

# **A synchronic analysis of university governance: a theoretical view of the sixties and seventies<sup>I</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

The study of the perspectives in the field of university governance has had increasing prominence, especially taking into account the unquestionable need to advance towards more efficient organizations, connected with the expectations that society has about them. Given this scenario, this work's central purpose was to conduct a synchronous analysis of the concept of governance and the constitution of university governments. As for methodology, we used secondary sources: a review of papers published mainly in English-language journals. The study focuses on the sixties and seventies and addresses the roots of the concept of university governance, delineating the actors in university governments, and the power relations between them. Among the key findings, it can be highlighted that the academic stratum, since the start of universities, has played an almost plenipotentiary role in university governments and, as a result, in the course of university development, and, as organizational complexity increased, it was necessary to incorporate new actors into management systems; all the above considering that two elements have been fundamental for the survival of these institutions: the legitimacy granted by society and the beginning of strategies in the management area.

## **Keywords**

Organizations – University – University governance – Participation.

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# **Análisis sincrónico de la gobernanza universitaria: una mirada teórica a los años sesenta y setenta<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Resumen**

*Estudiar las perspectivas en el campo del gobierno de las universidades tiene cada día mayor preeminencia, especialmente si se toma en cuenta la incuestionable necesidad de avanzar hacia organizaciones más eficientes, conectadas con las expectativas que sobre ellas tiene la sociedad. Considerando este escenario, el trabajo se ha planteado como propósito central realizar un análisis de carácter sincrónico del concepto de gobernanza y la constitución de los gobiernos universitarios. Desde el punto de vista metodológico se utilizaron fuentes secundarias: una revisión de papers publicados esencialmente en revistas de habla inglesa. El estudio comprende las décadas del sesenta y el setenta. Se centra en las raíces del concepto de gobernanza universitaria, en la delineación de los actores que participan en sus gobiernos y en las relaciones de poder que fluyen entre ellos. Entre las principales conclusiones, se pueden destacar como el estamento académico desde el principio de las universidades ha ocupado el rol casi plenipotenciario en su respectivo gobierno, producto de esto, en el correr del desarrollo y mientras la complejidad organizacional se incrementaba, es que fue necesario incorporar nuevos actores a los sistemas de gestión; todo lo anterior, teniendo en cuenta que dos elementos han sido fundamentales para la sobrevivencia de este tipo de instituciones, la legitimidad otorgada por la sociedad y los principios de estrategias del ámbito de la gestión.*

## **Palabras clave**

*Organizaciones – Universidad – Gobernanza universitaria – Participación.*

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## Introduction

Studying aspects of higher education may be considerably challenging and at the same time motivating. In this context, one of the aspects which require further analysis is university governance.

To begin with, it must be recognized that, before the decades under study, the term *governance* was applied in Anglo-Saxon literature systematically and steadily. At that time, the lineaments that are our object of study become clear and provide a notion of the constitution of the organizational structures of universities. If we compare the progress of current studies on university governance in Latin American institutions, it can be argued that the boundary of the topic and the object of study in the line of university governments are not clear about its birth and formation even though the term is in vogue.

This context justifies the choice of the period under study, since it is the moment when the search for a university identity which reflects the expectations of its various interest groups is encouraged. In addition, university management is undergoing a process of reaffirmation and consolidation of its own identity, conceptualization and scope, since to assert that the future – the success or failure of organizations – will always depend to a large extent on how they are managed is practically a consensus.

In this regard, it is useful to reveal what is meant by governance with some degree of accuracy, and it is precisely to that direction that the recent work by Ganga and Quiroz (2014) points – which, despite not addressing the synchronous period that interests us, may be considered reference information – when it quotes the translation by Sosa (2000), who notes that the term *governance* has appeared relatively recently, but refers to the term *governanza*, which is a neologism of the domain of political economy. According to specialists and the translator, the word is a correct concept

which adequately assumes a meaning which already existed in the general language of ancient Spanish.

For his part, Phelan (1960) argues that the university as a scholastic institution with its legal, social, political character, and specific organization, its rights, privileges and duties, stems from the associations of professors and students which emerged and gained legal recognition in the early thirteenth century; and since this genesis – and as associations grew, thrived, and became more complex – appropriate forms of government and, why not say it, of governance, have been required.

