

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Actions and Criteria for Increasing Equity

Sandra Mireya Ramón Melo



European Masters in Higher Education (HEEM)
Faculty of Education, Institute of Educational Research

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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Sandra Mireya Ramón Melo

Universitetet i Oslo

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Abstract

Equity strategies for increasing the participation of disadvantaged students in higher education are on the agenda of many governments. However, particular contexts may create a number of regulations addressed to enhance participation, but little debate on the mechanisms to increase equity.

This thesis is a case study that analyses the contribution that a number of strategies has had in relation to the access of disadvantaged students at the University of Antioquia, a prestigious public university in Colombia. This university is run under development plans and policies that seek to meet the needs of the society, characterized by socioeconomic inequalities. In order to examine the strategies, it was paramount to identify who the policy makers in the institution are, and how the dynamic of decision making works. Data was collected through individual interviews, and national and institutional documents.

Based on the neoinstitutional theory approaches, the thesis examines the process of legitimacy and institutionalization that shape institutional policies regarding access and equity. Findings of this thesis show the tendency of a politicized steering model at the University of Antioquia. This model shows a great influence in the success and failing of the strategies that pursue equity, due to it leaves the university without the support to strengthen strategies. Little debate and low commitment by governments have led to major ambiguities and lack of clarity in a complex context where other groups of disadvantaged students emerge, while the traditional lower socioeconomic strata students continue reporting low participation in higher education.

Keywords

Equity, access, disadvantage students, socioeconomic strata, equity strategies, affirmative action.

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved child, Nicolas.

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Abbreviations

ASCUN	Colombian Association of Universities
ACCES	Quality Access Program to Higher Education
CAN	National Council of Accreditation
CERES	Regional Centers of Higher Education
DANE	National Department of Statistics
ECAES	Quality Exam of Higher Education
HE	Higher Education
ICFES	Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education
ICETEX	Institute for Educative Credit and Technical Studies Abroad
MEN	Ministry of Education
PEI	Special Program of Access
ISBEN	Identification System of Potentials Beneficiaries of Social Programs
SNIES	National Information System of Higher Education Institutions
SPADIES	System Analysis and Prevention of Attrition in Higher Education Institutions
TEIs	Tertiary Education Institutions
USC	University Superior Council
UdeA	Universidad de Antioquia

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Introduction and Background

1.1 Overview

During the last two decades, reforms in higher education have taken place in Colombia. Reforms are meant to increase coverage and quality on all levels of the education system, in order to meet the needs of society. These reforms have met characteristics of an unequal context, with big differences in social classes. Concerning inequalities, public higher education institutions promote the inclusion of students who cannot afford tertiary education. This thesis analyses institutional policies, and actions that facilitate entrance to higher education to disadvantaged students at the University of Antioquia, Colombia. The study draws attention to how the equity strategies are shaped according to the context.

This chapter, *Introduction and Background*, provides the main objectives of the study and introduces further sections of the thesis. It starts with an approach of the background of the thesis; followed by the topic and purpose for carrying out the study. Later, the chapter presents a brief introduction of the theoretical framework, research questions and the research methodology; followed by the significance of the thesis. The last part of the chapter defines the concept of equity, and provides brief definition of affirmative action as an equity strategy. The chapter ends with the outline of this thesis.

1.2 Background of the study

The growth of students from secondary education, the private and social benefits of tertiary education, the broaden of disciplines, the new types of institutions, among others, has brought a high demand of students interested in taking further education. According to Mincer (1989) the increase of students is a respond to a need for more skilled individuals in

the labor force, in pursue of the economic growth of society. Economic growth motivated reforms on national policies which have enhanced the expansion of public and private HE institutions in order to face the demands, and pursue the coverage target. Burton et al (2008:2) argue that HE institutions compete for students, donations, governmental grants, and so forth,- sometimes as part of their educational mission but sometimes simply as revenue sources-. Students compete for entering in institutions as well, for instance, by taking admission exams.

Castells (2001) suggest that many countries in Latin America have historically had an elite-oriented education system. Hence, reforms of national policies, the increase of students, and expansion of HE have resulted into a high demand of students from the so called middle class and low class. In order to reach social missions, HE institutions have developed strategies to face inequality of students regarding socio economic strata. Burton (2008) highlights the social mission of HE in providing access to education, regardless of family circumstances. An important need-based element for this mission is providing access to poor students who could not afford higher education. Therefore, HE institutions, especially public universities, have built institutional plans that seek an adequate level of equity. According to this, Aguirre and Pabón (2008) suggest that plans and actions taken in Colombia started in the 90s, on improving access possibilities for disadvantage students. Constitution of 1991 marked the current structure of Colombian system. Higher education system was therefore influenced by the new constitution. Hence, the new guidelines were set up, such as the Higher Education Law 30 of 1992, which structures higher education system. This thesis focuses on higher education system period after 1991, due to the national support for access and admission criteria for the inclusion of afrocolombian students, minorities, and poor students from distant places with difficult access. Higher education institutions in Colombia, by virtue of the autonomy conferred, have developed plans in order to increase coverage and minimize inequality. Institutions offer aids for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, such as scholarships and rewards. In despite of good intentions by higher education institutions, student aids and schemes seem not to be enough or appropriate designed to solve problems of access and retention of

students. Though the attempt of some universities, many plans have resulted weak or discontinued, due to the change of planning coordinators, funding, weak on the accompany through campus experience and so forth (León & Holguín, 2004).

1.2 Topic and Purpose

The institutional actions are regarded as means for reaching equity in access to higher education. It is studied within the topic of policies in the institutional level. The focus is on the criteria for admission, and the strategies and programs addressed to facilitate entrance in the University of Antioquia. The aim of this thesis is to explore and describe the strategies that may have contributed to increase access for disadvantaged students to the higher education system. Disadvantaged students are those who meet limitations regarding to socioeconomic background. The thesis also examines the social factors that either limits or enhances those actions, and the dynamic between the actors who intervene in the decision making. It is of importance to explore the institutional commitment regarding what it states on policies and it is done in the institution.

1.3 Theoretical framework

The analysis of this thesis is developed under the neoinstitutional perspective, as the theoretical framework. The thesis draws special attention to the legitimacy and institutionalization of conducts and values built up in the university. According to Scott (2008), neoinstitutional theory suggests three main pillars, regulative, normative and cultural- cognitive which guideline behaviors of an institution. It is of relevance to understand how the actions, meant to enhance the mission of higher education, are implemented and identify social factors that shape the policies. The main object of this study is to explore the actions taken by the university to facilitate access to students from lower socioeconomic strata. This thesis seeks to contribute in issues of institutional policy and institutional debates in the approaches to equity; understanding policy as a public statement of an objective, and the kind of instruments that will be used to achieve it

(Gornitzka, 1999). The theoretical framework will be presented and discussed in more detail in chapter three.

1.4 Research Questions

The study explores, in the institutional level, actions that seek the increase of equity in the access to disadvantage students. Observing the aspects pointed, the study has the following research questions:

Is the implementation of special programs in the University of Antioquia contributing to facilitate access to disadvantaged students in higher education? And are these programs interpreted by the University of Antioquia as strategies that pursue equity?

Subsequent questions:

What actors intervene in the institutional policymaking?

What institutional strategies regarding access have been applied?

Which strategies have succeeded, and which have failed?

What are the criteria for success and for failing?

What changes has brought to the institution the creation of plans and actions to increase equity?

Which factors may constrain the development of equity policies?

1.5 Research Design and Methodology

This thesis is an exploratory study, and it is conducted under qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman 2006; Babbie 2007). This perspective draws attention to context and stresses on how social experience is created and gives meaning (Silverman, 2005). This thesis takes a case study, University of Antioquia (UdeA), located in the region under the same name, *Departamento de Antioquia* in Colombia. Focusing on a single institution implies a close interaction between the researcher and participants, which lead to understand what happened, why and what it means more broadly (Marshall and Rossman, 2006:56; Rubin

and Rubin, 2005:6). In order to answer the research questions presented above, a number of interviews were carried out (during June of 2010), as one of the methods of data collection. The interviewees are key informants who play institutional roles regarding access and inclusion- related strategies. A second method used to collect data is the document analysis of national and institutional documents which structure higher education system, and which support actions taken by UdeA after 1991. More about research methodology will be presented in chapter four.

1.6 Significance of the study

The importance of this thesis relies first, on the social inequality in the participation of students in Colombian higher education system; second, on the lack of strong education policy. This study attempts to contribute to the knowledge on higher education regarding equity approaches in the University of Antioquia.

Generalizing results based on a case study is, to some extent, a limitation; however, it is important to highlight that from this case study it is possible to give a broad idea of how equity approaches operate in public universities in Colombia. This can be reached due to public universities are run under the same regulations and national contextual characteristics regarding procedures.

A relevant aspect for carrying out this study is the fact that social equity within education opportunities is a topic that is little discussed in the country (Gómez, 2001). However, over time there have been some actions implemented and that are required to be examined, and which findings might be used by the actors involved in the process of building up policies. Due to the reputation of University of Antioquia as a public selective university, it is significant to identify to what extent the institution reaches its social mission of facilitating access to disadvantaged students; how the composition and dynamic of institutional authorities in charge of policy making traces the actions; and how the context itself enhances or limits the target of equity. UdeA has shown great commitment in the development of policies and actions that facilitate entrance to higher education. Moreover, according to a report from the Ministry of Education, UdeA is ranked as the second best

among the universities in Colombia¹. Hence it is important to examine the structure, the objectives, the actors, and the dynamics of equity policies in an institution that meet the aims of the study.

1.7 Equity

Equity is a main concept in this study. The term has been described as fairness, justice, and as a synonym of equality. Throughout history, it is possible to find debates in the same issues regarding equity or *aequum*. The first in giving a definition of equity was Aristotle, in his discussion about equity he indicates:

“The equitable’ seems to be just. Equity is just, going further than the written law. That may be intentional or unintentional on the part of the legislators: unintentional when they have forgotten to put something in, intentional when they were unable to make distinctions but had to make a general rule, which turned out to be applicable to some cases but not other” (Roebuck, 2003).

More recently, Bourguignon (2006), member of the World Bank, states that:

“Equity is complementary to the pursuit of long-term prosperity. Greater equity is double good for poverty reduction. It tends to favor sustained overall development, and it delivers increased opportunities to the poorest in a society”.

Developing countries undergo systems historically unequal which process and changing into a more equalitarian system has met obstacles which have distorted the purposes. Education is the aspect that can give a nation the opportunity to reduce poverty and pursue economic growth (Bourguignon, 2006). In the achievement of these economical and cultural growing it is paramount the adequate level of equity in the education. At the Regional Higher Education Conference (CRES, 2008) was noted that the persistence of equity problems increases social exclusion, promotes inequality and strengths the underdevelopment of the region.

¹ Information available at <http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/cvn/1665/article-240814.html>

Equity in education is a broad concept that involves opportunities, educational choices and performance of the different groups of students (Opheim, 2004). Opheim (2004) provides the following description of equity in education:

“Educational equity refers to an educational and learning environment in which individuals can consider options and make choices throughout their lives based on their abilities and talents, not on the basis of stereotypes, biased expectations or discrimination. The achievement of educational equity enables females and males of all races and ethnic backgrounds to develop skills needed to be productive, empowered citizens. It opens economic and social opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity, race or social status” (Opheim, 2004).

Within the educational field, the means to reach equity take forms of plans and policies to transform and enhance the quality of all levels of the system. Plans can also be seen as policies of expansion, access, curriculum, retention of the students, achievement in the studies, incorporation to labor market and so forth. According to Lindsay and Justiz (2001), a relevant aspect regarding to equity is the quality of the curriculum and the performance of the students during primary and secondary education. A following step of equity is met in access to higher education, the policies and actions taken to increase the admission. During the period of studies, equity takes forms of actions that pursue the retention of students, quality of curriculum, teaching, research and so forth. Educative equity is the sum of all the actions to prepare the individuals to labor market and to contribute to the nation's welfare, cultural, socioeconomic and political growth (Lindsay and Justiz, 2001).

Among equity actions that higher education institutions have implemented, this thesis draws attention to *affirmative action*. Literature refers to affirmative action as temporary policies or actions that seek to minimize discrimination by including those groups of people who have been socially and historically excluded (Lindsay & Justiz, 2001; Dias-Romero, 2006). Temporary policies concern not only education but other sectors, such as health. Features from a social context may influence in the success or fail of this type of strategies. These actions can contribute to equity; nevertheless critics argue that, although affirmative action alleviates discrimination, it does not contribute to reducing the social discrimination

itself (Dias-Romero, 2006). The concept of affirmative action will be presented and discussed in more detail in chapter three.

1.8 Outline of the study

The study is composed of six chapters. Chapter 1- *Introduction*, has presented the background, research questions and significance of the study. Chapter 2- *Context of Higher Education in Colombia* offers a description of the national education system. It describes as well the context of the University of Antioquia. Chapter 3- *Literature review and Theoretical framework* provides the literature related to equity approaches and the theoretical perspective to conduct the analysis of the study. Chapter 4- *Research Methodology* presents the research strategy and the methods used for data collection. Chapter 5- *Analysis and Findings of the Study* presents the analysis of the process. It offers the performance and instruments of the institution in pursuing of its social mission, access. Chapter 6- *Discussion of Findings* presents the findings based on the research questions. It links the findings of this study to the literature review and the theoretical perspective. It also provides recommendations concerning policy and suggestions for further studies.

Context of Higher Education System in Colombia

2.1 Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the context in which higher education system takes place in Colombia. In the first part describes the structure of higher education, the rates of increasing students during the last decade, and the number of students enrolled in the different types of institutions. It highlights the legal support of equity approaches through the National Constitution of 1991, laws, and acts issued during the 90s regarding the inclusion of disadvantage students in higher education. Information about cost sharing is included in this chapter; it also provides reforms carried out by the state agency responsible for student credits; and student aids offered by institutions. The second part of the chapter introduces the University of Antioquia and its context. It mentions the actions taken by the university, which seeks the inclusion of students from the lowest strata and the attempts for equal participation in HE.

2.2 Higher Education System in Colombia

Colombia is located in the northwestern of South America. According to the Department of National Statistics, DANE (2010), Colombia has a population of 45.681.447 people. As mentioned in chapter one, Constitution of 1991 establishes the current guidelines to run the country. The National Constitution of Colombia of 1991, Title I *About the Basic Principles*, art. 1 presents the nation as a social state of rights, decentralized, democratic, pluralist, and participatory; based on the respect for human dignity.

In the educational field, two relevant laws were issued and implemented. Based on the statements of the Constitution of 1991, it was created educational laws, like *The General*

Law of Education 115 of 1994, and *Higher Education Law 30 of 1992*, in which is organized the public service of higher education. This thesis focuses mainly in Law 30 of 1992. This law enhances, for instance, principles as autonomy (the institutions can create their programs, curriculum, define missions, develop research projects and create their own financial resources); it also enhances decentralization, supervision and the creation of programs in the modality of distance learning. It states a more inclusive system through competitiveness and effectiveness. In order to supplement the high demand of students, the government has encouraged the growth of the private sector. World Bank (2006) reports that in Colombia 62% of universities, 75% of universities institutes, 72% of the technological institutes and 85% of technical training schools are private. Revenues rely on tuition fees. Paradoxically, expansion of higher education, coverage is very low. According to ASCUN (Association of Colombian Universities), educational coverage between the period of 2002-2005 increased from 20, 8 to 28, 6 %, this access is still much lower than in other Latinoamerican countries (World Bank, 2003).

