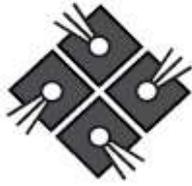


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**Theme:**

Independence of QA vis - à - vis different stakeholders

**Title**

“Accreditation of careers: quality standards and its effect on university autonomy”

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**Summary**

The Declaration of the World Conference on Higher Education (UNESCO, 2009) expresses that "the guarantee of quality is an essential function in the contemporary higher education and it must count on the participation of all interested parties ... it requires implementation of systems to warrant quality as well as evaluation guidelines and promotion of a culture of quality in the institutions." This study proposes to analyze the intervention of the State, universities, professional colleges and science academies to define standards of accreditation for courses of study in Argentina, during the period 1999-2006.

We put forward the hypothesis that the evaluation process and quality accreditation have produced a double redistribution of power in Argentine universities: "upwards", increasing the regulatory power of the State and "downwards", increasing the power of the academic elites power over the institutional power of the universities. The cases of medicine, engineering and architecture have been analyzed, focusing on the subject, the action and the object to which every standard of accreditation refers. Out of the analysis of the information, using the theoretical neo-institutional perspective (Guy Peters, 2003), the conclusion will elucidate the consequences this process produced over university autonomy.

## Introduction

From the Reform of Cordoba (Argentina) in 1918, the concept of university autonomy has been a great achievement and a key element to unification and democratization. Nevertheless, sometimes, this principle has tended to be implemented as an absolute sovereignty of universities rejecting any control and aiming at the isolationism with regard to the education national system and the society as a whole.

The increasing complexity of the National Systems of Higher Education – their massivity, the vertiginous growth of the private sector, the status of key variable for the development of the nations and its limitations in respect of a process of change related to the information and the knowledge society - has led the governments to giving up the position of *laissez faire* characteristic of the 80s. Furthermore, they adopted a new attitude developing policies that guard over the quality by means of evaluation and accreditation with the purpose of harmonizing expansion and quality, without interrupting the process of development of the institutions of higher education; but elaborating policies and carrying out instruments for their control.

Today, universities have become aware the fact that, though they must support their autonomy, they have to report back to society.

In the definition of the standards of accreditation of courses of study in Argentina, the Higher Education Act (1995) foresaw that the same ones should arise from a consensus between the Ministry of Culture and Education of the Nation (on behalf of “the State”) and the Council of Universities (on behalf of “the Universities”). In practice this was solved by giving intervention to "Professional Colleges" and to "Science Academies" too, completing this way the set of participants who intervened in the definition of the standards for every course of study. The above mentioned process implied consultations, interventions and decision making of the different participants, that it was re-edited for each course of study in which standards had to be defined. Each actor manifested a certain behavior of which its evolution is a matter of analysis of this investigation and shall be explained in the second stage of this investigation from theoretical approaches of the "neo-institutionalism".

The aim of this work is to analyze the evolution (1999-2006) of the positions taken by actors who intervened in the definition of standards of accreditation of the so considered courses of study of risk (Higher Education Act - Art. 43) in Argentina, taking into consideration the cases of medicine, engineering and architecture.

It is a qualitative study of descriptive – evaluative nature including the period 1999-2006 considering three courses of study: Medicine (1999), Engineering (2001) and Architecture (2006). Medicine was chosen for being the first experience produced in the Argentina through a process of definition of quality standards for the accreditation of courses of study of risk. Engineering was chosen for being the second experience, under the hypothesis that the curve of learning would have been important for having been the immediate experience later to the debut of the process of definition of quality standards for this type of courses of study. Finally, architecture was chosen for having been one of the last experiences produced in the matter. That is why these processes will be approached in three different disciplines and in different but contemporary temporalities, and where the same theoretical actors intervened: "State", "Universities", "Professional Colleges" and "Science Academies". The processes, in practice, may have turned out to be identical or could have changed one from the other.

The questions that this investigation seeks to answer are the following: Which was the level of participation of the State, the universities, the professional colleges and science academies in the definition of quality standards for the accreditation of the so considered courses of study of risk for the public interest in Argentina? How did the relations between these actors along the different processes of definition of quality standards for every course of study evolve? How was university autonomy affected by these processes? The investigation is yet on progress. However, we will present the achievements in this document.

