in the policy core attributes of a governmental program.

My substantive interpretation of the relationship is given when it identifies at least two significant factors influencing the need for Reform: external disturbances such as implementing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the international pressure from the OECD to commercialize tertiary education in Mexico. These factors clashed with the perception of the majority of the UACH community, who identify as social democrats and are committed to social mobility through social rights such as boarding school, maintenance scholarships, and food scholarships. Criticisms of NAFTA and the commodification of higher education, and their effects on the field, are reflected in the Institutional Development Plan 2009-2015, a document that arises from the consensus of the university community and guides the institution forward.

Another external factor that indirectly influenced the Reform was the Mexican government's signing of the San Andrés agreements, which committed to including indigenous communities and their constitutional recognition. The UACH has been a

strong proponent of social inclusion and has demonstrated its commitment to this cause. These exogenous situations to the University were crucial factors but not enough for the Reform of 2008.

*Policy Change Hypothesis 2 “The policy core attributes of a government program in a specific jurisdiction will not be significantly revised as long as the subsystem advocacy coalition that instituted the program remains in power within that jurisdiction—except when the change is imposed by a hierarchically superior jurisdiction”* Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017)

There is no relationship in Hypothesis 2 between the policy core attributes of a government program in a specific jurisdiction will not be significantly revised as long as the subsystem advocacy coalition that instituted the program remains in power within that jurisdiction—except when the change is imposed by a hierarchically superior jurisdiction.

My substantive interpretation of the no relationship since the promoting coalition does not have political control over the rectory of the university. Instead, it is interpreted that there has not been a review of the policy in recent years because the promoting coalition has the support of a large part of the student community that is mobilized due to the expansion of their university rights and with members and supporters in the university senate. This has allowed the progressive development of the policies of university equity at different levels.

#### *Advocacy coalitions hypothesis*

*“Coalition Hypothesis 1. On major controversies within a policy subsystem when policy core beliefs are in dispute, the lineup of allies and opponents tends to be rather stable over periods of a decade or so”.* Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017)

There is a relationship between the lineup of allies and opponents tends to be relatively stable over a decade or so”.

My substantive interpretation of the relationship is that the coalitions have been stable in the last 14 years, and the promoting coalition with a more leading role has continued to evaluate its model and promote it. The opposition coalition has

managed to preserve the evaluation regulations and has not allowed substantive changes in the institution's pedagogical model.

*“Coalition Hypothesis 3. Actors (or coalitions) will give up secondary aspects of their belief systems before acknowledging weaknesses in the policy core”.* Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017)

A relationship exists between *actors (or coalitions) who gave up secondary aspects of their belief systems before acknowledging weaknesses in the policy core.*

My substantive interpretation of the relationship is that the analysis reveals a gap between the equity policy framework and the actual results of the pedagogical model, which the promoting coalition has been unable to address, resulting in over 50% of enrollment, and over 60% of indigenous communities, dropping out Chapingo each year. Nevertheless, the equity promoters have not abandoned their core beliefs and have attempted to implement instruments that would bring equity to the outcomes within their sphere of influence.

#### *Policy Oriented Learning Hypothesis*

*“Learning Hypothesis 1. Policy-oriented learning across belief systems is most likely to occur when there is an intermediate level of informed conflict between the two. This requires that: a) each have the technical resources to engage in such a debate; and that b) the conflict be between secondary aspects of one belief system and core elements of the other or, alternatively, between important secondary aspects of the two belief systems“.* Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017)

There is a relationship between an intermediate level of informed conflict between the two. Each coalition has the technical resources to engage in such a debate. The conflict is between secondary aspects of one belief system and core elements of the other or between important secondary aspects.

My substantive interpretation of the relationship is that the conflict between the promoting and opposition coalition is complex and multifaceted. The promoting alliance has access to technical information and has successfully implemented positive discrimination policies. However, the opposition coalition argues that the

university should prioritize academic excellence and maintain the current pedagogical model.

The discussion between the two groups centers around secondary aspects of equity policies, such as additional measures to combat student desertion, rather than the central aspect of modifying the pedagogical characteristics of the institution. The opposition coalition believes that the university could improve its model without sacrificing the quality of education. They suggest reviewing economic transfers and eliminating double scholarships for high school students receiving federal funding. They also point out that spending per student is excessive and has led to neglecting research and infrastructure.

Overall, the conflict between the promoting and opposition coalitions highlights the tension between promoting equity and maintaining academic excellence in higher education. Both groups have valid points, and a resolution would require a delicate balance between these two perspectives.

*“Learning Hypothesis 3 Problems for which accepted quantitative data and theory exist are more conducive to policy-oriented learning across belief systems than those in which data and theory are generally qualitative, quite subjective, or altogether lacking”.* Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017)

There is a relationship between accepted quantitative data and theory and policy-oriented learning. My substantive interpretation of the relationship is that the promoting coalition has successfully advanced the implementation of equity policies through its quantitative and theoretical evaluations. According to a study conducted by Rivera del Río and Buendía-Espinosa (2022), the progress of students who entered the university through positive discrimination policies has been monitored. Although the final efficiency of the Highschool is 49.8% and the dropout rate is 52.2%, 98% of the students who complete the baccalaureate continue their studies at the UACH. However, the graduation rates of students from indigenous communities and poor municipalities are lower (43% and 38.46%, respectively) compared to those selected above average in the admission exam and those chosen by federal entity averages (60.41%).