Table 1 shows the increase of numbers of higher education institutions from 2000 to 2008 registered in SNIES². The number of universities tends to increase slowly while other institutions show a rapid increase over time. Table 3, illustrates that the number of private institutions in 2008 is almost threefold than public institutions. In the second semester of 2008 there were 1.483.849 enrolled students, both in public and private. From this total, 953.497 students were enrolled in universities in 2008, and 454.242 students were enrolled in the technical and technological institutions (see table 4 and 5). The numbers of students in the different levels of higher education suggest a rapid increase in the technical and technological programs while there is a low rate regarding to higher levels of education such as Masters and PhD.

² SNIES: National Information System of Higher Education, Ministry of Education of Colombia. Information available at <http://snies.mineducacion.gov.co/men/consultas/ContenedorRepConsultas.jsp?nombreCategoria=NUMIES&titulo=Número de Instituciones de Educación Superior>

Table 1 Type and Number of HE Institutions in the years 2000-2008, Colombia

HE Institutions	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Technical Professional Institutions*	43	43	43	43	44	41	42	43	43
Technological Institutions*	48	51	53	54	54	46	46	49	51
University Institutions/Technological schools	85	90	94	96	96	98	103	107	109
Universities	77	77	77	77	77	79	79	79	79
TOTAL	253	261	267	270	271	264	270	278	282

Source: SNIES, Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior. Ministry of Education.

*Law 749 of 2002 organizes the public service of higher education in the modalities of technical and technological education.

According to SNIES, in table 1, there were 282 higher education institutions registered in 2008. During eight years, the increase was 29 institutions; data does not specify if the increasing number includes the branches of the same institutions in other geographical regions. According to this information, technology institutions and university institutions have been increasing numbers while universities have had a slow increase.

Table 2 Sector of HE Institutions in Colombia

Sector	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Public	79	79	80	81	81	74	74	81	81
Private	174	182	187	189	190	190	196	197	201
TOTAL	253	261	267	270	271	264	270	278	282

Source: SNIES, Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior. Ministry of Education.

The private sector has had more expansion during the past decade. Table 2 shows that private institutions increased from 174 institutions in 2000 to 201 in 2008, while the public sector has had ups and downs during the same period, going from 79 institutions to 81. Regarding to funding, public universities depend mostly on public expenditures of the national budget. Public institutions also receive some revenues from tuition fees, which tend to vary from one university to other and which tend to be proportional³ to family income; these institutions gain other revenues through services and supplementary costs (e.g., student card fees, graduation fees, re-taking exams, recognition of studies taken in

³ Tuition fee in a public university can vary according to the modality and programs e.g., day programs vary from 83€ to 200 €, evening programs have an average cost of 330 €. Socio economic strata are taking into account for setting prices for day programs; it does not apply for evening programs and other modalities (Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander).

other institutions, grade reports, etc). Private universities do not receive support from the state; these institutions obtain their revenues from high tuition fees, services and supplementary costs as public institutions.

Table 3 Number of Students in public and private sector in the years 2000-2008, Colombia

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Public	342,276	370,888	416,722	483,302	565,705	598,261	665,376	744,707	805,132
Private	581,228	597,299	583,426	565,217	558,059	599,961	617,577	617,385	633,717
Total	923,504	968,187	1,000,148	1,048,519	1,123,764	1,198,222	1,282,953	1,362,092	1,438,849

Source: SNIES, Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior. Ministry of Education.

Between the years 2000 and 2008 the number of Students in public and private institutions has been rapid. When it comes to public sector, the number was twofold, while in private universities the number increased less than 25%. Data may suggest that public institutions have been implementing actions to widen access.

Table 4 Number of Students in each level of Higher Education in Colombia

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Technical	50,297	53,596	84,652	120,32	136,437	171,222	204,895	218,682
Technological	128,394	127,928	130,633	143,055	157,579	174,692	187,785	235,560
University	740,227	742,327	781,403	799,808	842,265	874,903	904,603	953,497
Specialization	51,911	50,554	43,783	39,893	46,495	47,888	43,151	50,759
Master	6,069	6,732	8,978	9,975	11,98	13,107	21,023	23,366
PhD	345	321	583	675	968	1,122	1,43	1,533
TOTAL	977,243	981,458	1,050,032	1,113,726	1,195,724	1,282,934	1,363,129	1,483,631

Source: SNIES, Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior. Ministry of Education.

In technical level, which consists of two years programs, students develop necessary skills for the application of knowledge in the labor market, while in technological level, three-year program, education is oriented to the more academic activities. This level is more theory oriented and students are required to design and apply techniques which are needed in the industry sector. Universities are the institutions that develop research. Bachelor degrees last between 5 to 6 years. Specialization refers to one year program after the bachelor degree; in this, students improve skills in the same field of studies or other. Master degrees are two-year programs, and a PhD is four-year programs. According to table 4,

during 2001 to 2008 numbers of students have increased, especially in the technical and the technological level. Technological studies show that the number of students fourfold during seven years. The number of students decreases while the level of higher education increases. Specializations show ups and downs in numbers during this period, while master programs have increased during the last years. It is important to highlight that the number of PhD students remains very low.

Table 5 Number of students enrolled in first semester in the years 2002-2008, Colombia

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Technical	26,746	25,406	35,74	39,165	38,77	31,738	30,516
Technological	46,017	49,71	57,86	63,252	60,311	56,144	69,943
University	186,937	215,99	224,154	232,596	222,334	282,36	284,824
Specialization	200	0	0	388	214	31,664	30,657
Master	0	0	0	0	0	6,898	7,348
PhD	0	0	0	0	0	429	421
TOTAL	259,9	291,106	317,754	335,401	321,629	409,233	423,709

Source: SNIES (Sistema de Información de Educación Superior)

Table 6 Number of applications for the first semester in the years 2002 to 2008

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Technical	44,017	35,575	46,92	34,467	34,294	43,195	55,240
Technological	80,673	90,568	99,107	79,528	77,48	103,323	111,603
University	577,596	647,222	627,559	536,262	525,811	650,789	696,724
Specialization	37,794	39,166	39,673	29,89	31,643	54,368	58,375
Master	2,689	6,014	6,342	4,703	6,175	10,349	11,518
PhD	104	214	318	351	576	717	734
Non classification	0	0	0	62,31	47,805	0	0
TOTAL	742,873	818,759	819,919	747,511	723,784	862,741	934,194

Source: SNIES (Sistema de Información de Educación Superior)

The data in tables 5 and 6 show that over 55% of applicants were admitted and enrolled in Technical schools. Over 62% of applicants were admitted and enrolled in Technological schools and the 40% of the applicants were enrolled in University in the first semester of 2008. Regarding to higher levels of education, 52% of the applicants were admitted and enrolled for Specialization; 63% of the applicants were admitted and enrolled for the Master; and 57% enrolled in PhD programs. The number of participation in the higher

levels of education is indeed one of the lowest in Latin America (World Bank 2003; CNA 2010). Table 5 and 6 shows that the higher the level of education, the lowest the participation of students in Colombia.

In the International Seminar about Educative Policies and Equity in Chile in 2004, Margarita Peña⁴ stated that:

“...educative expenditure in Colombia is very progressive regarding primary education, less progressive in secondary education and particularly regressive in tertiary education. This means that though paramount importance is given to the poorest, in the case of primary education, a big proportion of state subsidies are addressed to families that are capable of paying for education. This situation place poor families in the position of either to pay for private education with low quality or take their children out from education system”.

Similarly, Alviar⁵ (1995) highlights that though the system is still progressive in secondary education, the poorest income groups are getting fewer subsidies to access to secondary education. Regarding to the higher income groups, they go to state universities and benefit from state subsidies. Peña (2004) pointed out that the weaknesses of the educational system rely on information system and ineffective mechanisms to identify and control corruption (within the process of identifying the beneficiaries of the subsidies) which can create poor credibility of the subsidy programs. In addition to this, she argues that besides the problems of access and retaining of students in the educative system, inequity of quality of education has not gotten enough attention.

2.2.1 Cost Sharing, Student Aids and Student loan scheme in Colombia

In Colombia, the education system requires a mandatory exam to enter to higher education (institutions are free to establish the score to enter to the different programs). The exam is carried out by the state agency ICFES⁶. In this ‘filter’, the best scored students get help for financing their studies. The process of awarding the best scored students is one of the

⁴ Margarita Peña has hold positions as Ex Secretary of Education in Bogotá, Ex vice Minister of Education of Colombia. During the 90’s she worked as Head of Social Development Unit at National Planning Department.

⁵ Mauricio Alviar is Dean of the Department of Economic Science of the University of Antioquia.

⁶ ICFES, Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior. It is a state entity which main objective is the evaluation of education in all levels (‘Pruebas SABER’ in elementary school, ‘Examen de Estado’ in secondary education, ‘ECAES’ for graduate students, and evaluation of teachers).

clearest forms of inequity. High schools (especially from private sector, and private academic centers) often offer instructions and practices during the high school years in order to improve the performance in the exam. Regarding to public high schools, instructions for this exam are usually developed under lack of resources. Once a year the 50 best scored students in the country and the 2 best scored students in each geographical region, “*Departamento*,” are granted to enter to HE institutions in Colombia⁷ (General Law of Education 115, Cap. II. Art. 99), the best scored students from lower class obtain aids to pay tuition fees. Municipalities’ best scored students are granted to receive student credit from ICETEX⁸. A project from ICETEX (2007)⁹ addressed to support the best high school students states that the target is to support 764 students per year. ICETEX states that the goal is to grant 3515 student credit for this group of students during the years 2007 and 2010.

However, the regressive effect is greatly perceived in the ICFES exam and the rewarding process. Children from a higher socioeconomic background are often the ones who are awarded. It can be said that this type of rewards reinforces and accentuates the existing social stratification, while the *brightest and luckiest* of the poor are able to use HE and escape from their social and economical marginalization (Teixeira et al. 2006).

There are three state agencies that offer scholarships and student loans to domestic and abroad programs: *ICETEX* (Instituto Colombiano de crédito educativo y estudios técnicos en el exterior), *COLFUTURO*¹⁰ and *COLCIENCIAS*¹¹. Other Private agencies such as banks and cooperatives offer student credits as well; in these, the applicants must show

⁷ *Andrés Bello awards* for best scored ICFES. Article 99 law 115 of 1994, Republic of Colombia.

⁸ ⁸ ICETEX was created in 1950, its first mission was providing students loans for studies abroad, it is acknowledged to be the first government sponsor for student loan in the world. Today ICETEX has 21 regional offices. The feature of being a decentralized agency is one of its strengths.

⁹ See: <http://www.icetex.gov.co/portal/Default.aspx?tabid=584> and more information available at :http://spi.dnp.gov.co/App_Themes/SeguimientoProyectos/ResumenEjecutivo/Implantaci%C3%B3n%20apoyo%20a%20Mejores%20Bachilleres.pdf

¹⁰ COLFUTURO is mixed, state and private agency which promotes and funds graduates to study Masters and PhD abroad. For more information see <http://www.colfuturo.org/>

¹¹ COLCIENCIAS (Departamento Administrativo de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación) funds aids to Master Programs and PhD (in Colombia and abroad), the funding of research-related activities and innovation. For more information see <http://www.colciencias.gov.co/>

higher solvency or capacity of payment. This section of the study regards only the state entity ICETEX. It is the largest state agency for student finance in Colombia. It administers the funds for student credit and the student aids to undergraduate and postgraduate programs –in domestic and abroad programs-. The aim of this entity is to assist students from lowest socio economic strata. According to the development plan from the Ministry of Education “*Plan Decenal Nacional de Educación 2006 – 2015*”, student credit, from ICETEX, is the main equity policy for higher education in the current government.

ICETEX has a long experience in student credit; however the agency has declined for coverage through the years (World Bank, 2003). Despite the loan system seems to be well established, the lack of liquidity constraints the capacity of growing; the agency has not found solutions to adapt to the demand of students and the low funding by government. According to the World Bank (2003), ICETEX only covers 5 % of student population. It relays moderately upon government funding (7, 5 % in 2001) while most revenue comes from repayments (76 %). In order to increase loan activity, ICETEX has broadened the plans for student credits. Nowadays, ICETEX offers lower interest rate, a longer time for re-payment, and other reforms that seek the increase of coverage (see table 7).

Table 7 ICETEX, Reforms of conditions

	2002	2007
Interest	22% and 24%	12% and 8%
Subsidy	None	42,3% of students from socioeconomic strata 1,2 with SISBEN ¹² levels 1-4 receive subsidies up to 25% of the amount of tuition fees.
Amount of loan	Loan up to 50% of the amount of the tuition fee. 1.600.00 pesos maximum (533,33 Euros).	Students from strata 1 and 2 receive up to 75% from ICETEX, some HE institutions finance 25%. Students from 3,4,5,6 strata receive up to 50% of the amount of tuition fees.
Sponsor	Two sponsors with property.	One sponsor who does not have to have property. One of the parents can be the sponsor.
Grace period	None	1 year

¹² SISBEN (Sistema de Identificación de Potenciales beneficiarios de Programas Sociales). It is an identification tool which organizes the population according to a standard according to socio-economic conditions. SISBEN permits the selection for the participation in social programs.

Repayment	10 years	Up to 16 years
Granting	Credits granted without strata discrimination.	93,5% of the credits have been granted to students from 1,2, and 3 strata.
Branches	21	21 branches + internet site + extension of opening hours.
Funding for students CERES ¹³	None	Ministry of Education and ICETEX approve credits that have no guarantor but tutor.
Domestic postgraduate programs	One sort of credit Repayment during a term of period, equivalent to the time of studies after finishing the program, up to 1900000 pesos per semester(633,33 Euros).	Three sorts of credits (all sorts up to 40 million pesos per program) - ACCES project, Master for teachers - Medium term credit - Best students from ECAES ¹⁴
Abroad postgraduate programs	Two sorts of credit Postgraduate program: up to US \$ 8000 Foreign language course: up to US \$ 4000	Five sorts of credits (from US \$ 8000 up to US \$ 16000) - Medium term loan - Loan term loan - Best ECAES - Foreign language course - Continue education
Credit for higher education institutions	None	Three sorts of credits - Teachers - Teachers guaranteed by the higher education institution - Students
PhD in Colombia	None	Colciencias gives subsidies of 18.870 million pesos.

Source: Informe de Gestión 2003-2006 ICETEX

To what extent does ICETEX contribute to access and equity in the country?

National educational policy for equity in higher education promotes the opportunity to use the student credit by ICETEX through the different programs. However, it seems that the credits benefit the students, mainly from middle and upper class. The conditions or requirements for applying for credit are the same for all applicants. ICETEX programs require a guarantor that shows the capability to pay the debt in case the student cannot afford. Nowadays the term 'guarantor' is known under the smoother term 'deudor solidario' or 'tutor solidario' ('solidarity co-debtor' or 'solidarity tutor'). Besides the inequality of conditions for access to the student credit, there is also inequality of

¹³ CERES (Centros regionales de Educación superior) Students can follow technical, technological and University programs in these regional centers.