## 1. About the level of participation of the involved actors

It has been deeply analysed so far only the case of medicine.

According to the charts developed in the following pages, it is possible to infer the level of participation of the involved actors and the permeability of the State in respect of the levels of consultation. Thus, the proposals that the State took as valid (and that the Ministry of Culture and Education stated in the resolution Ner. 535/99) can be clearly observed as well as those which were not validated. At the same time, it is possible to state the way in which every actor was positioned from its position of power, choosing for alternatives that changed between autonomy or regulation according to the measures proposed.

According to the above mentioned, the observations will be determined as

:

- **In favor of Autonomy:** Those appealing to the suppression of concepts, sentences or reports suggesting control or interference in tasks and functions unaware to the need of regulation. Furthermore, it includes the ones that imply a fixed position of the institution which is supported by the autonomy itself. For example, to decide to call the basic contents minimum, among other cases, clearing out the position of the institution and its decision regarding the course of study.

- **In favor of Regulation:** Those which semantically propose changes suggesting a major control, regulation or order. For example, asking for the modification of a *can* instead of a *must*; a *should* for a *have to*; or adding sentences which call for intentionality from regulation.

<b>Case I: UBA</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	1	57	1	1	4	64
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	1	57	1	0	2	61
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	1	2	3
<b>Amount of observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	6	1	1	2	10
<b>Case II: Lomas de Zamora and the Antropology Society</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Quantity of observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Case III: CEMIC</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents and Hour Minimum Charge</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>In favor of Regulations</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Quantity of observations considered at Resol. 535/99.</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0

<b>Case IV: Universidad de Morón</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Case V: U.C.A</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	24	1	4	0	29
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	24	1	4	0	29
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	1	1	0	0	2
<b>Case VI: Universidad de Belgrano</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	1	1	0	6	8
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	1	1	0	6	8
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99.</b>	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Case VII: Instituto Barceló</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	0	0	1	51	52
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	1	51	52
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Case VIII: Nacional</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>

<b>Academy of Medicine Vicente Gutiérrez</b>			<b>Formation</b>	<b>Doctor of Medicine</b>		
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Case IX- Alfredo Larguía</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	1	1	0	2	4
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	1	1	0	1	3
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	1	0	1	2
<b>Case X: Rómulo Cabrini</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	3	2	1	0	6
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	3	2	0	0	5
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Case XI: Alberto Agrest</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	0	0	2	1	3
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	2	1	3
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Case XII Jorge Manrique</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>

<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	2	1	4	14	21
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	1	1	4	14	20
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	2	1	0	7	10
<b>Case XIII Ministry of Health</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	1	6	1	3	13	24
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	1	1	0	1	3
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	1	5	0	3	12	21
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	1	1	0	7	9
<b>Case XIV Universidad Favaloro</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Case XV Colegio de Médicos de la Prov. de Bs. As.</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	7	0	4	2	13
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	6	0	3	0	9
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	1	0	1	2	4
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0

<b>Case XVI Universidad del Salvador</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	1	0	0	0	34	35
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	1	0	0	0	27	28
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	0	7	7
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	0	0	18	18
<b>Case XVII: the CRUP</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	0	0	0	27	27
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	0	0	0	27	27
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	0	0	0	6	6
<b>Caso XVIII The CONEAU</b>	<b>Minimum course hours</b>	<b>Basic Contents</b>	<b>Intensity of Practice Formation</b>	<b>Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Observations carried out</b>	0	5	1	2	57	65
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	0	2	1	0	0	3
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	0	3	0	2	57	62
<b>Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99</b>	0	1	1	0	30	32

CaseXIX Universidad de Cuyo	Minimum course hours	Basic Contents	Intensity of Practice Formation	Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine	Standards	Total
Observations to be carried out	0	4	1	0	57	62
In favor of Autonomy	0	1	1	0	22	24
In favor of regulation	0	3	0	0	35	38
Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99	0	0	1	0	5	6
Caso XX Universidad del Sur	Minimum course hours	Basic Contents	Intensity of Practice Formation	Scope of the Title of Doctor of Medicine	Standards	Total
Observations carried out	0	1	1	0	0	2
In favor of Autonomy	0	1	1	0	0	2
In favor of Regulation	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quantity of Observations considered at Resol. 535/99	0	1	1	0	0	2
<b>Total observations carried out</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>418</b>
<b>In favor of Autonomy</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>In favor of Regulation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Total observations considered at Resol. 535/99.</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>98</b>