As a result of the dissemination of knowledge, there arises the need for professional programs to facilitate and make possible the access of the community to the world of education and knowledge; the functions of the university expand in response to the needs of the society in which it is embedded (CORSON, 1971; SUCHODOLSKI, 1974; BUSS, 1975).

Perennially challenged by their context, university organizations gradually become convoluted, as years pass and the imperative need for finding innovative formulas to properly manage them naturally arise. It is possible to affirm that they spontaneously evolved into the search for methods of governance which provided greater organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Baldrige (1973) complements very clearly and lucidly what is expressed a priori, stating that the bigger the university, the higher the levels of freedom in the work of academics and, therefore, the more difficult and cumbersome to manage will the institution be; if one adds to this the new tasks and functions that the university assumes, the work becomes something even more oppressive and challenging. It is then that the internal examination of the government, the strategic and operational planning, the organizational morphology, processes, management, and policies of the universities, becomes an attractive (from the theoretical and empirical research perspective), studiable and analyzable

phenomenon, clearly comparable to those found in national or local government systems (MOODIE; EUSTACE, 1971; MASON, 1978).

Taking into consideration all the elements highlighted in the environment indicated above, it is possible to say that the primary purpose of this work is to conduct a preliminary approach and a synchronous analysis of the governance and government of this very specific type of organization: the university; for this, we considered a time horizon comprising the sixties and seventies. We also consulted classical scholars on the topic, among whom we highlight: Clark (1972), Cohen, March and Olsen (1972), Cohen and March (1974), Pfeffer and Salancik (1974), Pfeffer, Salancik and Leblebici (1976). And, in addition, we referred to more recent studies, which – despite not addressing the period under study – channeled, contributed to, and significantly influenced the promotion of new ways of thinking, and thus became the foundations of the modern concept of university governance (TAYLOR, 2013; SHATTOCK, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2012).

From the point of view of content, firstly, we approach the broad concept of university governance; then this conceptualization is analyzed from the normative perspective; then, we approach the topic of university senates, and conclude with brief reflections on the most relevant or key aspects which are part of the concept of university governance.

## **Development**

### **University governance:** Basic conceptualization

It could be inferred that university governance has been implicitly or explicitly present since the origins of the university, if one considers this concept as the discipline responsible for analyzing and studying the various procedures, structures, processes, policies, and regulations through which

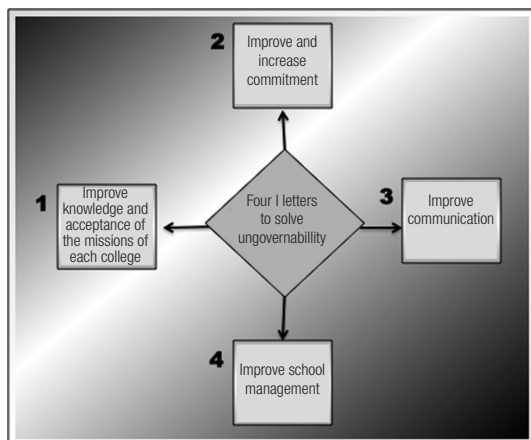
decisions are made and authority is exercised. Similarly, it is possible to affirm that, to address the evolution of the term *governance*, one must inevitably clarify in the first instance what its scope is and why such term defines better the reality of different universities; therefore, the term should be used regularly at the expense of other terms such as university management, which – in our view – is linked to another type of organizational construct, related to industrial models, as expressed by Jones (1986) and Hardy (1990), which are centered on empirical results aimed at meeting the needs of the market.

In this vein, it should first be recognized that, in the multiple relations within university organizations, it is normal and common that over time a separation between the authorities and the academics emerges, especially when top managers remain for too long in their positions (the principle of *alternation of power* often becomes secondary, since top managers convince themselves or are persuaded by their immediate surroundings that they are the only ones in the organization who are qualified or trained or who have been *called* to lead it, a very similar phenomenon to what happens in totalitarian political regimes), causing conflicts in governability. One possible solution to these situations is related to participation; in this line of analysis, Yoder (1962) considered that, to solve situations of ungovernability, it was necessary to generate spaces for participatory management intended to build and consolidate four main elements:

- The involvement of people,
- Communication,
- School administration (of students), and,
- Missions of colleges.

The aforementioned components are shown graphically in Figure 1.

**Figure 1-** Elements necessary to solve situations of ungovernability



Source: Own design, based on Yoder (1962).