¹⁴ ECAES (Examen de calidad de la Educación superior). This is an exam applied to students during the last year of undergraduate studies and graduate students. The exam seeks to evaluate both the quality of outcome and the quality of the institutions. Now many institutions require the exam as compulsory in order to get the diploma.

opportunity for poor students who get credit. Poor students tend to pay the high costs of tuition fees in private universities due to the low opportunities of getting a place in public institutions; this is caused by high demand of students and institutional admission exams. Colombia is a socioeconomic strata-based society with highly marked differences between classes. Though social differences have characterized Colombian society since the Spanish colony, the division into six socioeconomic classes started to be implemented since the 80s and legalized in 1994 (Uribe-Mallarino, 2008). According to Uribe-Mallarino (2008), the division of socioeconomic strata, as a public policy, has shaped the collective thinking of the inhabitants.

Concerned about the high rates of poverty¹⁵, and the low participation of students from the lowest social classes, ICETEX launched the program ACCES (Programa de acceso con calidad a la educación superior). The program was financed by the World Bank in a first stage loan¹⁶, through which it was carried out the project '*Higher education- Improving Access*' during the years 2003-2008. The project was carried out by ICETEX (responsible for the overall implementation and financial coordination), by COLCIENCIAS (responsible for the development of the doctoral component) and by MEN (responsible, with the support of ICFES, for the institutional strengthening). The program is addressed mainly to able students from the lowest socioeconomic status and minorities (whom belong to the lowest strata as well); to increase equity; and easy conditions and requirements. However these programs suggest that they still do exclude many able poor students. The fact that able poorest students are surrounded by relatives and peers who are under the same socioeconomic conditions assume that none guarantor may support a debt. Those are barriers to fulfill credit requirements and thus getting student loan.

¹⁵ According to DANE (National department of statistics), in Colombia the rate of poverty is over 40%, this information lets us know that a great number of people is living under precarious conditions, in which social welfare is not efficient (i.e. health, education and housing). Education is not the priority in most of the cases for the poorest population.

¹⁶ The loan from The World Bank consisted in US \$ 287 million, it has had Three main objectives: (i)**Equity in Access and student aids** (US\$252), (ii)Regarding to Quality in higher education through **Doctoral training** ((US\$25)and (iii) **Support Coherence and efficiency** through Institutional strengthening (US\$10).

Many of the programs offered by government entities are wasted for lack of adequate information to the students and parents, especially in the lowest and middle low classes. In Colombia, low class students hardly get to know about services offered by ICETEX, by HE institutions and by other entities related to credit schemes, procedures and requirements. Poor internet access to poor population reinforces this problem. It is a government's role to improve information through strategies to raise aspiration, staying in school and apply to HE institutions (Barr, 2003). Besides lack of information about the loans for domestic programs, there is also deficiency information regarding to abroad scholarships given by ICETEX, and other national and international organizations. Most of these programs require the knowledge of a foreign language as English. Unfortunately many of these scholarships are not taken due to lack of knowledge of a second language in Colombia, which can be considered as a barrier to higher education.

Institutional student aids

Public and Private institutions have developed some institutional strategies to minimize inequity by helping students to pay the cost of tuition fees. Students can get the benefits as discounts, scholarships, beca- trabajo ¹⁷(scholarship-work) among others.

Discounts provided by public and private institutions. Discounts on tuition fees are made based on a wide range of conditions. e.g., Family incomes, family size, area of residence, siblings at the same institution, academic and administrative staff's children in the institution, discounts when one of the parents of the student has died, single mother students, siblings at the same institution who depend on a single mother income, discounts for belonging to groups such as folk dance, sport, theater, among others. Discounts and conditions vary from one institution to another. The lack of a systematic data available to know how much aid is provided through these sorts of discounts leave these actions as invisible processes. A factor that may distort the discount benefits regards to non database concerning to area of residence and other basic information of the student. More about this

¹⁷ Art. 48 Reglamento Estudiantil (Student Guideline) Universidad de Pamplona, Colombia.

factor will be discussed in chapters five and six. The academic record is also rewarded by institutions. Students with high record in semester reports are awarded with discount in tuition fee, partial or total.

Scholarships and 'work - scholarship'. Some HE institutions have implemented strategies to help students in their economic needs e.g., University of Pamplona, University of Antioquia, La Universidad Nacional de Colombia. In this strategy, lower income students with good academic record are encouraged to work an amount of hours per week, on campus or other institutions in which universities may have alliances with (as assistants in computer rooms/offices, printing & publishing material and library). The money earned by these students goes directly to the tuition fees for the following semester, in other institutions it may be paid in cash. Other aids are derived from some donations by alumni e.g., UdeA. That specifically covers the cost of tuition fees of the some able poorest students who report high academic performance. These students can renew the grant each semester.

2.3 Equity approaches in Colombia

The government of Colombia has developed plans and policies that enhance equity. The nation context supports the ideology of equity which, to some extent, seeks to amend wrongdoing in the past. The Colombian Constitution states:

“All people are born free and equal, entitled to receive equal protection and treatment by the authorities and enjoy the same rights, freedom and opportunities without discrimination based on sex, race, national or family origin, language, religion, political or philosophical. The State shall create conditions to make equality real and effective, and adopt actions for disadvantaged or marginalized groups. The State shall protect particularly those people whose economic status, physical or mental conditions, are obviously under vulnerable circumstances, and shall punish any abuse or ill-treatment done against them” (Constitution of 1991, Article 13 of Chapter 1 of the 'Basic Rights')

The state has given autonomy to institutions to create actions for increasing access and to implement them within their development plans. Though the progress in legislation in the higher education field, most of the strategies have not been implemented. Reasons for this

to occur are funding, and political willing (León & Holguín, 2004). In addition to the constitution, the Colombian government has issued other acts which enhance equity in higher education system. For instance, Act 1084, 4th August 2006, “*In which the State strengthens higher education in remote geographical areas, and areas of difficult access*”. Through this act, public and private institutions have the commitment to give 1% of places to each of the cases. A second example is Act 70 of 1993, which supports mechanisms to protect Afrocolombian communities. Moreover, through decree 804 of 1995 and decree 1122 of 1998, government seeks to protect cultural diversity and social and economic development of ethnic groups.

However, autonomy in HE is relative, institutions can develop such actions only if they follow constitutional parameters. Some institutions have implemented actions that have been considered a violation of the equity in access. An example of this, it was the claims, and lawsuits, by students against Universidad Industrial de Santander, east Colombia. They argued that affirmative action policies violated equality in access to higher education. As a response, the Constitutional Court came to consider three rules in the creation and granting places to students with special conditions (Aguirre & Pabón, 2008)¹⁸. The three rules are: (i) that the number of quotas to be allocated according to these criteria is significantly lower in the total of the quotas. (ii) That the procedures for admission of students through these criteria take into account the academic ability of applicants, whom under special conditions compete for places. (iii) That proportionality test is positive according to the right to equality. Due to the amount of lawsuits, the university mentioned above put an end to the special admission system.

One of the earliest attempts to equity, or affirmative action policy (León & Holguín, 2004) took place in 1990. During that year, the fund *Alvaro Ulcue Chocue* was created. The aim

¹⁸ See “*Special Admission Systems in the Universities: A Challenge for the consolidation of the Right to Equality in the Access to Higher Education*”, The article is the result of a research “*Special Admission Systems in the Universities: jurisprudence assessment on the constitutionality of the Special Admission Systems in universities*”, carried out by the Research Group Politeia attached to the School of Philosophy, Universidad Industrial de Santander, in partnership with the Research Centre of the Faculty of Law, Universidad de Santander.

of the fund is to facilitate access to indigenous students. ICETEX grants the credits for these students. Within the requirements, students must develop a project which benefits the indigenous own community. Different from all the other programs from this ICETEX, this kind of credit does not require a guarantor. According to ICETEX (2002), the average of granted credits per year is around 200 (León & Holguín, 2004). Another program from ICETEX is the credit to Afrocolombian students. This credit has mixed features from the other programs. It requires the development of a social project which may benefit the Afrocolombian own community. Students must prove they belong to lowest socioeconomic strata and provide a guarantor.

Within the implementation of special admission programs, we find Universidad de los Andes, a prestigious and highly selective private research university in Colombia, which was one of the first institutions in creating special programs in 1994. The special admission program '*Programa Oportunidades*' facilitated access to those students with excellent academic reports, and who came from the excluded areas. Unfortunately, the program was discontinued in 1998. León and Holguin (2004), argue that there were two reasons for this to occur. First, the program exceeded the number of students that was meant to offer in the beginning (70 students). In 1998 the program had 126 students which generated unexpected cost to the institution. Second, it emerged the need to assess the program and the development of it. In the assessment, it was noted that the selected students, though they had an excellent academic record in high school, they could not achieve the academic requirements demanded by the university. The program was not taking proper care of this issue, or was not clear in the way it functioned. At the end, it became a problem. They report that 30,1% of the students quit the studies. Another circumstance which limited the success of the program was that many of the students were not able to go back to their communities after the accomplishment of the studies (to apply knowledge as it was dealt) due to socio-political conflicts in the country that has led to the forced displacement¹⁹.

¹⁹ For more information about forced displacement in Colombia at <http://www.codhes.org/> Consultoría para los derechos humanos y el desplazamiento

León and Holguín argued that, for achieving the objectives of the program, it was necessary to create affirmative action policies. University de los Andes needed to guarantee the conditions in access, permanence and succeeded accomplishment of studies. This implies the intervention of all actors and their participation in the development of these kinds of programs. Paramount importance in the creation of special access programs is the adoption of proactive attitude instead of reactive responses (Spanier & Crowe, 2001).

Though the promotion of equity by the government and the intention of universities, the cases described above suggest that there has been a weak structure regarding the means for reaching equity. Limitations with legal procedures that motivate institutions to bring programs to an end, problems with continuity and funding, limitations caused by socio-politic conflicts, among others, are encountered in the designed and implementation of policies that are meant to include disadvantage students in higher education.

2.4 University of Antioquia

University of Antioquia is a prestige public selective institution created in 1878. The main branch of University of Antioquia is located in Medellín. This is the second important city in the country. According to last statistics report from DANE, Medellín has 2.223.660 inhabitants.

2.4.1 Governing Actors in the University of Antioquia

UdeA is steered by two councils. The University Superior Council (USC), maximum authority in public universities, Art 64 of law 30 of 1992 established the members of this council. Members of USC are: The Ministry of Education or his/her representative; The Governor of the Departamento de Antioquia -Who chairs the council-; Representative of the President of Colombia; A representative from the academic units; A representative of professors; A representative of graduated students; A student representative; A representative of the industrial sector; an ex-rector of the University of Antioquia; Rector of the University [Opinion rights but no voting rights). The functions of the USC are: to

establish academic and administrative policies, and to establish the institutional plan; to establish the academic, administrative, and finance organization of the university; to watch over the performance of the institution regarding legality disposition, the general statute, and institutional policies; to issue or modify the statutes and guidelines of the institution; to point and remove the rector; to approve the budget of the institution; to establish its own guidelines; other functions that law and statutes establish.

The second governing structure is the Academic Council. Art 68 of Law 30 of 1992 establishes the members of this council. The law states that, besides the rector, it has a representative from each faculty, directors of programs, professors, and students. The council highlights that the structure is established by the statutes of each institution. The functions of the Academic Council are: to decide over the academic development of the institution regarding teaching, especially when it concerns academic programs, research, extension and university welfare; to design academic policies regarding academic staff and students; to review the budget suggested by the academic units and present it to the University Superior Council; to hand in reports to the University Superior Council; and other functions that the statutes may establish.

The principles of the University of Antioquia

The General Statute and the Development Plan of UdeA state 22 principles for the improvement of their everyday academic, research and expansion related activities. They are a wide set of practices that higher education institutions require for meeting an adequate development of processes:

Equality, social responsibility, autonomy, universality, teaching and learning freedom, regulation, coexistence, academic excellence, interdisciplinary, teaching and research, extension, auto evaluation, inter institutional cooperation, participation, association, university right to petition, proper procedure, planning, decentralization, regionalization, economic and administrative reality, and principles prevail (Development Plan 2006-2016, p.p 18-24).

However, meeting an adequate level of these principles in a higher education institution within a social system that shows high levels of inequality, among other factors, can be

complex. To what extent these principles are part of a rhetorical discourse and what are the means used to legalize processes, are issues that concern this thesis.

UdeA has shown a dynamic that has led it to the expansion within its region and a rapid increase of students. Today, through the regionalization program, the university has 11 branches in the 9 different regions, this suggest that the university is highly committed to the development of the locality and society. However the good attempts for reaching the goals, it meets several limitations, not only within the institution but limitations and problems concerning higher education system and Colombian society itself. The Development Plan 2006-2016 offers a SWOT analysis of the Institution (see Appendix 1). It is of importance to highlight the great effort that University of Antioquia does in order to find resources for covering the financial shortage. Budget from the state is considered a big problem, weakness and threaten for the development of the adequate process in all aspects of the institution. In the study “*Colombia, on País por Construir*” Pulido et al (2001) identified 30 critical problems of Colombian society, in which the main structural problems are violence, corruption and impunity (ASCUN, 2007). These social factors, and internal conflicts affect and distort the allocation of resources in the educational system, the delivering of relevant official information, the clarity and the transparency in the processes and so on (ASCUN, 2007). One informant in this study (2010) reveals that national budget for higher education is only 0, 25 % GDP, different from Brazil that allocates over 2% of GDP to HE. In addition, the informant affirms that the amount of budget that the state grants to public higher education institutions is minimum, compared to the amount taken by corruption, which by 2010 has been reported an average of 4,5 % GDP²⁰. These kind of social problems often motivate not only students but academics, and employees from other public sectors (health, judge) to end up in strong demonstrations and strikes against the way politicians and government use state resources and budget. Concerning the budget of University of Antioquia, the state grants this institution ‘with 100 million dollars, which is

²⁰ See also <http://www.elspectador.com/columna-207212-corrupcion>

a poor amount for over 35.000 students, 1200 full time teachers, 600 teachers with temporary jobs, and 5000 adjunct teachers'²¹.

Admission and Register Office report an amount of 35.000 students enrolled this year, in undergraduate and postgraduate programs in the main branch and in the other sub-regions. The university offers a wide range of programs- full time, part time and distance programs. The total number of programs is 72, all accredited. The university reports about 40.000 applicants per semester and about 10 % of them are admitted. According to SNIES, the university has experienced an important increased of students. Table 8 presents the increase number of students, over 25% for undergraduate programs and over 44% for postgraduate programs.

Table 8 Statistics of enrolled students in the University of Antioquia during the years 2003 to 2008

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Variation (2003-2008)
First cohort	7.461	7.951	8.467	7.767	9.184	9.498	27,3%
Enrolled Undergraduate students	26.888	29.876	31.816	32.631	33.783	33.679	25,3%
Enrolled Postgraduate Students	1.385	1.532	1.592	2.007	1.791	2.006	44,8%
Graduation of Undergraduate students	2.683	2.484	2.726	3.156	3.634	4.239	58%
Graduation of Postgraduate students	521	554	580	822	651	787	51,1%

Source: SNIES - Observatorio Laboral para la Educación

2.4.2 Admission Process

The general statute of UdeA states that the Academic Council establishes the conditions and policies admission for undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Admission process is supported by two statements. First, the academic agreement 236 of 2002; it states the applicants' requirements (to have finished high school, ICFES exam, and to approve the institutional admission exam). It also states the special admission for minorities, i.e., indigenous and afrocolombian applicants. It is granted two places in each academic program. Second, the rectoral resolution 15849 of 2002; it establishes the tuition fee criteria, which consist of four aspects: monthly payment during the last high school year,

²¹ *Ibid.*

socio economic strata, incomes, and personal assets. Moreover, it states other variants of tuition fees, i.e., Penalties and charges over the tuition fee.