Therefore, most universities that received the offer could show their analysis and points of view according to its possibilities or decisions. It is clear that it was an experience in which two fundamental values for the universities of the country (either public or private) were of risk and this had to do with the *regulation* and the *autonomy* of courses of study, of the Schools and finally of the institutions

Out of a total of **418** observations made by the participants to the document zero<sup>1</sup>, the State executed 98 amendments.

As from the changes realized in several of the standards, it can be seen that the State has considered the proposals and suggestions of the actors who represent several sectors. Yet, it can also be noticed that the State does not yield its position as regards the minimum course hours neither the intensity of the practice formation nor the scope of the title that remain without changes.

It was possible to observe that of a total of 20 actors who issued pertinent answers, **218** were in defense of an autonomous criteria and **200** of regulative character.

For the period of reference, there existed in the University System 36 National Universities, of which only four answered: Universidad de Buenos Aires; Universidad de Lomas de Zamora; Universidad del Sur and Universidad de Cuyo. In the case of Private Universities, there were **41** recognized institutions, of which five answered: Universidad del Salvador; Universidad de Belgrano; Universidad Católica Argentina; Universidad Favaloro and Universidad de Moron. As regards Private University Institutes, 2 out of 4 answered: the CEMIC and Barceló. As for State University Institutes, though answers were not registered, none of them offered careers related to the matter under consultation. Then, as for public organisms, CONEAU and the Department of Health of the Nation did answer. Regarding the science academies and professional colleges, the National Academy of Medicine answered- through five members - and the College of Medical Doctors of the Province of Buenos Aires did too. Finally, as for interested organisms, the Council of Deans of Private Universities answered too. In the end, **20** interested actors gave their answers.

The first analysis with regard to the tensions produced between the concepts of regulation and autonomy is born from the own genesis of the Higher Education Act (24.521). In effect, diverse positions on the scopes and limitations of the autonomy that universities should have arise from the debate opportunely produced at the Parliament to the moment of its treatment. Therefore it is debated whether only universities should grant academic degrees or qualification titles.

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<sup>1</sup> The document zero is that sent for consultation of the actors, The Secretariat of University Policies of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

Tension is solved in favor of university autonomy, authorizing universities the granting of academic degrees and qualification titles (art. 29 (f) of the Higher Education Act), but regulating the conditions universities will have to fulfill in the section of regime of titles of the above mentioned law (art 40 to 43). Especially article 43 turns out to be the one producing a greater tension at the moment of regulating. It is so that the faculty awarded to the universities to grant qualification titles is counterbalanced with the regulation of the minimum course hours, the basic curricular contents and the intensity of the practice formation. Nevertheless, the same article foresees that this regulation, which materializes through the Ministry of Culture and Education of the Nation, should have a previous agreement of the Council of Universities to be then accredited by the quality agency created by law. (CONEAU)