In recent years, it has no longer been argued that, in order to implement these changes, there is a need for vigorous and recognized leadership in the university community, that is, for people with special talents and proven and genuine capability to act as guides toward the achievement of predetermined objectives. *University democracy*, considered necessary and essential for achieving the progress of the *university student* (KEETON, 1970), was proposed as a feasible scenario for the operationalization of changes. At that time, it was already recognized that the strength of top academic managers should be based not only on leadership abilities or competences, but also and especially on knowledge (*strategic cognition*), since one is talking about people who have to run organizations dedicated not only to the transmission of knowledge but also and especially to its generation, which should be relevant to the society in which the university is included. Under these circumstances, the predominance of politics – or, worse still, of demagogic politicking – decreases significantly, giving way to true meritocracy, where ample spaces for participation are given to interest groups and to the most competent persons.

For his part, a couple of years before, Faulkner (1958) had carried out an analysis of the formulation of the organizational objectives of universities. While he does not explicitly mention the term university governance, he makes it clear on what elements university policies are built and, therefore, the ones university governance should be responsible for, and highlights the following variables:

- Objectives of institutions,
- Formulation of objectives,
- Deliberation on institutional objectives,
- Curricula,
- Role of students,
- Role of members of the administrative stratum, and
- Role of college executives.

In order to provide greater clarity to Faulkner's proposals, in Figure 2, there is a table containing items associated with the respective variables.

Following this study, other authors expanded the number of entities which participate and have power within university governance and also analyzed the structures where governability is developed.

**University governance:** An analysis from the perspective of university regulations

The idea of regulations within universities has occupied the minds of many authors constantly; and it is present, for example, in the work of authors such as Heyman (1966), Sherry (1966) and Wright (1969), who dedicated themselves to investigating the regulatory processes of institutions. In their analyses, it can be observed how regulatory processes become increasingly complex and necessary – and evident as a way towards the confirmation of formal institutionality – for routine processes within universities. However, a question may arise: Why it is necessary to

**Figure 2-** Variables and actions associated with objectives

N.	Variables	Actions
1	Objectives of institutions	Should express the needs of the community and of clients (students).
		Should be constantly revised and re-established to be in accordance with the changing needs of society.
		Have to take into account the needs inherent to the diversity of their students.
		Should establish the bases for the correct formulation of university curricula.
2	Formulation of objectives	Have to take into account the experimental nature of learning. To this end, it is necessary to provide the necessary spaces to explore those elements everywhere on campus.
		It is clearly an activity of legislative character.
		Collegiate bodies should be responsible for formulating objectives.
	Deliberation on institutional objectives	It should be the responsibility of the board and respective colleges.
3	Curricula	Should clearly implement the objectives of the institution and college to which they belong.
4	Roles of students	Provisions should be made for them to participate in the formulation of the objectives of the colleges.
5	Roles of members of administrative stratum	Should participate in the formulation of institutional objectives
6	Roles of colleges executives	Should study institutional problems and advise managers on the formulation of educational objectives

Source: Own design, based on Faulkner (1958)

complexify structures and regulatory processes within universities? To answer, it is necessary to understand that, in the view of Moodie and Eustace (1971) and Mason (1978), as presented above, universities are organizations similar to countries or intermediate or local governments, due to the nature of their management. Thus, since in governments there are regulations which protect citizens from the crushing power of the state, there should also be similar regulations to be applied to the university

reality, intended to protect *university citizens* (members of the university community) from the *power residing in the stratum of authorities* (management teams). Sherry (1966) discusses *the university state*, and reviews the regulations typical of public sector universities.

Since the first question has been clarified, it is important to ask a new question: Who is the citizen of the university state? Emerson and Haber (1963) claim that it is the free nature of academics, who have rights and duties, which

converts them into true *citizens* of university governments.