The inscription and admission processes to undergraduate programs start with the payment of the inscription (13 €); having paid, the applicant gets a code. Second, the applicant, using the code, fills in the application form on-line. There are predetermined dates for taking the admission exam. Third, the applicant takes the exam. It lasts three hours; the exam has 80 questions regarding two competences or abilities (40 questions regarding reading skills and 40 questions regarding logic reasoning ability). Four, the exam is graded from 0 to 100. An applicant is admitted when he/she grades over 53/100. Applicants from the sub-regions are admitted when graded over 50/100. And fifth, applicants receive the results of the exams. The places are allocated from the highest score until all programs have filled the places they are able to offer²². It is of importance to highlight that the score from the national admission test, ICFES, is not a requirement for entering to this university, though all students must have taken it, as a requirement to enter to the higher education system; the score that counts to enter to University of Antioquia is the institutional admission exam. Concerning to this institutional exam, there are two significant issues; first, the low academic skills of the poorest students to take such a demanding exam, as well as the actions for those applicants who having passed the admission exam, do not access to the university due to number of places. These issues will be discussed later in the study.

UdeA has established a tuition fee *Cost Criteria*²³. The university, as a public institution, gives priority to poor students who meet the requirements. This will be discussed in more detail in chapters 5 and 6.

²² Information available at <http://www.udea.edu.co>,
<http://www.udea.edu.co/portal/page/portal/BibliotecaPortal/ElementosDiseno/Documentos/AdmisionesRegistro/caminoAlaU.pdf>

²³ See Resolución Rectoral 15849 / 23.04.2002 information available at <http://secretariageneral.udea.edu.co/doc/i15849-2002.html> and Academic Agreement 236/ 26.10.2002. Information available at <http://secretariageneral.udea.edu.co/doc/u0236-2002.html>

2.5 Summary

The chapter has described important events that took place during the 90s. The importance of laws and acts issued after the implementation of the Constitution of 1991 is highlighted by the enhancing of democracy and including principles. Several actions have been taken then by higher education institutions in order to minimize the inequity in the opportunity of access in addition to programs promoted by ICETEX. Gómez (2009) highlights the institutional policies or *Affirmative Actions* that some universities have developed. Nevertheless, issues like the quality of primary and secondary public education and many small private schools should be taken into account, when mandatory exams are required to enter to higher education; raising the level of quality of the earlier steps of education can give the opportunity to the poorest to compete equally for scholarships and benefits given by the public and private institutions. University of Antioquia has shown to be committed to social progress in its locality and geographical region. Its experience and great effort have given the university the recognition in the country.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Overview

The following chapter offers the review of literature and the approach of equity in access to higher education. The first part of the chapter is dedicated to the ongoing debate on equity policies regarding the entrance to tertiary education and barriers that are met in access, especially by disadvantage students. Moreover, it points out strategies meant to reduce educative inequalities; among the strategies, it is highlighted the affirmative action as a policy meant to reach equity. The second part of the chapter provides the theoretical framework used to conduct the analysis of this study.

3.2 Literature Review

3.2.1 Approach to Equity Policies in Higher Education

This study takes the description of policy given by Gornitzka (1999); it states that policy is a public statement of an objective and the kind of instruments that will be used to achieve it. The public statement implies characteristics of policy content (Gornitzka, 1999), which draw the analysis of this study; by using this perspective, the study focuses on the policy problem, its objectives, normative basis of the policy, instruments, and linkage that concerns that connection between other policies and environmental actors. Santiago et al (2008) -in the project *OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education*, conducted in 24 countries around the world- mention that, for equity policies there are challenges such as ensuring equality of opportunity, devising cost-sharing arrangements which do not harm equity of access, and improving the participation of the least represented groups. They

highlight also the direction of the main equity policies, which may address first, to assess the extent and origin of equity issues. Second, strengthen the integration of planning between secondary and tertiary education systems. Third, to consider positive discrimination policies for particular groups whose prior educational disadvantage is well identified; and fourth, to provide incentives for tertiary education institutions (TEIs) in order to widen participation and provide extra support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This contribution suggests mainly a truly diagnosis of the higher education system by the stakeholders in order to create and implement strong policies and actions to promote equity, as well as to see a whole education system with a common target, and not as isolated parts of a system. These kinds of policies, strategies or actions are met in the literature with a variety of names, i.e., affirmative policies, compensatory policies or affirmative action (Pedroza & Villalobos, 2009). They may differ depending on the context, meaning of terms and legality interpretation.

3.2.2 Barriers to Higher Education

Researchers have identified a number of barriers to higher education. Santiago et al. (OECD, 2008) and Matear (2006) argue that besides economic limitations and admission issues, there is a lack of knowledge about the benefits of higher education. Additionally they suggest that a key barrier results from the possible disconnection between secondary and tertiary education. Moreover, there are other barriers regarding motivational, social and cultural barriers (Opheim, 2004). According to Oppheim, the motivations are influenced by the external conditions such as economic and cultural differences. A study developed by Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Económico, Universidad de los Andes (Sanchez et al. 2002), identified four aspects that determine access in public universities in Colombia. The first, regards to the national exam ICFES, for entering to the higher education system, is the main factor which limits disadvantage students. This barrier can be more marked when the institution has its own admission exam, specific program exam, and interviews. The second, concerns to family incomes. They highlight that though it is not a determinant for entering, it is determinant for staying in the system. The third, relates to the specific field

score in the ICFES and the program in which the student applies for. The most demanding field to enter is health sciences, followed by economy field, and the less demanding is the education field. The fourth aspect refers to the age when the student takes admission exams. Other aspects are structural barriers (Spanier & Crowe, 2001), these concerns the organizational and institutional barriers that make it difficult, if not impossible, for persons with special needs to participate in the academic community; other barriers relate to flexibility in scheduling and the convenience programs sites to study.

3.2.3 Strategies to Reduce Inequities in Higher education

Equity is on the agenda of diverse actors in higher education. Inclusion policies are part of a proactive form of facing inequalities; however, the notion of inclusion can have different meanings according to the context (Chiroleu, 2009). In the education field, there are policies addressed to facilitate entrance and permanence of students, one of them is through student credit. Barr (2003) suggests that an adequate income contingent loan, which covers real living cost, and which can be available to all students, is a strategy reform for enhancing equity. Nevertheless he highlights that such a reform is broadly applicable to industrialized countries; this position relies on the type of system that can grant loans to all students who may apply, and it can make higher education free at the point of use (Barr, 2003). Besides student loans, and tuition fees, Johnstone (2006), points out that cost sharing policies involves issues of governmental subsidization, grants, and loan subsidies. In order to reach more equitable higher education opportunities, Johnstone proposes direct grants, up-front subsidies, remaining debt forgiveness, and debt reduction.

3.2.4 Affirmative Action

One of the core concepts used in this study is '*affirmative action*', as an equity policy. It is of relevance to note that this type of policy has been used in the different public sectors, especially in education and health. Thomas (2001) defines affirmative action as '*any program that seeks to take steps aimed at enhancing opportunities for an unprotected group*'. The term 'Affirmative Actions' was first used by President John F. Kennedy in

1961, to define the *steps to be taken*, when he issued Executive Order 10952, which created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. His rhetoric encouraged the prohibition of discrimination and increased opportunities for minorities and women in education and employment. Sanchez²⁴ (not year cited) highlights that these actions take a political connotation to the extent that attempt to emend historical discrimination. Under a political implication, affirmative action was adopted in the educational field to repair wrongdoing to afro-descendent and women in the access to higher education. Affirmative action has spread out to concern other unprotected groups in different contexts.

Debates about affirmative action in US led to its implementation in universities in US, under careful legality process, to assure the proper development of the policy (Tomas, 2001). Higher education institutions like University of California, University of Michigan, University of Texas, among others private and public institutions, have broadened admission criteria and have enhanced special programs to meet the goals of the policies. The initiatives of affirmative action have not only concerned and developed within higher education arena, but have moved backwards and universities have reached secondary and elementary schools. Universities have intervened in their curriculum and teacher skill development to prepare students for admission to college (Wilson 2001).

Wilson (2001) mentions areas of consideration that, according to Bowen and Bok (1998), most selective institutions consider after identifying the applicants who seem to be capable of completing the studies successfully. The first step is admitting an ample number of students who show particular promise in their studies. Second, refers to assemble students with a wide diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and talents. A third consideration is to attract students who seem especially likely to utilize their education to make valuable contributions to their professions and welfare of society. Finally, he regards to the importance of long-term institutional loyalties and traditions; this means to give benefits in the admission processes to applicants whose parents, or other member attended to the same

²⁴ John Anton Sanchez is an afrocolombian journalist and anthropologist; he is activist of the Afro-American Movement and member of the Africa-descendent and Caribbean Strategic Alliance.

institution, as well as to applications from children of faculty staff. The four areas suggest a form of 'how' a selective university can structure a special admission program in a given context for disadvantage students, and can shed light aspects regarding the attraction and identification actions that universities carry out in secondary schools.

Following the contribution of Bowen and Bok, Lindsay and Justiz (2001) offer three suggestions for higher education admission process. First, calls to reevaluate admission measure scores. Second, admission process might include new models of merit, diversity, family income, locale of high school, or budget for high school. Third, refers to other kinds of preferential treatment in the admission process, like special admissions for athletes, musicians, artists, applicants from rural areas, children of faculty, children of alumni, and female science majors (Lederman, 1995; Bergmann, 1997; Wolf-Devine, 1997 in Lindsay and Justiz, 2001). The development of policies regarded to access of disadvantage groups in higher education has met several limitations in all the steps of implementation; it means, before the admission, during the admission, and in the integration, as well as on the academic aspects that may guarantee the achievement of studies from these students. Affirmative action as well as any other strategy implemented evidently requires funding, but also the high commitment in other aspects like concerning in diversity, multicultural experience and institutional change that assure the adequate development of the admission programs.

In his work, Wilson (2001) discusses four broad categories in the actions of higher education institutions: inclusion, student relations, academics, and institutional change. Regarding to *inclusion*, he argues that it is all the institutional efforts for increasing students enrolling, but he highlights that admission alone is not enough. *Student relations* refer to all the programs that improve college environment and minimize alienation, poor group relations, hostility, lower grades, and drop out. *Academics*, it enhances the efforts of improving the teaching/learning process by workshop programs. *Institutional change* means the transformation of the institution itself to meet the unique educational needs of its minority students. In this view, it can be argued that institutional change not only concerns

infrastructure and structure of the programs, but the norm, values and beliefs that are institutionalized. Similarly, Spanier and Crowe (2001) argue that in order to achieve equity, there is a number of considerations that must be circumscribed in the policy issues of the institution. Such issues fall into two broad categories: *Equity in access*, concerning the selectivity and access of students, comparable opportunities and structural barriers; and *equity in experience* which regards institutional environment for different groups. The complexity of each of the categories, breaks down into issues of institutional challenge, regarding selectivity and access of underrepresented groups. This involves the criteria of eligibility and the recruitment programs that higher education institutions may implement to identify the talented students. Above in this study, it was mentioned that admission alone is not enough. Truly affirmative action policies or special admission systems imply that other actions must take place in order to achieve the equity in experience. The institution meets the challenge to transform psychological and behavioral dimensions of campus that can adversely affect minority students (Hurtado, Clayton-Pederson & Allen, 1998 in Spanier & Crowe, 2001), this institutional transformation does not start neither after admission of disadvantage students nor the graduation of those students. The transformation goes back to the intervention of higher education institutions in the curriculum quality of primary and secondary education, the provision of adequate educational climate to experience equity and accompany the graduate to the incorporation to labor market. The long way of the commitment of higher education institutions states in the institutional mission. Mission, admission policies, and practices go hand in hand (Spanier & Crowe, 2001). Institutional mission involves the civil society and the changing of cultural norms. It is civil society itself which holds the greatest promise for eliminating discrimination (Tomas, 2001).

Despite that approaches to this strategy of affirmative action has been implemented; there is skepticism whether it truly solves problems of educative equity. The main argument states that social factors are the ones which should be solved, such as poverty caused by the social inequalities and characteristics of the context that remain social discrimination (Dias-Romero, 2006).

For this thesis, it is important to analysis the approaches to affirmative action in the University of Antioquia. Studies related to equity strategies and, to some extent, an approach to affirmative action in Colombia as it refers Gómez-Campo and Célis-Giraldo (2009) about a contract between ICETEX and CID (the Center of Investigation for the Development at Universidad Nacional de Colombia). The study “*Educational expenditure and impact on family income, characterization of complementary institutional strategies to the student credit that influence on the retention and social inclusion of youth people in higher education*” study concerned on the impact of ACCES program. The aims of that study were first, to characterize the composition of expenditure of households which are beneficiaries of the program ACCES, according to their incomes and socio demographic conditions; and analyze the effects of educational expenditure, other than tuition, in the household expenditure. The second aim was to identify, systematize and establish the affirmative action offered by HE institutions in Colombia. Based on this information, it was meant to develop an integration model of access through affirmative action, in order to increase the likelihood of entering and remaining in higher education of young people from 1 and 2 socio economic strata. Published findings of this study report that through the credit ACCES, students have more possibility to accomplish their studies. They report that 35,7% of students who are not supported by this credit quit their studies, while only 11 % students of students who benefit from ACCES credit program quit studies. Findings also report that 93% of students who receive benefits from this program come from the lowest socioeconomic strata, it indicates that the credit program has achieved the equity goals. In contrast with these reports, ‘*El Observatorio de la Universidad Colombiana*’²⁵, reveal that a study carried out by Universidad Nacional de Colombia, shows that between 2003 and 2008, though the credit has increased the enrollment of socio economic disadvantaged students, 80% of these ACCES credits were given to students in private universities. Due to the high cost of tuition fees at private institutions, the study suggests that the middle class and the upper class are the true beneficiaries of ICETEX credit programs. This also suggests that, to some extent, the poorest students get into debt by paying private education.

²⁵ See <http://www.universidad.edu.co/>

In the debate, ICETEX denies reports given by Universidad Nacional. In addition, Gómez-Campo and Célis-Giraldo²⁶ (2009) make important annotations about the study on the impact of ACCES program and affirmative action; they mention that only 22% of the universities answered the survey. The lack of participation in the study of the institutions suggests the lack of actions to increase equity, they say. In this aspect, León and Holguín (2004) argue that, it does not exist a debate about affirmative action; this has led these actions to meet limitations. They add that lack of knowledge on this issue can be observed in the fact that the special programs are limited to the special admissions without a truly supervision of the performance-academic and cultural- adaptation of the students who get the benefits.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

This thesis focuses on the institutional level of equity policies, and draws special attention to institutionalization, and legitimacy of processes. Zucker (1977) refers to *institutionalization* as a process occurring over time, and as “a process in which individual actors transmit what is socially defined as real, and at the same time, at any point of the process, the meaning of an act can be defined as more or less a taken for granted part of this social reality”. In the construction of common meanings and construction of social reality, Berger and Luckmann (1967 in Scott, 2008), stress three phases, *externalization, objectification, and internalization*. They argue that through the phases, “the sharing of meaningful symbolic structures”, become a common reality with others and “the objectified world is retrojected into consciousness in the course of socialization”.