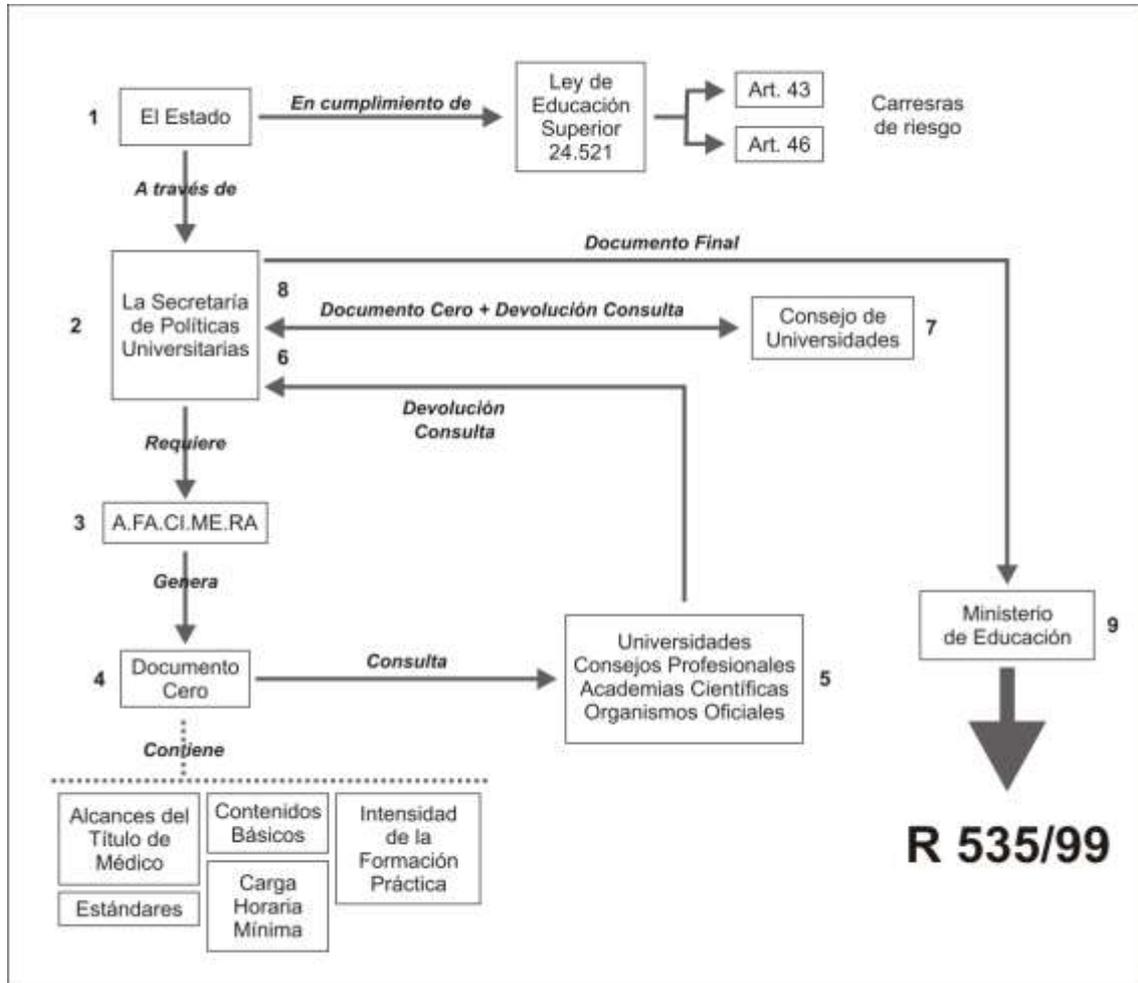
Out of the evaluation of the answers of the consulted actors, it arises that the weight of a major support as for the security of the autonomy is realized by the private universities supported by the public ones though from different positions.

The same analysis which appears here for the case of medicine will be repeated for the processes of definition of quality standards for the careers of Engineering and Architecture. One seeks to establish hereby a comparison between 3 processes of definition of quality standards to determine if the experience obtained in this first process of Medicine served as a learning to influence the later ones and how this learning could be seen expressed in the following processes.

## **2. About the evolution of the relations between the actors involved along the different processes of definition of quality standards of every course of study**

As in the previous point, it has so far been analysed the case of the regulation of the careers of medicine. There remains the analysis of the cases of engineering and architecture to be able to conclude how the relations evolved between the involved actors along these three processes of regulation.

As an advance of the investigation carried out, we show a description of the process of consulting for the case of medicine.



In the 90s in Argentina, the beginning of a process of change and transformation of the system of higher education, especially the university subsystem was carried out. The process of reform began in 1993 and reached its maximum point when the Higher Education Act (24.521) was passed. From that moment and under the new regulations, what was established in their respective articles was given shape.

In the first place, the Council of Universities (CU)<sup>2</sup> is created. In its different meetings the members shall constitute and debate the different topics mentioned in the Higher Education Act.