Yet, although academics are relevant actors, they are not the only ones affected by the decisions of the structures of university states; students also form a stratum involved in the decisions of the central administration body and, in a very important and direct way, of the possible discretionality, for example, of professors (or teachers). From this stems the injunction of the circles of power or people with significant decision-making levels, who, without clear regulation, might become a threat to the freedoms of the different actors within the university. In this context, there arises the need for designing and implementing policies which prevent such situations from appearing in the university reality. Here a new question emerges: Who is responsible for this activity (the creation of regulations)? Sherry (1966) noted that, given its nature within the university, the entity or actor called to exercise this legislative activity is the academic, even though students are responsible for guaranteeing that this regulatory action develops properly; moreover, given their connection to the university reality, they are the primary source of information about the environment that bothers them and, therefore, the main input of this university's activity. Interestingly enough, neither Sherry (1966) nor Corson (1971) advocate giving students greater protagonism within university legislative processes, given their temporary character. Both rely on the idea that the student has neither experience nor maturity to make such decisions during the first years, when they are newly admitted students; and, when they acquire the necessary experience, together with some maturity (due to the time they have been in the entity), they must leave the institution to exercise their profession. It could be complemented that these arguments could also be extended to and demand validity from the executive and/or administrative level.

Nevertheless, it is clear that universities – in their growing need to ensure rights and

reaffirm their institutionality – gradually increased their regulations, which thus allowed securing and protecting the prerogatives of both professors and students. The latter, despite the thought expressed by the previous authors, did participate in the negotiation processes of the creation of new regulations by means of committees created to confer legitimacy to the process of change. Among the issues addressed by the students, the following stand out: curriculum and programs of study, participation mechanisms, among other academic and student issues concerning university policies (AUSSIEKER, 1975).

**University governance:** The role of university senates

In 1937, the University of New Hampshire constitutes a university senate, which reflects the universities' widespread need for legitimacy and participation of various strata in decisional processes related to the creation of policies of education, research and student matters. This model results from the pressures of students to have greater participation in university governments (HALLBERG, 1969; CORSON, 1971; MORTIMER, 1971; STURNER, 1971; JENKS, 1973; LONG, 1977). In this experience, the senate was composed of 59 faculty members, some committees and the university council. It had authority to make recommendations, and executive power in emergencies, but no legislative power (BLEWETT, 1938; MORTIMER, 1971).

Begin (1974, 1978), Aussieker (1975), Moore (1975), Kemerer and Baldrige (1975), Baldrige and Kemerer (1976), and Lee (1979), by analyzing the negotiation processes within university senates, discover another important interest group with great influence on decisional processes: trade associations, which exert great influence on decision-making for the defense of their interests.

To a greater extent, senates are more engaged in solving problems on university campuses and conflicts of interest between colleges than in what should be their real

purpose: the creation of university policies. Another weakness of these structures is academics' low participation. Many of them show little interest in political issues and prefer to devote themselves to their research activities and/or professorships (LASER, 1967; BALDRIDGE; KEMERER, 1976; SELTZER, 1974). Although they do not want to spend time in the management or discussions of university policies, they insist on the creation of spaces which allow them to express their opinions formally or informally, and thus try to stop any development which threatens their position in the institution (TOURAINÉ, 1974; KENEN; KENEN, 1978).

For their part, Lyons and Lyons (1973) investigate the distributions of power within two universities. The study sheds light on what happened to the senate of the University of New Hampshire: the need to incorporate the participation of students in decisional processes is hindered by the delegitimization of the authorities in power, who for years had made decisions without taking into account the opinion of students.

#### **University governance:** Some key elements

Initially universities worked in small associations; or, as expressed by Desy (1960), kept of their historical origin the sense of a community of professors and students organized to discover and to make shine, beyond the common scope, the truth in the arts and sciences for the *understanding* of the fundamental principles governing intellectual disciplines. This is the meaning of community, *academic monastery*, where decisions were taken together and in a gregarious way, which takes democratic expression to modern universities; where power stems from the basis, decisions are taken by collegiate bodies which have high positions in the organizational hierarchy supported by their merits as prominent academics. Understanding these elements, it is then necessary that decisions have legitimacy and the participation of their peers (LANE, 1979).

The passage of time implies changes in organizations and, of course, in their government systems; in this regard, Ikenberry (1971) argues that there are six elements to consider:

- Decline in individual and institutional autonomy,
- Increase in regulatory frameworks,
- Recognition of conflicts and how conflicts are managed,
- Decentralization,
- Challenges associated with professionalization; and finally
- Loss of the idea of mythic professors.