A central concept in this thesis concerns to legitimacy. Suchman (1995) defines “*legitimacy* as the generalized perception or assumption that the action of an entity is desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and

²⁶ Victor Manuel Gómez-Campo is a professor in the Department of Sociology and Researcher in the Education Research Institution in La Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Jorge Enrique Célis-Giraldo is a researcher in the Education Research Institution at La Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

definitions”. These conceptions are close to what Bourdieu defines as *culture*. For Bourdieu (1967), culture is not merely a common code to answer to common problems, but a set of previously assimilated master patterns, from which an infinite number of individual patterns directly applicable to specific situations are generated. Bourdieu offers theoretical approaches concerning the *learned culture*, *cultural capital* and the stereotypes in social classes. In his work, Bourdieu (1967) considers the hypothesis in the relationship between social classes, and the success in academic studies. He states that achievement of studies in “children of the middle and upper class is due to the congruence between the culture in which they are brought up and that of the school”. 'Educated people are at home with academic culture, while children from lower class face new school', 'cultural elements to which their family ambience did not introduce them' Bourdieu (1967, 1969). In his approach about equity strategies in higher education, Johnstone (2006) highlights that students from upper class have the advantages of greater *cultural capital* from family, secondary school and peers, which in turn imparts not only knowledge itself, but academic ambition and the methods and habits of effective study.

Besides the conceptualization above, this thesis also refers to new institutionalism theory, which dates back to 1977 (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991:11). This approach enhances a broad definition of *institutions* as “*comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life*” (Scott, 2008). Conception of institution evolved after decades of approaches by a wide range of institutional theorist who gave contributions from economics, political and sociological perspectives. Neo institutional theory is the result of analyzing organizations, and the means they use to institutionalize rules, norms, beliefs, symbols and common meanings, which are the features of the behavior of individuals in a given institution. Since the 60s, the importance of the environment and the construction of the meaning system led to develop new approaches; the new ideas embrace the importance of the culture and the social system. “*The old and new institutionalism*” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) share the view of institutionalization as a process of empowering and constraining behaviors, as well as stressing the role of culture in shaping organizational

reality (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Zucker, 1983). However, one important difference in the two institutionalisms is the conception of the environment. While the *old* one describes institutions as embedded in local communities, the *new* one focuses in non local environments, this suggests that the boundaries of the different sectors of industries, professions and society influence and penetrate in the organization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991:13). Recently, Scott (2008) pointed out that neo institutional theory attends to the deeper and more resilient aspects of social structure. These aspects consider the processes by which structures, including schemas; rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior. In his work, Scott (2008) offers a dense list of ideas describing the concept of Institutions:

- *Institutions are social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience.*
- *Institutions are composed of cultural-cognitive, normative and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life.*
- *Institutions are transmitted by various types of carriers, including symbolic system, relational systems, routines, and artifacts.*
- *Institutions operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction, from the world system to localized interpersonal relationships.*
- *Institutions by definition connote stability but are subject to change processes both incremental and discontinuous.*

This thesis attempts to analyze the processes of the institutionalization of norms and legitimacy of the actions in the University of Antioquia under the perspective of the three pillars mentioned by Scott (2008), *regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive*. First, ***regulative*** refers to the processes involving the capacity to establish rules, and manipulate sanctions- rewards or punishments- in an attempt to influence future behavior. Relying on this pillar, the study examines the procedures that institution follows and can determine the consistency of the actions taken by the dynamic of rules - sanctions. Second, ***normative*** introduce an evaluative and obligatory dimension into social life. It includes both values (concepts of the preferred or the desirable) and norms (how things should be done). Third, the ***cultural-cognitive*** concerns on the shared conceptions that constitutes the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made. This pillar comprehensibly sums up meanings from society and builds cognitive maps; behaviors and conducts match

the cognitive maps of individuals; conducts are taken for granted under different levels of thresholds either as desirable or not desirable conducts. The importance of understanding ‘meanings’ in the context, helps for examining the aspects that affect the development of actions. When institutional policies are made, they go through a complex process that ends up with the legitimacy of the policy as it can be seen in table 9. Berger and colleagues (Berger, Berger, & Kellner 1973; Scott, 1991) stress the cognitive aspects of legitimation, in the way that it “explains or justifies” the social order of institutional arrangements. Scott (1991:170) states the following approach of organizational legitimacy, “*Organizational legitimacy refers to the degree of cultural support for an organization-the extent to which the arrays of established cultural accounts provide explanations for its existence*” (Meyer and Scott 1983a:201). In the educational field, organizations are legitimized in society by the patterns of operations through which values are implemented (Parsons, 1960). In his approach, Parsons discusses that every organization is a subsystem of a wider social system which is the source of the meaning, legitimation, or higher- level of support which makes the implementation of the organization’s goals possible.

Table 9 The Three Pillars of Institutions

	<i>Regulative</i>	<i>Normative</i>	<i>Cultural-Cognitive</i>
<i>Basis of compliance</i>	Expedience	Social obligation	Taken for grantedness, shared, understanding
<i>Basis of order</i>	Regulative rules	Biding, expectations	Constitutive, schema
<i>Mechanisms</i>	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
<i>Logic</i>	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
<i>Indicators</i>	Rules, laws, sanctions	Certification, accreditation	Common beliefs, shared logics of action, isomorphism
<i>Affect</i>	Fear, innocence	Guilt/ Shame/honor	Certainty/confusion
<i>Basis of legitimacy</i>	Legally, sanctioned	Morally, governed	Comprehensible, recognizable, culturally, supported

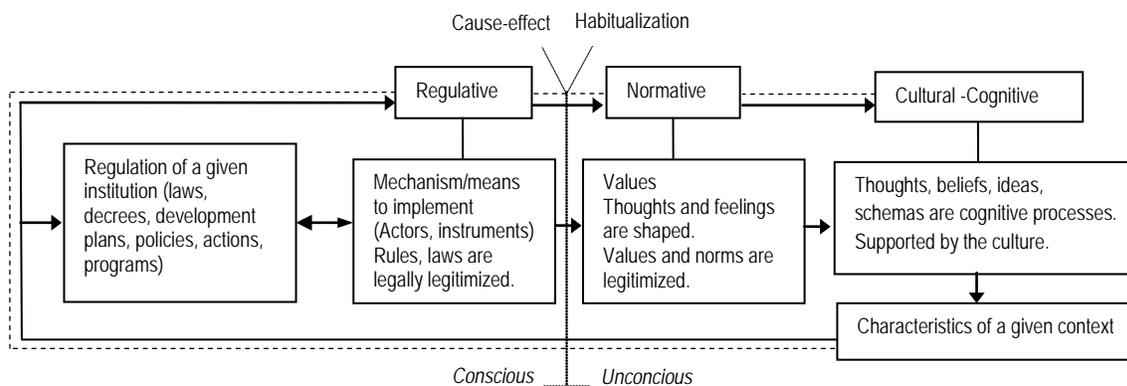
Source: Scott, Richard (2008:51)

Within the process of institutionalization, and in accordance with the three pillars above, Tolbert and Zucker (1996; Scott 2008:125-127) suggest sequential processes involved. First, *Habitualization* which ‘refers to behaviors that have been developed empirically and adopted by an actor, or set of actors in order to set recurring problems’, this implies the

sharing of definitions and meanings. Second, *Objectification*, this ‘involves some degree of social consensus among organizational decision makers concerning the value of a structure’ for this organizations can use gathered information from different sources. And third, *Sedimentation* or *full institutionalization* is characterized by the ‘complete spread of structures across the groups of actors theorized as appropriate adopters and by perpetuation of structures over lengthy period of time’.

By referring the neo institutional approach, the study seeks to analyze the mechanisms under which the University of Antioquia, as a public higher education institution, structures the decision making regarding access to disadvantaged students through equity policies such as affirmative action. Identifying institutional features, such as values, meanings, preferences, are determining aspects to understanding how organizations change and adapt to norms and beliefs in their environments. The university, in that direction, has constructed a system that allows it, or constrains it, from reaching the goals and legitimizing procedures that meet the cognitive structure of society. It is important to emphasize the organizational perspective of this study through the different individual actors who are involved in policy decision making and those that translate stated policies into action. This single organization is part of a broader system, the national level. The organization is influenced and shape by national decisions and a context.

Figure 1 Legitimacy and Institutionalization Process



Adapted from Scott (2008), Hoffman (1997), Tolbert and Zucker (1996) and Gornitzka

Figure 1 attempt to summarize the theoretical framework used in this thesis. It is observed that in the process of institutionalization, there is a continuum moving from conscious to the unconscious, from the legally to the taken for granted (Hoffman, 1997). The terms conscious and unconscious can be examined from the psychological perspective. In his work, Lev Vigotsky developed the Socio Historic and Cultural Theory. This theory implies that through the interaction with the society in a given culture, children acquire the knowledge of meanings of symbols, beliefs, values, (through the processes of thought and language) and internalize the forms of conducts (Blank & Van der Veer, 1990). Adults provide the tools that have been historically supplied. For Vigotsky, culture is internalized in a form of neuropsychic system involved in the physiologic basis of the human brain (Blank, 1989 & Blank & Van der Veer, 1990). To this extent, the interaction with a given culture, and a system that provides a set of regulations, make that at some point of the process the meanings are internalized by the individuals. The meanings acquired become part of the individual's own cognitive processes. Figure 1 also shows a constant process of the three pillars. This thesis considers that implementation of new regulations, or their reforms, are implemented as causality, *cause-effect*; and which results can be, in some part of the process, broadly accepted through the *habitualization* (Tolbert and Zucker, 1996). Due to actors transmit what is described as real; institutionalization process is represented through an intermittent line. As it is observed, individuals in a given context, with certain thoughts, beliefs, ideas, schemas and assumptions (Scott, 2008), create or reform the regulations of a given institution.

3.4 Summary

The literature review and theoretical framework in this chapter were elaborated based on concepts and studies of strategies in the direction of equity policies and the neo institutional perspective. The study is analyzed in two dimensions. First, following the concept of policy and the characteristics of policy content by Gornitzka (1999); under this perspective the study will focus on the policy or action problem, objectives, normative basis, instruments used, and linkage between other policies and actors. Within the complexity of design and

implement of equity policies, it is suggested a deep diagnosis by the actors involved, in which can be identified aspects of the origin of equity, and the integration between secondary and tertiary education, and take into account the barriers that students meet in the access to higher education. Among the variety of policies, actions or strategies that seek an adequate level of equity it is found in the literature the affirmative action. This type of actions, oriented to the higher education field, attempt to facilitate the access to groups that have been discriminated. The second dimension to analysis this study is based on the conceptual framework regarding institutionalization, legitimacy and neoinstitutional perspective. Neoinstitutional approaches provide three pillars (Scott 2008) that structure this study: regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive. Through this framework, it is enhanced the importance of the context in the conduct of the organization. Context is seen as the provider of the norms, rules, customs and meanings. Neo institutional perspective points out that beliefs and values are institutionalized through the three pillars. Moreover, it suggests that legitimation of conducts and behaviors are made through a variety of aspects within the three pillars.

Research Methodology

4.1 Overview

The following chapter offers the methodological strategy for the analysis of this study. The chapter starts with the research approach; this study is designed and conducted under qualitative perspective, and has an exploratory purpose. It presents the research strategy for data collection and the methods to collect and analyze the data.

4.2 Research Approaches

The study is conducted under a qualitative methodology. Marshal and Rossman (2006) suggest that qualitative research is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena. They highlight that this perspective is naturalistic, draws on multiple methods which respects the humanity of participants in the study, focuses on context, it is emergent and evolving, and is fundamentally interpretative. Focusing in these features, the researcher seeks answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and giving meaning (Silverman, 2005). Due to the exploratory purpose of the thesis, qualitative approach shows strengths by enhancing the importance of context, as a main factor by shaping the procedures and actions in an institution. As well, an exploratory research implies a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon under study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This study has a strong focus in the building of norms, beliefs and meanings that bring to legitimize procedures in higher education, how these phenomena occur in the institution, who is involved and how the institution has created strategies to pursue the institutional goals. Within the qualitative methodology, this thesis uses two methods, qualitative interviews and document analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

4.3 Case Study: University of Antioquia

“A case may be simple or complex... (But) it is one among others. In any given study, we will concentrate on the one; the basic idea is that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate. While there might be a variety of specific purposes and research questions, the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible”. (Punch, 2000: 436; 1998: 150 in Silverman, 2005: 126). ‘The hope in an elaborated case study is to be able to generalize to broader processes, to discover causes, and to explain or understand a phenomenon’ (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:6-7). However, Silverman (2005) discusses that generalization can be limited by aspects like representativeness of the sample (that may imply the importance of the case, taking the case to which the researcher has access, considering that one case is not enough data).

This section describes the motivations that the researcher had for taking this university as the case study as the research strategy. There are basically three aspects that led towards the selection of this institution. First, *the location of the university*, the region in which is located University of Antioquia has been marked by the progress and the high commitment to the region Departamento de Antioquia, Londoño (2000) states that the society in this specific region of Colombia has historically been characterized by the ability to create institutional mechanisms, regional policies, strategic projects, public and private cooperative schemes, and presenting projects to the government in order to promote economic growth. Second, *the nature of the university*, it is relevant for this study the public characteristic of the institution, due to the grade of decentralization-centralization of norms and decisions given to the institution. Examining this specific public prestigious university can shed light on the conditions of others less prestigious institutions in the country, and to some extent, some characteristics can be generalized due to they are run under the same national regulations. Important as well, it is the social mission that the institution has as a public university. Third, *the size and reputation of the institution*,

University of Antioquia has an important number of students and recognition in the nation, as it was described in chapter two. It is a relevant aspect the regionalization process that the institution enhances and that has resulted into 11 branches in 9 sub-regions. Through this program the institution includes students from rural regions, and offer programs that may contribute to the progress of culture and economy of their localities. University of Antioquia as a public university enhances the commitment to serve society and the promotion of strategies which pursue development and progress of culture and economy.

Along through the history of this institution, University of Antioquia has built up a high level of reputation in Colombia; applicants come from all over the country. Academics and administrative personnel strive to maintain the demanding teaching and the recognition of the institution.

4.4 Data Collection

The conduction of this thesis took place in Medellín, June of 2010. The first step was contacting via e-mail the different ‘potential’ participants who might be involved in the decision making or implementation of actions related to the topic of research. Characteristics of the context, the country and the university itself, were taken into account for shaping and carrying out the process of data collection. Sensitive information concerning democracy in the institution, participation of different groups, reliability of reports and transparency in the procedures were aspects carefully conducted within the guidelines of the data collection. Beside the interviews, it was made a review of national educative laws and published institutional documents, which were complemented with non public institutional documents.

4.4.1 Selection of Informants

According to Babbie (2007), the term *informant* describes someone who is well versed in the social phenomenon in the research topic, and who is willing to tell what he or she knows about it, it is a member of the group that can talk directly about the group per se. Based on the review of published institutional information, a list of key informants was

established. The preliminary list included a member of the Superior University Council, a member of University Welfare Office, one member of the Academic Council –who was the first contact gotten by e-mail and who offered the collaboration by informing some of the informants about the purpose of the study-, and a Student Representative. Some of the informants just mentioned were contacted in advance and a series of appointments were established. The informants gave the reference of other informants within the topic. It is important to highlight the positive attitude from the informants in contributing to the requested time for interviews, referring to other informants, and offering contacts for further information.