Among other things, the article Ner. 43<sup>3</sup> was included as a topic of work in the Minute Ner. 4 of the Full Meeting Agreement of the CU realized in December, 1996. In that moment Medicine was named as a career of risk, and therefore, it is included in the list of those careers in which the State must assure the education quality in function of certain parameters. Then the arrival of the *document zero* that it would be realized by A.FA.CI.ME.RA<sup>4</sup> is awaited. During the Full Meeting Agreement Ner. 7 of the CU, December 1998, it was agreed to transfer the document zero already done to the Academic Affairs Commission of the CU, where they would analyze its contents. In this meeting, several interventions are carried out on the part of the actors and among them it was very important the intervention of the Dean of the UBA, Dr. Shuberoff, for whom it was of a fundamental importance to consult to other sectors as the Interuniversity National Council (CIN)<sup>5</sup> or the Rectors' Council of Private Universities (CRUP), because as he says textually: "the associations not always answer to the needs of the careers ". Furthermore herein, an invitation to all universities will be carried out in order to check the document and state their opinions about this matter. Using this logic and with a term that contemplated from January until June 1999, in only six months, the university institutions interested, and then the Academic Affairs Commission of the CU – formed by a Commission of Experts named at the proposal of the Secretary of University Policies – had to analyze and transcribe suggestions and

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<sup>2</sup> Conformed by 21 representatives from state and private universities and presided by the Secretary of University Policies.

<sup>3</sup> The article 43 is the one that establishes that the Ministry of Culture and Education, in agreement with the Council of Universities, is the one which must determine the basic contents, the intensity of the practice formation of the so considered careers of public risk. Likewise it orders that the above mentioned careers will have to be accredited from time to time by the National Commission of Evaluation and University Accreditation or by private entities constituted to this end due recognized. Also it states that the Ministry of Culture and Education shall determine with restrictive criterion, in agreement with the Council of Universities, the list of such careers as well as the professional activities saved exclusively by them.

<sup>4</sup> AFACIMERA is the Association of Faculties of Medical Sciences of Argentine Republic

<sup>5</sup> The CIN is the collegial organ formed by the Deans of the state universities in Argentina

observations of the document which would conclude being the regulatory frame of the first career labelled “of risk”<sup>6</sup>

This way it is re-elaborated the final document that will end up by taking form under the resolution 535/99, in which the standards for the Career of Medicine are decided in Argentina.

### **3. On the way in which the university autonomy was affected by these processes**

Even though the deep analysis of the processes of regulation of the careers of engineering and architecture has not been concluded ,we have advanced in a comparative analysis of the level of autonomy that the regulated standards admit for each of three careers analyzed. That is why we have taken as a unit of analysis the textual contents of the approved standards in the ministerial resolutions for every career.

Thereby, we have arranged the standards of every ministerial resolution (corresponding to every career), in a table with the following information:

- Number of standard (in correlative numeration as they appear in the resolution);
- Action that happens in the standard, determined by the verb that it orders it
- Subject mentioned (or not) in every standard, understood as institutional actor/s on whom the potential responsibility of fulfillment might relapse.
- Matter or concept on the one that regulates the standard;

Then we have defined a table with the purpose of providing it with a quantitative value up to the level of autonomy admitted by each standard, pursuant to the following table.

Scoring Table		
ACTION	MAY - SHOULD	1
	SHOULD	0
SUBJECT	NOT DEFINE	1
	DEFINE	0
MATTER	CONCEPTUAL	1

<sup>6</sup> The Academic Affairs Commission sends its members an analyzed version by the Experts Commission called by the SPU, dated April 1999. The same was formed by Samuel Bluvstein, Eduardo Bumaschny, Osvaldo Cardozo, Mario Cherjovsky, Carlos Fernandez, Abraham Sonies, Georgina Torres Nieto de Mercau and Amanda Galli.

The higher the score is, the higher the degree of autonomy is. This way, the major degree of autonomy that every analyzed standard can obtain is 3 points and the minor is 0.

When the obtained points added to the standards of every resolution, the number of total points is obtained.

To establish the degree of autonomy of each one of the careers, the number of total points obtained is related to the quantity of standards that each of the resolutions establishes.

