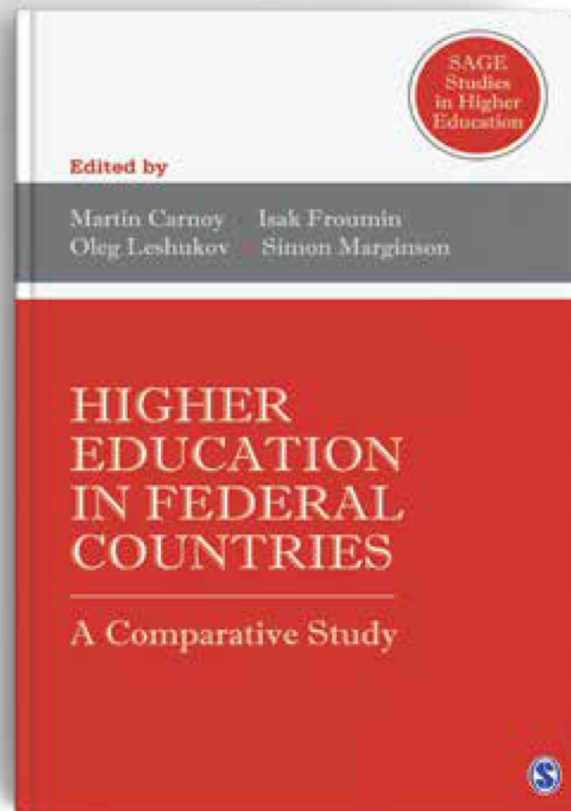


Higher Education in Federal Countries

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The questions

Federalism is a system of government in which sovereignty is shared, in most cases on a legal/constitutional basis, between a central governing authority and constituent political units such as states or provinces.

1. What happens with *higher education* in countries that have federal systems of government? How has federalism shaped the evolution of higher learning, credentialing and research?
2. What are the special problems, challenges and advantages of higher education within a federal setting?
3. In general, do multiple layers of government help or hinder?
4. Do the different federal systems of higher education have something to learn from each other?
5. What might be the optimal model for multi-layer governance of a national system of higher education in country in which the regions play a significant role?

The study

- Initiated and financed by Higher School of Economics, Moscow, originally in order to compare federalism in Russian higher education with other countries;
- Topic has rarely been researched. Only Brown et al (1993)
- Leading scholars approached in nine countries, authors paid for country chapters, long high quality chapters resulted;
- Project developed by Isak Froumin (HSE), administrative coordination by Oleg Leshukov (HSE), editing by Martin Carnoy (Stanford) and Simon Marginson (UCL IOE)
- Significant reductions of chapters for length in final stages
- Book has good original information on the national cases as well as addressing federalism

D. Brown, P. Cazalis and G. Jasmin (eds.) (1993). *Higher Education in Federal Systems: Proceedings of an international colloquium held at Queen's University, May 1991*. Ottawa: Renouf Publishing.

Criteria for selection of case study countries

- (1) High level of heterogeneity of regional development;
- (2) Relatively large scale of country and higher education system; and
- (3) A division of responsibility for higher education between national and regional levels of power.

Using these criteria the main cases selected were Australia, Brazil, Canada, India, Germany, Mexico, Russia and USA.

China was added, because although it is formally a unitary rather than federal country it meets criteria (1) to (3)

Country case studies covered

- The overall context of national-regional relationships and federalism;
- National-regional relationships in higher education, in terms of legal, economic and other aspects;
- An evaluation of the implications of the country's model of national-regional relationships for the higher education sector, including the effects on regional higher education systems.

The inquiry is focused on higher education at level 5A (degree programs) in terms of the UNESCO/OECD definition

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Case study countries and authors

Australia - S. Marginson

Brazil - R. Verhine and L. Dantas

Canada - G. Jones and C. Noumi

China - R. Wang and P. Yang

Germany - U. Teichler

India - J. B. G. Tilak

Mexico - I. Ordorika, R. Rodríguez-Gómez and M. Lloyd

Russia - I. Froumin and O. Leshukov

United States - M. Carnoy, A.L. Antonio and C. R. Nelson

A planned UK study did not eventuate because the author was ill

Drivers of variations in federal systems

- Ongoing differences between nations in political culture and the role of the state, shaping distinctive approaches to government, power sharing and education
- Differences between nations in the mode of federal or quasi-federal relations—in the legal shape of federalism, norms of autonomy, location of decisions according to level of government, approach to equity between states/provinces, and the means of national coordination and control
- Political culture and mode of federalism may change over time, especially through major shocks such as wars and economic depressions