4.4.2 Interview

Within qualitative research, interviewing is a widely used method to gather information. Kahn and Cannell (1957: 149 in Marshall and Rossman, 2006) describe interviewing as a “conversation with purpose”. Through these types of conversations the researcher explores general topics to help to know participants’ view, as well as help researchers to understand experiences and reconstruct events through the information.

In this study, eleven interviews were conducted with key personnel that have positions within equity related topics at the University of Antioquia. The interview guide is presented in the appendix 2.

1. *Dean of Economic Science, Member of Academic Council.* Also member of the Academic Council. In this council are debated the policies related to academic affairs, such as curriculum, programs, academic hiring, and pedagogic processes.
2. *Assistant of Vicerector of Academic Affairs.* The functions of this informant are focused on hiring academic staff. The informant is also a member of the inclusion committee.
3. *Coordinator of Part Time Program and Flexible Education.* This position is part of the Vicerectory of Academic Affair. This is one of the programs that enhance the social mission of the institution, by facilitating entrance through the preparation to take the admission exam.
4. *Coordinator of Extension Program “Semilleros”* in the Faculty of Nature Science and Mathematics. It is a relevance program, which also enhances the social mission of the institution by facilitating entrance through the training to take the admission exam.

5. *Director of Admission and Registration Office.* This department is in charge of all issues related to the admission process in coordination with all academic units. It registers admitted students, graduated, academic reports, and statistics of entrance, graduations and so forth.
6. *Representative of professors in the Superior University Council.* This informant is one of the 9 members of the USC at UdeA.
7. *Planning Department Assistant.* In this department are designed the development plans and action plans that run the university.
8. *Coordinator of Supporting Program to Visual Deficiency Students.* The informant is also a member of Inclusion Committee. This position is part of the Vicerectory of Academic Affairs. It is a relevant position in the development of equity. The participant is in charge of steering the program, moreover designs and updates the admission exam for visual deficiency applicants.
9. *Director of Regionalization Program.* This position is part of the Vicerectory of Extension. It is a relevant position in the social mission of the university.
10. *Assistant at the University Welfare Department.* This is a position that is not only institutional but national level, promoted by law 30 of 1992. The department develops a number of programs that enhance welfare not only for students but institutional staff. One of the objectives is to lead integration programs for disadvantage students, highlighting the diversity and granting permanence in the institution. The department focuses on equity programs after the admission of the students. It does not intervene in any action related to access.
11. *Student Leader* in the Engineering Department. Though the non participation of students in the Superior University Council, there are students who lead actions, through assemblies, regarding the factors that affect the public university. This student answered the interview by e-mail due to late contact provided.

4.4.3 Document Analysis

Qualitative researchers often complement interviewing, participant observation, and observation with the gathering and analysis of documents. The method is useful in developing an understanding of the setting or the group studied (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). The review of official documents is taken as part of the data collection in this study; both national and institutional documents are analyzed.

Other complementary institutional documents were collected, such as: Tuition fee criteria 2007- 2009 (power point presentation); Regionalization 1995-2010: Inscriptions, Admissions and Enrollments (power point presentation); Regionalization 1995-2010: Results of Admission Exam (power point presentation); Preliminary Report of the Base Document for the Strengthen of Inclusion Process at University of Antioquia, 2009.

National	<p>Law 30 of 1992, <i>In which is organized the public service of higher education</i>²⁷</p> <p>Law 115 of 1994, <i>General Education Law</i>²⁸</p> <p>Agreement 03, march 21, 1995, <i>In which are established the politics of the University Welfare Offices in Higher Education Institutions</i>²⁹</p> <p>Plan Decenal 2006 -2015 <i>Development Plan from the Ministry of Education</i></p> <p>Plan Sectorial 2006- 2010 <i>Action Plans for Plan Decenal during the current government, under the policies of “ Revolución Educativa”</i></p>
Institutional (UdeA) ³⁰	<p>General statute. Superior Agreement 01, March 05, 1994</p> <p>Student Guidelines. Agreement 01, February 15, 1981</p> <p>Development Plan 2006 -2016</p> <p>Action Plan 2009- 2012</p> <p>Academic Agreement 202 , February 7 , 2002, <i>In which is created the program Flexible Education</i></p> <p>Academic Agreement 236, October 26 ,2002, <i>In which is establish the admission criteria</i></p> <p>Academic Agreement 005, May 24, 1994, <i>Which gives the guidelines to the Part time courses</i></p> <p>Rectoral resolution 15849, April 23, 2002,<i>In which are establish the Criteria of tuition fee cost</i></p> <p>Superior Agreement 173, July 13, 2000,<i>In which is created the University Welfare System in the University of Antioquia</i></p> <p>Academic Agreement 317, December 6, 2007, <i>In which is created the Inclusion Committee, establishes its objectives, functions, and other related aspects.</i></p> <p>Superior Agreement 257, May 25, 1993, <i>In which is added the program Semilleros to the Superior Agreement 57 of 1987, as a modality of extension course</i></p>

4.5 Summary

This chapter has provided the methodological approaches that have been used to carry out this study. The thesis has used the qualitative perspective, and the research strategy is a case study. In order to collect data, it has been conducted eleven individual interviews to key informants related to issues of equity and access in the institution. Besides the interviews, a second method has been the document analysis. For this, there are national and institutional relevant statements, which support the actions regarding equity and access in University of Antioquia.

²⁷ Available at http://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1621/articles-86437_Archivo_pdf.pdf

²⁸ Available at http://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1621/articles-85906_archivo_pdf.pdf

²⁹ Available at http://menweb.mineduacion.gov.co:8080/cesu/doc/Acuerdo_03_1995_Cesu.pdf

³⁰ Institutional Documents are available at

<http://www.udea.edu.co/portal/page/portal/portal/A.InformacionInstitucional/J.Normativa/A.DeCaracterGeneral>

Presentation and Analysis of the Findings

5.1 Overview

The following chapter presents and analyses the findings of this thesis. The chapter starts with the categorization of the interviewees; then it presents and analyzes the decision making procedures in the University of Antioquia (UdeA). Later it examines the strategies and special programs that the university has implemented in order to facilitate access to disadvantaged students. The last part of the chapter infers aspects which shape policies and decision making in the university.

5.2 Categorization of Informants

Informants are classified into three groups: policy maker, policy implementer and student. Table 10 shows their participation in the governing councils and other participation.

Table 10 Categorization of Informants

Category	Informant	Participation in decision making (University Superior Council)	Participation in Academic Council	Other participation
Policy maker	Representative of professors in the Superior University Council	Full voting [and opinion] rights		
Policy implementer	Dean of Economic Science		Member	
	Assistant of Vice rector of academic affairs			Member of inclusion committee
	Coordinator of Part Time Program and Flexible Education			
	Coordinator of Extension Program “Semilleros”. Faculty of Nature Science and Mathematics			
	Director of Admission and Registration Office			Member of Tuition Fee Liquidation Committee
	Planning Department Assistant	*		
	Coordinator of Supporting Program to Visual deficiency Students			Member of inclusion committee
Director of Regionalization Program	Invited No voting rights		Regionalization Committee,	

	Assistant at the University Welfare Department	*		Inclusion Committee
Student	Student Spokesperson			Student General Assembly. Spokesperson

*the directors of these departments are invited to participate in University Superior Council, with no voting rights.

5.3 Decision Making in the University of Antioquia

Decision making takes place within the two main councils of UdeA. Table 11 presents the members of the University Superior Council (USC), according to Law 30 of 1992, and it makes a parallel with the member of the current University Superior Council at UdeA.

Table 11 University Superior Council, University of Antioquia

Members of University Superior Council Law 30 of 1992	Linkage with the university	Members of University Superior Council University of Antioquia	Invited members in the debates of University Superior Council University of Antioquia <i>No voting rights</i>
Ministry of Education or his/her representative	External	Representative of the Ministry of Education	Secretary of Education in the Departamento de Antioquia
Governor of the Departamento de Antioquia Whom chairs the council	External	Governor of the regional department /or the Secretary of Education in the Departamento de Antioquia Who chairs the council	Auditor of the University of Antioquia
Representative of the President of Colombia	External	Representative of the President of Colombia	Comptroller of Departamento de Antioquia
A representative from the academic units	Internal	A representative from the academic units	General Vicerector of the UdeA
A representative of professors	Internal	A representative of professors	Administration Vicerector of UdeA
A representative of graduated students	External	A representative of graduated students	Research Vicerector of UdeA
A student representative	Internal	None	Extension Vicerector of UdeA
A representative of the industrial sector	External	A representative of the industrial sector	Academic Affairs Vicerector of UdeA
An ex-rector of the university	External	An ex-rector of the university	Director of the Legal Advisory Department
Rector of the University* <i>Opinion rights but no voting rights</i>	Internal	Rector of the University* <i>Opinion rights, but no voting rights</i>	Director of Planning Department of UdeA <i>Recently invited</i>

Source: Law 30 of 1992; Development Plan of the University of Antioquia 2006-2016.

*The Rector of a public university is pointed by the University Superior Council.

The structure of the University Superior Council shows imbalance within the members. Among the nine members with full voting [and opinion] rights, six are external to the university, external to processes of the institution. By this, it is not meant that their presence is not valid within the council; indeed, their presence follows the tendency of the different stakeholders in higher education institutions. A second observation concerns the member entitle to chair the council (with full voting and opinion rights), in this case the Governor of the Departamento de Antioquia. This member has two characteristics; first, the member is external to the university; second, the member shows low commitment in this function; as it was affirmed by an informant:

“This member (The Governor of the Departamento de Antioquia) does not attend often to meetings...the Governor is not interested in this... Instead, the Governor delegates the Secretary of Education of the Departamento de Antioquia to chair the council” (Anonymous, 2010).

From this affirmation, it is important to highlight that the Secretary of Education is listed as an invited member of the University Superior Council; invited members are not allowed to vote. A third observation in USC is the absence, for six years now, of the representative of the students. The argument of the students for rejecting participation in the University Superior Council is the misbalancing of the structure.

Institutional Development Plan 2006-2016 (p.p 18) and the General Statute of UdeA (1994) enhance the *democratic nature* of the University of Antioquia within the principle of equality. However, there are inconsistencies regarding the structure of the USC. Informants agree with their opinions about institutional democracy when they affirm that:

“...So, who is taking decisions in the university are not those who are in the university...; it is one of the problems that we have now, and that is the reason for the interruption of class activities. That is one of the issues that students and professors have been claiming about...” other informant argues that *“Decisions in the USC are politicized, the university is a minority in the decisions...the USC is antidemocratic”* (Anonymous, 2010).

An event was encountered while conducting the field work of this thesis. It gave relevant information about *democracy* procedures through *‘set-up elections’* in the faculties of the University of Antioquia, and highlights how USC operates. In one faculty, dean elections had occurred recently. Students voted to elect their dean. Nevertheless, USC did not point

the dean elected by students and academics; instead, USC pointed the candidate who got the lowest amount of votes. An informant in this thesis, and a casual conversation between students, affirmed that:

“We are in conflict here, we are in a permanent assembly, and we are alert! Due to a decision that USC took, they pointed a dictatorial dean, the dean of...., that no one likes him, neither the students nor the professors, nor even the employees. He has been dean for two periods now, and he was a candidate again, for the third period. USC pointed him, but in the following way: they (USC) announce a “Consult”, there are several candidates for the faculty of, and it is the same for any other faculty; so, there is a professor that tripled on votes to the dean in mention, who got 8% of votes. This result of the “consult” is taken by the USC, but it is not a binding opinion. It was pointed the candidate with fewer votes. That decision has given rise to anger, and that dean is still there, he does not leave, USC is supporting him. Obviously USC won, they are majority. That is the problem. Someone who does not have governability! , that dean has not governability in his faculty and he was pointed because he is relative of the president of Colombia. So, it is politicized. You become a majority if you are supported by the president, the ministry, the governor. The same is to point a rector or a dean” (Anonymous, 2010).

The Student Spokesperson (2010) argues about the participation of students in the USC that: *“The presence of a student does not influence in the institutional decision making, but it would legitimate the process of decision making”.*

Instead of participating in the USC, the students have organized themselves into the *General Student Assembly*. Any enrolled student from UdeA can participate in the meetings and debates. They established their own regulations for pointing the spokespersons that bring the voice of students to the university authorities and administrative staff. Spokespersons cannot take decisions themselves, but the whole assembly plenary. The student spokesperson (2010) considers that, in order to have a more democratic structure of the USC: *“The council should include academic and research representation with commitment to the development of the nation, also the representation of students, teachers, alumni, and minorities; as well as the representation of public and private sectors of society. In this direction the university can give responses to the needs of society”.*

Moving to the second governing structure, table 12 shows the composition of the Academic Council in the UdeA, members and invited members.

The General Statute of the UdeA states the participation of students, professors, and deans of each faculty, rector, among others. However, it can be observed that student

representation is not listed. Other relevant aspect in the Academic Council, it is the status of invited members of schools and institute directors.

Table 12 Academic Council of the University of Antioquia

Members	Invited Members
Rector, who chairs the council	General Vicerector
Research Vicerector	Director of University Welfare Department
Extension Vicerector	Director of Foreign Affairs Office
Dean of Faculty of Arts	Director of Planning Department
Dean of Faculty of Economic Science	Director of the Legal Advisory Department
Dean Faculty of Natural Science and Mathematics	Director of Post grade Department
Dean of Faculty of Social Science and Humanities	Director of Regionalization Department
Dean of Faculty of Communication	Director of Microbiology School
Dean of Faculty of Law and Politic Science	Director of The Inter-American Library Science School
Dean of Faculty of Education	Director of the Nutrition and Dietetics School
Dean of Faculty of Nursing	Director of Physical Education and Sport Institute
Dean Faculty of Engineering	Director of Language School
Dean of Faculty of Medicine	Director of Philosophy Institute
Dean Faculty of Agricultural Science	Director of Internal Control Office
Dean of National Faculty of Public Health	
Dean Faculty of Dentistry	
Dean of Faculty of Pharmacist	
Professor representative	
General Secretary of UdeA	
Administration Vicerector	
Academic Affairs Vicerector	

Source: Development Plan 2006-2016

It is of importance to mention that the General Statute (1994) states that schools and institutes are considered part of the faculties; though they have certain autonomy, they depend from the faculties and highlight that these units focus in research in applied science.

Initiative is a characteristic of the University of Antioquia. It was revealed by informants of this thesis that, institutional programs and actions (see table 13) started in the academic units by professors and teachers committed to the development of knowledge, and concerned about access limitations. Today, professors, coordinators of programs, members of committees and so on, continue to work on strategies to be presented to Academic Council. This council studies the projects and may approve them or reject them. Approved projects are delivered to the maximum authority, the University Superior Council. Decision of policies regarding academic procedures, for instance, the admission criteria is the province of Academic Council. When such policies need to be reformed, then it is the USC which makes reforms.

Regarding decision making, it is observed ambiguity between the *decentralized* ideology enhanced by law 30 of 1992, National Constitution of 1991, and institutional plans; and the *centralized* national decisions that conduct the university. As a decentralized university, the institution promotes, for instance, the existence of the University Welfare Office in each faculty and in sub-regions branches of the university; the regionalization program; and alliances with other sectors. As a centralized public institution, the university depends of national laws, national budget and decisions by the government. According to an informant, relevant information regarding events, meetings, decisions, and so forth, take place in Bogotá, excluding the participation from higher education institutions.