These evaluations have allowed them to adjust policies that allow equity in the results in the agricultural high school. As well as having evidence that allows them to defend the model and lobby the Senate to continue expanding the policies of results.

*“Learning Hypothesis 5. Even when the accumulation of technical information does not change the views of the opposing coalition, it can have important impacts on policy—at least in the short run—by altering the views of policy brokers”.* Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. (2017)

There is a relationship between the accumulation of technical information impacts on policy—at least in the short run—by altering the views of policy brokers. My substantive interpretation of the relationship is with the last evaluation of 2022, the promoting coalition expecting to make changes and adapt the results policies and guide the assessment as well as the Chapingo pedagogical model to one more in line with the educational equity model; This technical information can have an impact on the new administration (2023) and play an important role before the discussion of the new institutional development plan for 2025-2040.

## Conclusions

Why do actors in the Autonomous University of Chapingo promote social-democratic equity policies despite the absence of external pressures, especially when most public higher education institutions in Mexico promote meritocratic conservative policies? I applied the Advocacy Coalition Framework from public policy process theories to answer this question. Although no single variable can fully explain the phenomenon of equity policies at the Chapingo Autonomous University, it appears that a series of circumstances led the actors within the university to adopt a combination of strategies, which enabled them to promote equity policies at various levels.

To begin with, the relatively stable parameters as the high levels of educational inequality in Mexico. For example, the 4th and 5th quintiles with the highest incomes account for 69.3% of enrollment in public universities in Mexico, as an educational

policy has prioritized expanding enrollment rather than promoting equity. Despite efforts to introduce equity policies, evidence shows that access to tertiary education remains undemocratic. Population preferences for wealth redistribution and existing legal conditions that guarantee educational equity also affect this issue.

Moreover, external events have influenced the exercise of university autonomy and the motivations of UACH actors and coalitions. The signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the San Andrés agreements, which recognized the rights of indigenous communities, as well as Mexico's democratic transition, and the PRI government's fall after 70 years, created external conditions that could indirectly impact equity policies.

Furthermore, the UACH's pluralistic model and the democratic selection of authorities fostered a high level of openness within the political system. These factors, along with the coalition's experience in implementing equity policies, access to technical and scientific information, and a strategic position in the university's government, all shaped the outcome of equity policies.

It's worth noting that Dr. Roberto Rivera del Río played a leadership role in promoting equity policies at UACH. He conducted a diagnosis of the inequality situation, collaborated with academic specialists in educational equity, used a narrative consistent with the institution's values, and lobbied university faculty and unions to develop a new admission model based on equity.

The UACH coalition led by Dr. Ribera del Río implemented a unique strategy to reform university admissions policies, considering both stable parameters and external disturbances. This approach and commitment to equity, technical knowledge, and strategic positioning contributed to successful policy implementation.

The ideas that led to the 2008 reform were not developed in isolation but rather as part of a continuous learning process that has evolved throughout the history of the UACH. The concept of equity has always been present in the institution's ethos, dating back to historical events where university students allied themselves with



peasant and agricultural sectors to fight for their demands. These ideas coexist with other beliefs inherited from the institution's past, including a militarized model that still has a strong presence in the university. As a result, two main groups have distinct visions for the university's future: one promotes a more equitable and socially just institution, while the other prioritizes educational quality, meritocracy, and academic excellence.

It's worth noting that the university's origins lie in a militarized system, which is reflected in features such as the boarding school and the subsidized three-meals-per-day food service. This is also why the university is renowned for its academic rigor and strict evaluation.

The 2008 reform represents a significant milestone in the university's history. It reflects the ongoing evolution of the UACH and its commitment to addressing issues of equity and social justice. However, the tensions between the two groups with different visions for the university's future highlight the ongoing challenges faced by the institution as it continues to navigate its complex history and identity.

#### Limitations

The ACF framework is typically applied at a whole policy subsystem level rather than focused on a single educational institution like Chapingo. While using the ACF helped organize research, it can be criticized that the change did not originate in the entire policy subsystem but only in one tertiary education institution. The justification for this is that changes in Mexican universities are not homogeneous, as universities have autonomy and can determine their policies and governance.

However, applying the ACF analysis to the UACH presented difficulties in determining the role of university political parties, as these groups are not organized into identifiable political parties with defined platforms. Instead, they act individually and form alliances among themselves. The promoting coalition played a more prominent role than the opposition alliance, which operates more anonymously from its spaces of influence.

The democratic model of the UACH allows all actors to participate in the election of the rector, which also opens the possibility of external partisan influence. Some groups allege that members of Peasant Torch, a peasant organization linked to the Institutional Revolutionary Party, seek to destabilize the institution. In contrast, other groups link teachers and administrators to the National Regeneration Movement Party that currently governs Mexico.

The difficulty in identifying how the different actors come together is that groups accuse each other of political affiliation, even though members in formal positions publicly deny having links to these groups. This complicates the identification of the different groups and their political positions, making it challenging to understand the political landscape of the university.

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