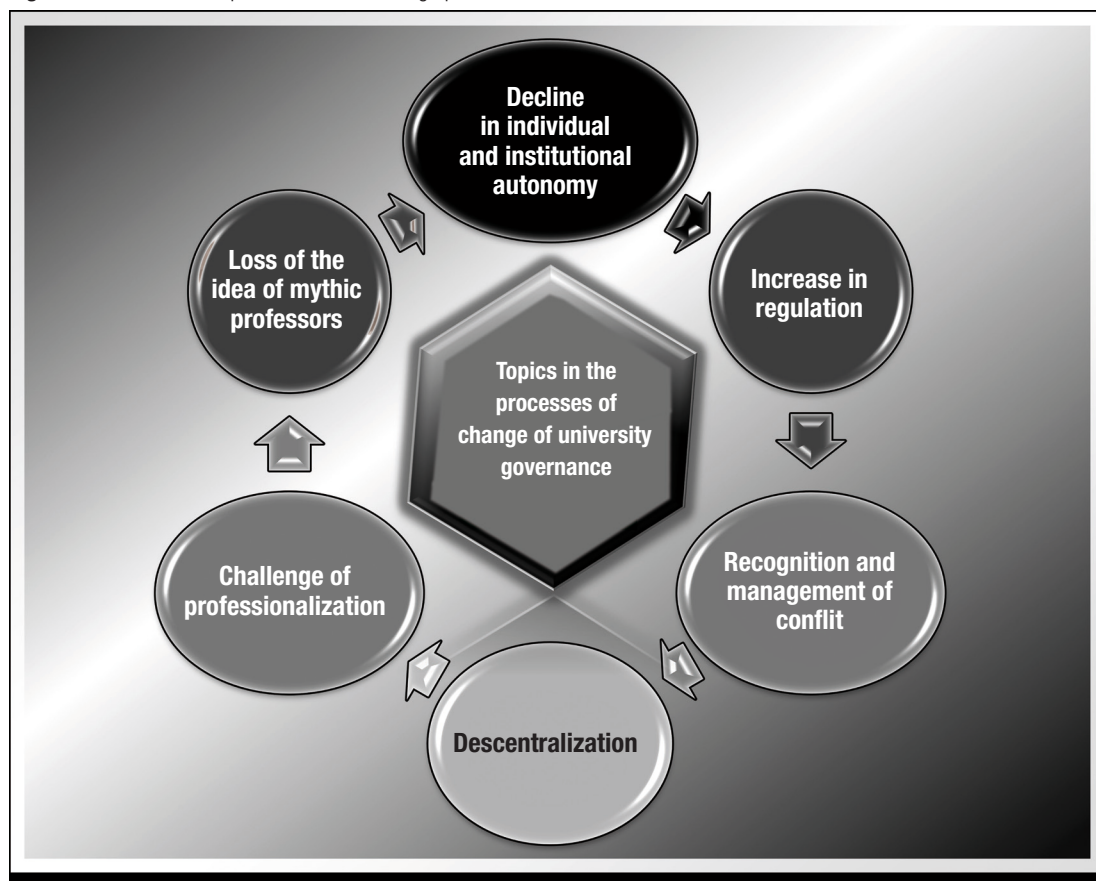
A graphical representation of the previously mentioned elements is shown in Figure 3.

Taking as reference elements the ideas developed above, it is possible to approach more concretely the view of university governance in the decades analyzed. In a broad sense, in the first instance, one could define the functions it performs as low or high level (BARRETT, 1963). Its mission transcends the classrooms, and the classes taught in universities impact on society as a whole; hence its unquestionable importance.

It is possible to clearly identify the different actors of power that coexist within universities. The most classic of them is the academic community, which, in the face of the increased complexity and size of the university, shapes a new actor: administrative authorities and unions and/or trade associations. Another relevant entity are the students, who, in the first instance, did not have any power or representation in the collegiate bodies which directed the course of the universities, but who gradually became able to validate their presence in institutions' decisional domain. All this, coupled with the need to legitimize university authorities, brought about the coveted spaces for participation. Similarly, though not much studied in recent decades, the senior board of



**Figure 3-** Predominant topics in structural change processes



Source: Own design, based on Ikenberry (1971).

directors could be mentioned as an outstanding actor, which exerts crucial influence on the long-term macro policies of universities. It is undeniable that the appearance of these interest groups generates conflicts which have significant impact on different levels and dimensions of the university, and that, to prevent this from becoming an insurmountable problem, it is necessary to create organizational routines for conflict resolution (ALLAN, 1971; BOYER; CROCKETT, 1973; KEETON, 1970).