5.4 Equity Strategies and Special Programs

UdeA has implemented a variety of strategies and programs to facilitate access to disadvantaged students. It was observed the lack of knowledge about the strategy of *affirmative action* used in this thesis. Only one informant new about the strategy, and interpreted it as:

“Treating different to that one who is different, to that one who needs; but obviously, not that much different that may distort the rights of the others; because that can be a tendency, to give too much benefit because of the disadvantage conditions and the others may end up as disadvantaged as well” (anonymous, 2010)

At UdeA there are seven actions that pursue equity in the university; the actions or strategies involve students, who still are in high school, students who have finished high school and wish to be accepted by the university, students that come from special groups such as indigenous and afrocolombian communities, and students with visual deficiency, students from rural areas. Table 13 presents the seven actions or strategies analyzed in this thesis.

Table 13 Access Actions implemented in the University of Antioquia		
Strategy	Requirement	Aim
Semilleros	The student is enrolled in high school	Improve reading and logical skills to disadvantage students form lowest socio economic strata, in order to have a better performance in ICFES exam, and admission exam from UdeA or other HE institution.
Part time courses	Diploma from high school and ICFES exam	Improve reading and logical skills for admission exams from UdeA or other HE institution.

Flexible Education	Diploma from high school, ICFES exam and admission exam from UdeA	Assist students whom have taken and approve the admission exam at UdeA and are not admitted due to number of places.
Minorities	Diploma from high school and ICFES exam; proves that the student belong to indigenous or afro colombian community.	To accomplish national equity policy by the inclusion of two students per academic program, meeting the established in The Constitution of 1991 and law 70 of 1993.
Tuition Fee Criteria	To be admitted at UdeA; provide documents where state the socio economic strata of the student or the parents.	Facilitate access to disadvantaged students through the low tuition fees.
Regionalization Program- Special Admission within regionalization program <i>PEI (Programa Especial de Ingreso), Nivel Cero</i>	Student from a sub-region of the Departamento de Antioquia and apply for an academic program in one of the branches located in a sub region different from Medellín.	To facilitate access by the re-score/lower the standards of admission exam of UdeA.
Inclusion of vulnerable students * -Students with visual difficulties	Diploma from high school and ICFES exam	Inclusion of students with special abilities and cultural conditions, which can be vulnerable to social exclusion.

*Current discussions are taking place regarding other vulnerable students, such as those students who have been victims of conflict, and rehabilitated students from armed groups (guerrillas and paramilitary groups)

The first program listed on table 13, *Semilleros*, was legalized by the Superior Agreement 57 of 1987 in UdeA. Later, the Superior Agreement 257 of 1993 added this strategy to the modality of extension courses. Concerning about the low quality of primary and secondary education in Colombia, this program is meant to improve academic abilities of students who attend to high schools in poor areas of the city. As well, the program has been adopted by other faculties and other branches of UdeA in the sub –regions. The main propose of the courses is to prepare students for facing the institutional admission exam, and the demands of higher education, either at UdeA or other universities. The first *Semillero* was in mathematic field, in the Faculty of Nature Science and Mathematics. In the beginning, the courses consisted of 4 hours per week during 16 weeks. With the success of the strategy, other faculties have joined the program as well. Today, Faculty of Nature Science and Mathematics (during first semester of 2010), has 41 groups with 1457 students in Medellín (see appendix 3); and 5 groups with 92 students in two rural branches of the University. *Semilleros* has gained recognition not only within the institution but in the municipality. Public budget, ‘*Presupuesto Participativo*’, from the municipality, and which is administrated by local leaders from the poorest areas, has been invested in education.

Localities or 'Comunas' have contracted with UdeA in order to receive the service. Moreover, the program has extended to some sub regions of the Departamento de Antioquia, where the university has branches. According to the coordinator of the program, Semilleros has had a good impact which can be seen in the high demand of students and extension of schedules during weekends. The program takes place both, in the university campus and high schools. According to the program *REUNE* (a department in the Vicerechory of Extension, which since 2000 collects information from Semilleros in all faculties) since 2000 until the current semester of 2010, have attended 24.690 students. Semilleros has not only involved students, who are in their last year of high school, but it has concerned students in previous years of schooling, and it has also reached students in primary school. The program semilleros does not have statistics of the entering of those students to either UdeA, or to other institutions.

However the impact of this strategy, semilleros meets three main limitations. As limitations, informants from this thesis refer to *funding, resources* and *cost*. Though, the institution and governing actors highlight the achievements of the program, the university does not allocate budget or resources to run the program. As a result, students pay fees for the program. This limitation suggests that students from the lowest strata are paying for improving academic skills to access to public universities. Another aspect is that the strategy adjusts to the lack of classrooms to set the students. An observation of appendix 3, *Semilleros, Faculty of Nature Science and Mathematics*, shows that the number of students per group varies from 5 to 51. Two inquires from the characteristics of this strategy arise; first, to what extent the poor families (strata 1, 2, or even below this official strata classification) afford to pay for this service? And second, how effective are the courses for groups over 50 students per group?

It is observed that semilleros functions as a disarticulated strategy within faculties. The informant does not report any established committee to steer unified targets and procedures. Moreover, the informant affirms that:

“Semilleros cannot be part of the mission of the university, because the university focuses on higher education; however, it is valid for the university to intervene in previous levels of education” (Anonymous, 2010).

Moving to the second and third strategies, both coordinated by the Academic Affairs Vice rector Department. *Part time courses* were legalized on May 24th of 1994, under Academic Agreement 0005. This program offers courses for students who have high school diploma and have taken the national exam ‘*Pruebas de Estado*’ ICFES, for entering to higher education system. The purpose of the courses is, as well as Semilleros, to improve the skills of the students for taking the institutional admission exam, either at UdeA, or Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Students attending to part time courses pay fees, similar than semilleros. Regarding to budget shortage and the development of strategies as part time courses and semilleros an informant argues that:

“The university is not allowed to spend its budget solving the low quality from primary or secondary education, if so, the university would incur then in speculation. The only way to develop the strategies is by charging students, by contracting with the municipality and other sectors, or by making alliances with the other parties” (Anonymous, 2010).

Flexible Education program are the actions taken to assist those students, who have passed the admission exam, but due to lack of places at UdeA, cannot enter. The program was created by Academic Agreement on 7th February of 2002. It offers subjects from first and second semesters of the different academic programs in the university, the courses are taught by the same teachers and professors from UdeA. When students accomplish 16 credits, they can be eligible to enter to the programs that they have applied for. Students are graded during these courses. The treatment to students follows the guidelines from Law 30 of 1992 and the Institutional Student Statute. According to the informant (2010) flexible education students pay a semester fee according to the number of credits they take, the total paid might be higher than the semester fee of ordinary students.

The existence of this program was motivated by the dropout rate in the institution; hence the aim of the strategy is to replace the number of dropouts during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd

semesters. Today, the dropout rate is 10%, according to institutional official information³¹ (see appendix 4). Faculties report to Flexible Education program the number of places available caused by dropout, thus flexible education can admit a certain number of students per semester.

The next group listed on table 13 is *minorities*, which concerns to indigenous and afrocolombian communities. Article 13 of Constitution of 1991 states the no discrimination of any group in the nation. Based on this statement, on law 70 of 1993, on decree 1122 of 1998, and on decree 804 of 1995 (which promotes the education of all levels to ethnic groups, enhance diversity and multicultural environment), UdeA, through the Academic Agreement 236 of 2002, grants two quotas for indigenous and two for afrocolombian students. Besides this, the university implemented the re-score strategy in the admission exam for minority groups, 50/100. According to the registered information at UdeA, in 2009 there were 1585 enrolled students from minority groups; 913 Afro Colombian students and 669 indigenous students (from 78 different ethnic groups). 1585 students from minorities is equivalent to 4, 2 % of the student population in the university, including sub-regions. The rate of minority students is still low. There are two aspects of importance regarding this group. First, regards to the dropout rate, about this, an informant affirms that:

“The dropout rate of indigenous students is 47%. This information is not taken when publishing the official dropout rates neither by the institution nor by SNIES (Information National System of Higher Education)” (Anonymous, 2010).

A second aspect is the time they use to finish an academic program. The same informant also highlights that:

“A student from minority groups may take between 9 or 10 years to accomplish an academic program” (Anonymous, 2010).

This suggests that, however the university enhances the commitment to minority groups, the students meet difficulties in academic performance and integration; lack of official rates from this group constrain proper actions to retain students.

³¹ See also SPADIES, Sistema de Prevención y Análisis a la Deserción en las Instituciones de Educación Superior, available at <http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/article-156292.html>

Moving to the fifth strategy on table 13, it is the tuition fee criteria. Criteria are supported by Rectoral resolution 15849 of 2002. The resolution creates the *Tuition Fee Liquidation Committee*. The following table provides information about the members and functions.

Table 14 Tuition Fee Liquidation Committee, UdeA.

Members	Director of University Welfare department – who chairs the committee-. Director of Admission and Registration Office Director of Finance Department Coordinator of student welfare Coordinator of tuition fee liquidation Student Representative of the Academic Council
Functions	To re- liquidate the cost of tuition fee to those students who request it and only when the circumstances justifies it; To study and modify the cost of the charge in the case requested; To update the information of the aspects of tuition fee criteria, when the student proves that his/her economic conditions have changed, therefore the student gets a new tuition fee liquidation; And to request visits to the student’s household when it is necessary to verify socio economic information.

Source: Rectoral resolution 15849 of 2002

It is important to highlight the no participation of student representation in the Academic Council, which suggests none student participation in the tuition fee liquidation committee. Informants agree that the cost of tuition fees is very low, and in fact, it is a factor of equity in the institution. The resolution states four aspects for establishing the cost: monthly payment during the last high school year, socio economic strata according to the electricity/water bill in the students’ household, incomes, and personal assets. The mathematic formula for the criterion is: $0.40Lc + 0.20Lr + 0.20Lp + 0.20Le$, in which:

Lc = liquidation of the monthly payment during the last high school year

Lr = liquidation of incomes

Lp = liquidation of personal assets

Le = liquidation of socio economic strata

The following table shows tuition fee cost that students have paid the last seven years:

Table 15 Tuition fee cost and socio economic strata, UdeA

Minimum tuition fee cost according to socio economic strata							
Strata/ year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1	54905*	58199	61164	64164	67372	70774	74348
2	68631	72749	80206	80206	84216	89428	93917
3	131770	139677	153994	153994	161694	170780	180377
4	301975	320094	352903	352903	370548	390076	410633
5	823569	872983	962464	962464	1.010587	1.062.116	1.116.272
6	1.619.686	1.716.866	1.892.845	1.892.845	1987487	2.087.864	2.193.310

Source: Admission and Registry Department of University of Antioquia

*Values are given in Colombian currency Pesos.

1 € = 2353, 12 Pesos. 1 NOK= 300 Pesos

Rectoral resolution 15849 of 2002 states the treatment to undergraduate students from the lowest socio economic strata (1 and 2 strata). It establishes that these students are exempt from tuition fee after achieving 16 credits and show good academic record. Students achieve 16 credits when they have accomplished two semesters in the university. This aspect is considered a good attempt by the university, however four of the informants (2010) point out two aspects of this action. First, the strategy applies long time after the disadvantage student has started the studies. Second, informants affirm that dropouts occur between the first and third semester, basically for living costs problems, this suggests the need for the strategies to move towards that period.

In this strategy, it is of importance to highlight the documentation-fraud phenomena, which is faced by UdeA and other institutions. Even though there is control, to some extent, for checking the information delivered by students, it seems it has not been effective. An informant (2010) affirmed that there is an internal control which consists in comparing the information (SES, telephone and addressed) given during the inscription and the information delivered for the liquidity of tuition cost fee. There are other external controls that consist in checking the information through the Property Registry Office, DIAN (Tax department and national customs), and FOSYGA (Solidarity fund and guarantee).

Regarding to check and monitoring the information, an informant (2010) affirms, “*In theory, it exists*”. The same informant commented about a study which was carried out five years ago in the institution, conducted on a semester cohort of 5000 admitted students –the study was motivated for a great suspicious of fraud-. From a sample of 1200 students, the study reported 128 cases of great suspected students. The informant is not sure if it was one or two students penalized by committing fraud, and affirms that “*the study was not followed up*”. The student spokesman affirms that:

“Fraud is a problem and it is necessary to admit it, students from strata 3 and 4 in order to get benefits from the university, provide socio economic strata documents from relatives and friends who live in strata 1 and 2. The university administrators know this problem...a real study would change the numbers of students from each strata” (Anonymous, 2010).

This affirmation suggests a great institutional problem related to fraud, which needs to be considered and solved in pursue of equity. On table 13, it can be observed that, Tuition Fee Liquidation Committee does not include application of penalty regarding fraud documentation. Rectoral resolution 15849 of 2002, art 7, states that *“in case of fake or non exact documentation, the student must pay the true amount of fee, and the university shall charge the student with 100% of the amount of the fee, plus other disciplinary sanctions according to the student statute”*. Concerning to this problem, it can be said that issues such as values, norms, and lack of effective database system in the country, meet and develop the high possibility of committing fraud.

A relevant aspect to highlight in this section regards the inconsistency by the informants about the rate of students from the different socioeconomic strata³². There are different rates according to each informant. According to informants:

“Students from strata 1, 2, 3 are rated: 70%, 75%, 80-90%, 82%, while others affirm that students from strata 1, 2, 3 are rated a 92%, and 90 -95%”. The student spokesman refers that over *“60% of students are from strata 3 and about 6% from strata 1”* (Anonymous, 2010).

Close to this affirmation, an informant argues that:

“About 5% of students are from strata 1, and the great majority is from strata 2 and 3..., the poorest are not entering to higher education, the university itself fulfills a role, I mean, education, it is an equity factor. We have to achieve that the truly poor students enter to higher education, and that is what we are not achieving...moreover, socio economic stratification system seems not to be an adequate system to assign state subsidization” (Anonymous, 2010).

Special Admission within regionalization program- *PEI (Programa Especial de Ingreso)* is the next strategy on table 13. Regionalization project started in 1995. Superior Agreement 156 of 18th February of 1999 officially established the structure of the Regionalization Department, its targets, personnel, functions, and created the Regionalization Committee. The department comprises a full time director, full time assistant, full time administrative coordinator, and a full time secretary. The program seeks to include students from far apart rural areas within the region of Antioquia. The university promotes this department, and enhances the achievements in coverage and pursue of equity. It is of importance to

³² Official rate of students from the different socio economic strata was not provided by the university.

highlight the structure of the committee, which gathers pertinent members for pursuing an institutional target. Table 16 lists the members and the functions of the committee.

Table 16 Regionalization Committee, UdeA.