Countries in the study

Limited liberal states (separation of powers)	Comprehensive states (no state/society split)	Post-colonial states (still emerging)
Originated as states, constitutional framing of federalism, dual sovereignty	Unitary polity. Political framing of federalism or devolution under strong central control	Unstable movement between liberal and comprehensive state forms, and between central/regional power
Australia, Canada, USA Germany (a social market cousin)	China, Russia	Brazil, India, Mexico
Relatively equal regions except in US. In Australia and to some extent US, economic power used to centralise. In Canada and Germany the provincial/central balance is stable	Major variations between regions in average income. Central state has more through-going control in China than in Russia	All three have strong regional traditions and marked inequality between regions. In Brazil the central state asserts itself from time to time as reformer

Characteristics of federal systems

	Nation-state type	Foundational form of federalism	Main mode of federal coordination	Inequality between states
Australia	Limited liberal	Federation	Legal/fiscal	Very low
Canada	Limited liberal	Federation	Legal	Moderate
United States	Limited liberal	Federation	Legal	High
Germany	Social market	Confederation	Negotiation	Very low
Russia	Comprehensive	Mostly unitary	Political/fiscal	High
China	Comprehensive	Unitary	Political/fiscal	High
India	Post-colonial	Mostly unitary	Political/legal	High
Brazil	Post-colonial	Tripartite fed	Political	High
Mexico	Post-colonial	Fluctuates	Political/fiscal	High

Federal systems and higher education

	Formal responsibility for higher education	Real political control of higher education	Public financing	Private sector regulation	Systemic stratification and diversity (S & D)
Australia	States	National	National	National	high S low D
Canada	States	More state	Shared	State	mid S mid D
United States	States	Shared	Shared	Deregulated	high S high D
Germany	States	Shared	Shared	State	low S binary
Russia	Shared	Central	National	National	high S high D
China	Shared	National	Shared	National	high S mid D
India	National	Fluctuates	Mostly state	State	high S mid D
Brazil	Shared	More state	Shared	National	high S high D
Mexico	More national	Fluctuates	Shared	State	high S mid D

The cases: limited liberal states and Germany

- In Australia national taxing power has overwhelmed state government, with an almost 100 per cent takeover of policy, financing and regulation in higher education. 'Federal fiscal imbalance'. Facilitated marketization and uniformity
- In Canada the provinces (states) remain primarily in control with the national role confined to specific areas such as research and regulation of international education
- In the United States the national government intervenes in areas such as student loans and research funding. The states remain central to public HEIs but now lack adequate fiscal capacity. Independent accreditation
- In Germany the lander and national government are in continuous negotiation in this sector. Fluctuating division of labour, some movement towards national power at present

The cases: comprehensive states

- Russia gestured towards decentralization in the 1990s but has now reverted to strong central control. There is considerable variation in the institutional landscape between regions, national power is uneven, as is quality
- In China there is a long tradition of advanced devolution under central control. The national government finances the World-Class Universities but has devolved responsibility for other HEIs to the provinces, while maintaining fiscal control. This is another example of ‘federal fiscal imbalance’ where there is lack of fit between the division of governmental responsibility and the division of governmental capacity. Wang and Yang call it the ‘commanding heights strategy’

The cases: post-colonial states

- In all three national government controls and finances a small sub-sector of universities, mostly elite. The private sector is the principal vehicle for massification, generating low quality.
- India, where private sector regulation was decentralised to state level, has corruption and systemic incoherence
- In Brazil the national government regulates the private sector, and the sector's expansion is a tool for asserting the national role. There is a promising trend to national approaches to HEIs and R&D but comprehensive reform is yet to occur
- In Mexico there have been sharp swings in authority between the two tiers. Decentralised regulation of the private sector fragments higher education and renders policy incoherent.

Conclusions (1)

- Each federalism is context-nested and distinct, there are no general laws, and no models or optimal cases
- National emphasis on WCUs, and in general high stratification, can undermine state-level provision
- Historically the nation-state was often the moderniser. This may still be true in the post-colonial states, Russia and USA. It was true but is no longer self-evident in Australia.
- Over-centralisation constrains China, Russia, Australia
- Private sector massification in post-colonial countries has left a trail of problems in its wake; these are worsened within federal structures because harder to make visible and solve. Cross-cutting national intervention is the way forward

Conclusions (2)

- Germany and Canada might have the best balance between (1) national coordination, and (2) making decisions close to higher education on the ground and to local stakeholders. Arguably, federalism makes higher education better in those countries
- The USA could restore an effective federal system in higher education if it rebuilt state finances, via grants to states or the part decentralisation of tax/spend capacity
- China has the potential for an effective division of labour but needs to rebalance national and provincial power
- Australia, Russia, Brazil, India and Mexico have yet to find effective ways of consistently turning multi-level educational government into an asset in higher education