In this analytical context, it could be argued that in the period studied it is possible to identify five elements: first, the elements of government (leadership, structures and procedures, policies and plans, decisional process); the so-called level or context (type

of institution, campus, college, department, schools, careers); the so-called administrative affairs (budget, academic agenda, educational objectives, academic and research policies, human development policies.); in addition, there is participation (how? when? where? to what extent?); interest groups have been left for last and distinguished between internal and external ones, for didactic purposes, given that the latter have been recognized as such since the eighties. All this is supported by the literature, with works such as Wandira (1981), Baldrige (1982), Grant (1983), Clarice, Hough and Stewart (1984), Drummond and Reitsch (1995), Ehara (1998), Pierson (1998), Gornitzka (1999), Eckel (2000), Hill, Green and Eckel (2001), Longin (2002), Trakman (2008), Mok

(2010), Krücken (2011), Chan and Richardson (2012), Kretek, Dragsic and Kehm (2013), Schick and Novak (1992), Greenhalgh (2015), Filippakou and Tapper (2015), to mention only some of the most relevant ones.

During the sixties and seventies, university governance is a construct through which first one can see the need to address the functions typical of the university system, differentiating academic activities from those related to institutional management in its various systems and subsystems, elements connected to *Level or Context* and to the *Elements of Government*; hence, to ensure the rights and duties of the actors within the university government, it is necessary to implement a regulation to address the complexity of the institutional reality. Thus, there arise the elements related to *Affairs* and whom these serve, the *Interest Groups*; however, in order to ensure the proper implementation of university regulations, inclusion processes are necessary in the decisional process *Participation*.

## Conclusions

Taking into account the context in which universities have been embedded and society's permanent requirements on them, these organizations have been engaged, since their genesis, in studying how they are managed or governed. This fact in itself represents a great opportunity and thus the concept of university governance emerges with great force. Such concept has become an object of very considerable study.

In this line, the present analysis is a tool that considers two dimensions:

- A temporal one, related to the period studied, and
- A spatial one, which is related to the geographic location of the universities analyzed, most of which are of Anglo-American origin.

For years, the academic stratum has been validated as a kind of non-formal plenipotentiary owner of universities and has been presented as a key element in historical analysis. Such stratum was tackled by creating mechanisms of participatory democracy and university regulations (the agency theory would call them alignment mechanisms). This element is genuinely true, its transcendence reaches the present time and is studied both in Latin America and in Anglo-Saxon universities (GORNITZKA et al., 2004; KIVISTÖ, 2007; BLEIKLIE; KOGAN, 2007; GANGA; BUROTTO, 2012; GANGA et al., 2015).