The quantitative synthesis that was possible to obtain from the qualitative analysis gave the following results:

CAREER	Total Scoring	Quantity of Standards	Relation Scoring - Standards
MEDICINE - Res. 535/99	167	126	1.32
ENGINEERING - Res. 1232/01	75	63	1.19
ARQUITECTURE - Res. 498/06	70	63	1.11
MEDICINE - Res. 1314/07	89	67	1.46

As a preliminary synthesis of the quantifiable part of the work, it is possible to say with regard to the relation between accreditation of careers and university autonomy, that the quantity of standards does not define the degree of autonomy.

In fact, the levels of major autonomy are achieved by both resolutions that have more standards, Medicine Resolution 535/99 and Medicine Resolution 1314/07.

Likewise, the best relation between autonomy and quantity of standards is observed in the resolution that has the intermediate number of standards, that is to say Medicine Resolution 1314/07. It can be found that the key of the regulation is in the draft of each of the standards. The careers with fewer standards - engineering and Architecture - in many cases include several articles regulated inside each of them.

## **Conclusions**

The problem of evaluation and quality assurance in higher education constituted one of the main issues in the agenda of higher education reform in Argentina during the 90s. Therefore, a new agenda for higher education was originated in order to review the bond between the State and society and the relation between the State and universities. This involved the introduction of systematic procedures of evaluation nationwide, which in time meant a redistribution of the relationship among the authority of the State, the authority vested in the academic elites (and their institutions) and that one exercised by the pertinent markets and their agents.

Thus, due to these conditions, the new laws for higher education in Latin America from the beginning of the 90s, include among its prime rules the principles of evaluation and accreditation of quality standards.

The accreditation of courses of studies of risk, due to how they affect public interest, were inscribed in Argentina (1999-2006) within such framework. The Higher Education Act (1995) considered that the quality standards for the accreditation of such courses of studies had to derive from the consensus between the Ministry of Culture and Education (representing the actor "State") and the University Council (representing the actor "Universities"). In practice, "Professional Colleges" and "Scientific Schools" were also given intervention, which completed the set of actors involved in this process for each course of studies. In this study the particular case of medicine shall be analysed, which shall later on be extended to the cases of engineering and architecture.

In the case of medicine, the state decided to entrust the first draft of the document of standards to the Association of Medical Schools of Argentina (AFACIMERA) so as to then send such document for consultation with universities, professional colleges and academies. Out of the number of enquiries made for the case of medicine, there appears that the level of involvement of the actors in question had been extensive and plural. It is also evident that institutions have made observations both in favour of the autonomy of universities, and in favour of the regulatory power of the State, with a slight preponderance in favour of university autonomy (52% of total observations). However, when evaluating the observations according to the actor questioned, we find that in the

case of universities there is a greater amount of observations for autonomy (65%). It thus seems logical to conclude that there is a resistance to the redistribution of power at stake in this process, which in time explains the behavior of the universities, in political terms, from the “rational actor” theory.

Once queries and responses were exhausted, the State again intervenes in order to decide which of the observations will take place and which will not. This shows permeability with less than a quarter of the comments received (23%), not yielding to its alleged original demands on minimum course hours, intensity of practical training or the scope of the degree. That is when the final document of quality standards for the accreditation of medicine emerges.

The agreement of the University Council obtained after such document will finally derive in the Resolution issued by the Ministry of Education, granting legitimacy to the intervention of the State and the academic elites when defining quality standards.

But in which way would these regulatory interventions affect university autonomy?

A first analysis of those ministerial resolutions that established the quality standards for the accreditation of medicine, engineering and architecture help us draw some preliminary conclusions.

It can be verified, from the analysis of the standards defined by each ministerial resolution, in each course of studies, that the defined number for each course does not elucidate up to which extent the autonomy of universities is affected. What turns out to be a key element is the language of each and every one of the standards.

Some of the key factors for the writing of the standards were:

- The subject of regulation: as it may or may not be defined in the standard.
- The topic or object of regulation: as defined in a conceptual or operational way. The analysis could also be extended as a regulation of product, process or input.
- Regulatory action: determined by the verb used when drafting the standard: "may," "should" or "must."

These are therefore the first findings of the investigation which is still in progress. An in-depth analysis of the process of definition of the standards of quality for the cases of engineering and architecture will favor the extension of the conclusions about the way in which the autonomy of universities has been affected after the intervention of the State and the academic elites.

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