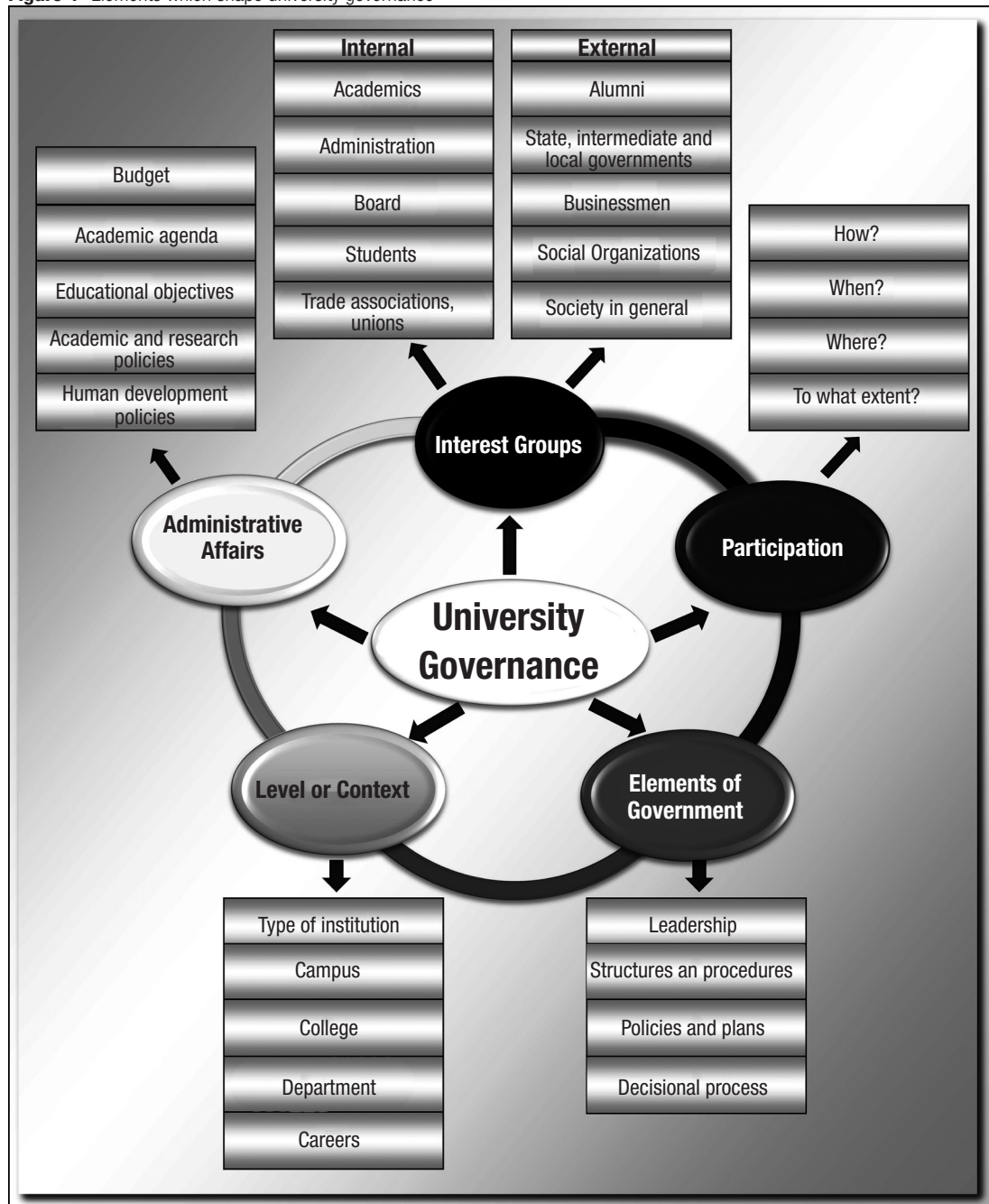
Therefore, given their status as open and complex systems, universities seek their survival by means of institutional legitimacy, which entails constant processes of change and inclusion (SPORN, 1996; MAASSEN, 2000; KRÜCKEN, 2011, KRETEK; DRAGSIC; KEHM, 2013).

In this order of things, this study makes it possible to understand how, in the sixties and seventies, universities were in full pursuit of an identity which would allow them to reflect the interests of the different groups which are part of it. As a result of that and of the need to assert their own interests, these groups were in constant negotiation processes in order to reduce the conflicts that hinder the processes of university management.

Today a very similar reality can be observed; as postulated by Rhodes (2001), the contemporary university is growing in numbers and knowledge; its complexity and the participation of its members is also increasing, and it is thus fully assuming its intellectual, professional and social function. All this implies an increase in organization, management and governance, and of course, in the forms of teaching.

However, before the 1960s, university management did not receive as much attention as the most direct academic issues, related to

**Figure 4-** Elements which shape university governance



Source: Own design, based on Ganga, Abello and Quiroz (2014), from Leslie (1975), Barret (1963), Moran (1971), Peterson (1971), Pfnister (1970), and Richardson (1974).

teaching, research, and extension. In the sixties and seventies, university management begins to gain relevance as the study indicates, which opens new possibilities for research in the following decades. The need to professionalize the activities related to management and thus the activities of university government also becomes evident, given the absence of programs focused on this domain in higher education (CORSON, 1960), a situation which is very similar at present, especially in Latin America.

Assuming the study of the sixties and seventies, we understand that today's universities have since added other concerns. Now they are, within their sphere of government, concerned not only with matters of academic and administrative management such as finance, personnel, and materials, but also with everything related

to planning and strategic vision (HARDY; LANGLEY; MINTZBERG, 1983; MINTZBERG, 1990; HARDY; FACHIN, 1996; TABATONI; BARBLAN, 2000; LORANGE, 2000) and other topics such as the entrepreneurial university model, proactivity and sustainability (CLARK, 2000, 2003; LORANGE, 2000).

To conclude, it should be said that, as it has been evident in the development of this work, this bibliographical inquiry lays its foundations and initial pillars on the historical background associated with university governance, but it also leaves new research opportunities open, especially to study the evolution of the decades after the 1970s.

Additionally, one can further expand the development and perspective of other authors involved in the issue which is our object of study.

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