Members	<p>Director of Regionalization, who chairs the committee</p> <p>Research Vicerector/ representative</p> <p>Academic Affairs Vicerector/ representative</p> <p>Extension Vicerector/ representative</p> <p>Director of the University Welfare Department</p> <p>Director of Postgraduate Programs</p> <p>A Dean or Director of School/Institute pointed by the Academic Council (two years period)</p> <p>A representative of professors (this member ought to participate in the regionalization academic programs, and is elected by the professor representatives from the Faculty/Schools/Institutes Councils, for a period of two years.</p> <p>Regionalization Assistant, who acts as a secretary in the committee.</p>
Functions	<p>To advise the University Superior Council, Academic Council and Rectory in issues related to regionalization policies.</p> <p>To design the regionalization action plan and presented to the pertinent authority.</p> <p>To plan the budget for regionalization</p> <p>To follow up the academic and administrative performance in each branch and deliver reports to the Academic Council.</p> <p>To advise the different units and departments on regionalization issues.</p> <p>To promote the regionalization development in the university.</p> <p>To arrange with the Academic Council the semester academic offer.</p> <p>To advise the Director of regionalization on pertinent aspects, and when he/she requires.</p> <p>To present reports to the pertinent authorities.</p> <p>To develop its own regulations.</p>

Source: Superior Agreement 156 of 18th February of 1999

Regionalization is strongly enhanced by the university and as it is observed on table 16, the committee shows a coordinate and cooperative work within the institution. As the informant affirms:

“Every faculty knows what we do, all of them determine the pensum, they announce and select the academic staff, they establish the exams, and it is set in the academic units”, and “we promote, administrate, support logistic processes, but the academic responsibility is of the faculties” (Anonymous, 2010).

The Department of Regionalization has carried out strategies to facilitate access to UdeA. First, the action of re-score or to lower standards for the admission exam has facilitated rural students to participate in higher education. The cause to make scores flexible in this context was the low quality in primary and secondary education. Ordinary students are admitted when scoring over 53/100; students within the regionalization program are admitted scoring 50/100. Second, it offers *Sistema Especial de Ingreso (PEI)*, which is similar to semilleros, but it focuses on students from the last two years in high school. The aim of *PEI* is to improve reading and mathematics skills in students in order to have a good

performance on the admission exam. Students pay the cost of the course. Statistics from Regionalization Department say that from 152 students registered at *PEI*, 92, 2% approved the admission exam for the first semester of 2010. The third strategy in this program regards to a new strategy *Nivel Cero* which offers a special course to those students who have scored 40-49/100 in the admission exam. The aim of this strategy is to raise the reading and mathematics skills in order to reach a good academic performance and integrate the student to the university demands. The following tables and figures provide an overview of the profile of the student from the rural areas, regarding age, strata, and exam scores.

Table 17 Participation of students from Sub-regions, UdeA.

year	age	Applicants			Admitted Students			Enrolled Students		
		<18	>=18 and >=24	>24	<18	>=18 and >=24	>24	<18	>=18 and >=24	>24
2007		1229	3429	1318	453	1063	368	1	875	524
2008		1479	3264	1214	381	714	273	2	823	289
2009		1580	2978	1091	557	778	269	22	1090	333

Source: Regionalization Department, Universidad de Antioquia

Table 18 Socio Economic Strata of Students in the Sub-regions, UdeA

year	Strata 1	Strata 2	Strata 3	Strata 4	Strata 5	Strata 6
2007	1937	2663	1283	42	5	15
2008	1808	2500	1382	59	5	9
2009	1553	2335	1492	70	11	9

Source: Regionalization Department, Universidad de Antioquia

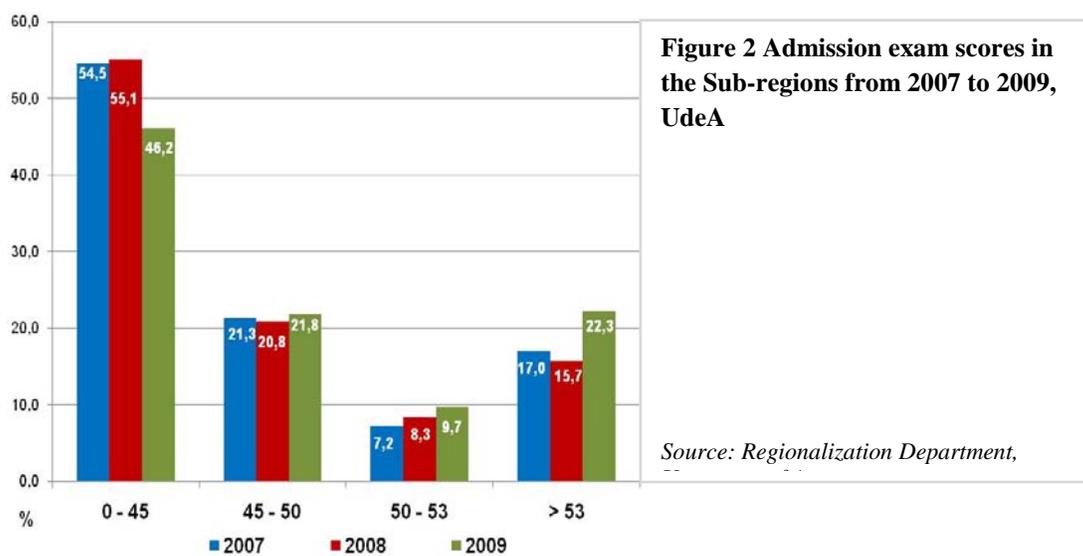
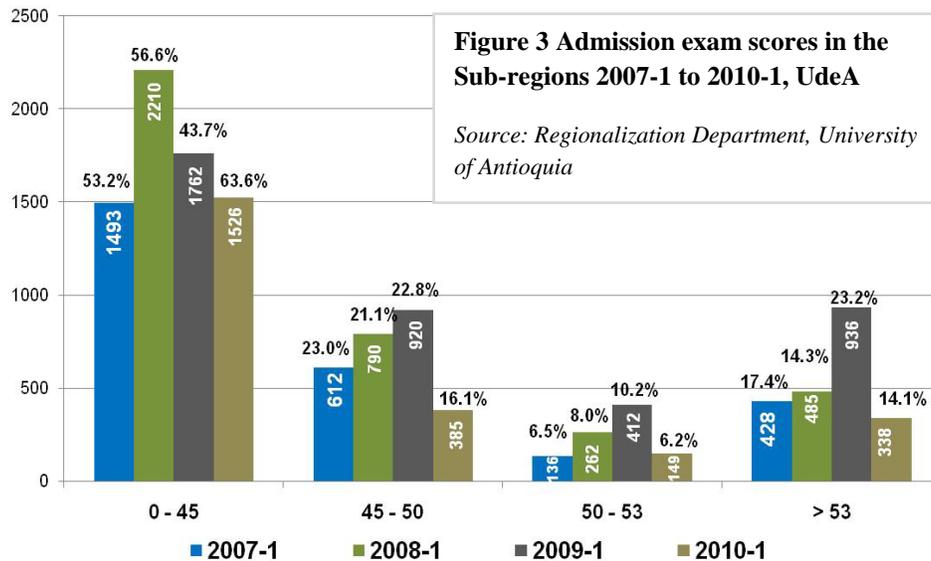


Figure 2 Admission exam scores in the Sub-regions from 2007 to 2009, UdeA

Source: Regionalization Department,



According to the tables above, in 2009 the university registered 5649 applicants in the sub-regions; 25% of them were enrolled in the institution. Table 17 shows that during 2007 and 2009, students from socio economic strata 2 heads the list, followed by strata 1 and 3. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the performance of students in the admission exam. Figures show the improvement in the scores, which suggest effectiveness of the strategies *PEI*. However, it is observed in both figures that the distinction of scores 0-45 is not clear; strategy ‘*nivel cero*’ admits students with scores over 40/-49/100, the table does not show the percentage of this group. Concerning strategy *nivel cero*, it states that its main objective is to offer 100% of the available places to students in the region, without affecting quality. For the current semester of 2010, there were 656 applicants, and 516 were admitted; this is equivalent to 78%. High rates of admission in the sub- regions involve as well strong commitment from the institution to strength not only the academic skills, but resources to retain students in the university.

Besides these strategies mentioned above, regionalization department has adopted strategies applied in the main branch, such as *semilleros* and *formación de formadores*. The latter action assists high school teachers, in improving academic skills such as reading, mathematics and nature science in order improve the educational performance of high school students.

The last but not least strategy listed on table 13 refers to *Inclusion of Vulnerable Students*. Vulnerable students are described in the Academic Agreement 317 of 2007 as “*those students whom have special abilities and cultural conditions different from the rest of the population, which might affect them and suffer exclusion from educative system, besides constraining their participation in economic, political, social and cultural activities in our society*”. Equity actions that involve vulnerable groups are carried out by the Inclusion Committee. This committee was officially created in 2007, by Academic Agreement 317; the committee assists the Academic Council and the administration in designing policies, plans, strategies, and programs in favor of vulnerable students.

Table 19 Inclusion Committee, UdeA.

Members	Academic Affairs Vicerector (who chairs the committee)/ often with the representation of the Coordinator of Supporting Program to Visual deficiency Students. Dean of the Faculty of Education (as the representative from the Academic Council) Director of the University Welfare Department Director of Regionalization A representative from the different organizations of the university which work in favor of vulnerable students. The mentions organization must be legally registered in the university. A student representative for the visual deficiency students. In the near future, a representative of Indigenous students.
Functions	To propose to the university governance structures the plans, strategies, and programs that facilitate access, permanence, and accomplishment of studies. Assist the different departments of the university to adopt values and principles of inclusion To carry out procedures in favor of cultural transformation within the university, and in favor of vulnerable students To create permanent information strategies, to the community in general, about the available services for vulnerable students To participate in events -local, regional, national and international- regarding the analysis of inclusion in higher education. With the contribution of research and permanent inquiring to be able to create an impact and transform the public policy in both directions. To organize programs and academic events which might promote inclusion in higher education To assist and support local, national and international activities in favor of the inclusion of vulnerable students in higher education To promote, support and assist basic and applied research regarding inclusion of vulnerable students Others that may assign the Academic Council or the Rector of the University.

Source: Academic Agreement 317, 2007. University of Antioquia

Before 2007, the committee functioned as a temporal commission (minutes 290 / 2005 by Academic Council), the experience as a temporal commission showed them that such structure gave disarticulated strategies from each unit. Table 18 shows that this committee promotes the inclusion of a wide representation of members involved with access, permanence and equity actions, as well that the representation of minorities and the

students; in other words, it seems to be open to participation of different groups. The informant states:

“Today, we have some identified groups, tomorrow might be others; I mean, according to social changes, and to so many phenomena that happens in this country, particularly, there are going to appear other vulnerable groups” (Anonymous, 2010).

The functions of the committee of inclusion not only highlight the development of plans, strategies and so forth, but promote a dynamic within the institution and between other institutions and encourage the cultural transformation through these actions. According to the activities carried out by the committee, the informant affirms that:

“It has been very complex because it is a new thematic [...]. We, by suggestion of the Academic Council, tried the conceptualization of inclusion to be comprehensive, and we try to have a transversal steering to all processes in the university...It cannot be only the economic perspective, but pedagogic, accessibility, and all the factors that in a given moment may cause student attrition, inequity and inequality[...] The Ministry of Education told us that the University must have a position towards inclusion, then we struggled reading books, translating documents about the topic...but, why has not the Ministry of Education set a position towards inclusion?...It is complex because the Ministry of Education gives some guidelines to the institutions, but when you meet problems with this, and you turn to the ministry, any of them have clarity about the inclusion, then you feel that you are abandoned ” (Anonymous, 2010).

Until recently, the committee had identified as vulnerable students only to those with visual difficulties, and had applied several important coordinated actions, not only to facilitate access but the permanence of these students. Those actions have been: the addition of options in the on-line inscription, regarding physical or sensorial disabilities (visual/hearing); adaptation of admission exam: translation into Braille system and to audio; adaptation of a special room for students with visual difficulties, in which are six computers with Braille keyword, and software that let the student visualize the text while hearing; the announcing for volunteers to read academic texts for this group of students, there are over 300 volunteers now. It is important to mention that this strategy (reading volunteer) was one of the first actions to assist these students. Another action has been the adaptation of the infrastructure for these students; new students are assisted in order to learn the meanings of the adaptations. In June 2010 were reported 42 students, enrolled in 15 programs. UdeA is pioneer in the specialized service for students with visual difficulties. It is of relevance to mention that the performance in the admission exam and academic performance in the institution by this group of students have diminished. According to the

informant, the implementation of the General Law of Education 115 of 1994 cut down the specialized school for these disadvantage students, this suggests a decline of an important action in the articulation between secondary education and higher education in terms of equity. The informant affirms:

“In the University there are two generations of these students. One that studied at the specialized school (run by Jesuits), and the other that study in the regular school. The General Law of Education talks about integrated schools, so, these students were no longer at the specialized school, but they were relocated into the regular school. Before, they attended to the regular school in the morning, and they had the complemented instructions in the specialized school. They were excellent in Braille language, in the process of reading, writing, mobility and orientation, such school does not exist now.... the relocation process started in 2004. We can notice the difference; even in the performance of the admission exam...the academic performance of these students has been deteriorated” (Anonymous, 2010).

Committee of Inclusion has evolved over time, in terms of widen and go into depth of inclusion. Nowadays, debates about what other groups are identified as vulnerable students are taking place in the university. Among the groups that are identified are: students from the lowest socio economic strata, students who have been victims of social and political conflict in Colombia (forced displaced), rehabilitate students from guerrilla, and paramilitary armed groups. Regarding to these new identified groups of vulnerable students, the informant affirms that:

“Some universities have been including students from these groups, and have met serious legal problems [...]. Institutions have signed agreements with Social Action-a program from the Presidency-, they give economic incentives to universities that admit these students,... a colleague from a private university said that when they called the Ministry of Education, they answered that, cases regarding to those students were province of the Ministry of Justice, and the way around...they have no clarity...the Ministry of Education organize events, encourage universities to start programs and actions, but once we start, there are moments in which we are alone” ((Anonymous, 2010).

In June 2009, the Inclusion Committee presented a diagnosis which highlights the need to identify and make visible information and rates of minorities and other excluded groups; the diagnosis also provides a SWOT analysis in the aspects of access, permanence, and policies in the UdeA (see Appendix 5).

It calls attention that even thought the institution enhances the term of equity in the Development Plan 2006- 2016 and Action Plan 2009- 2012, which title is “*A University Committed with Knowledge for an Equitable and Including Society*”, inclusion committee

is not part of the statements. “*They did not want to include it*”, the informant affirms, and keeps on saying:

“We did present a diagnosis and inclusion strategic actions to the Planning Department..., and anything of what we presented is published in those plans..., when they were justifying the text for the introduction of the plan, they called and asked me: What is what the university takes as inclusion?, I answered: you should know since you are working with the rector.... In my opinion, the plans take inclusion as coverage...” (Anonymous, 2010)

Development plan (p.p 43) highlights the importance of ethnic diversity, cultural groups, the little knowledge about them and their ancestral knowledge; however, the actions that may promote the inclusion of these groups seem to be hidden and minimized.

5.5 Factors that Affect Policies and Actions

The study identifies three interconnected factors that affect the shape of policies and actions, e.g., *Social problems, Budget, and Low quality primary and secondary education*. These factors can be also considered as barriers to access to higher education.

The first aspect, *Social Problems* highly affects the performance of the UdeA. Within this aspect are found issues regarding a lack of reliable information, both, by the institution and the by the students i.e., official rates of dropout, the delivering of socio economic strata documentation by students in order to receive benefits addressed to the poorest students. It is also observed lack of democracy in procedures of decision making and other kind of procedures i.e., Election of rector and deans by governing actors in the university; procedures of this type silence the voice not only of students, but of members whom are carrying out important processes to pursue social targets of the institution. It is detected a high level of corruption, by the authorities themselves. Corruption is experienced in all systems and sectors across the nation; it is also part of the University of Antioquia. In the institution, it is known that to be a relative or close related person to important actors from government, it is a factor of personal benefit, for instance, to obtain priority for being elected as a part of the governing structure of councils, or faculties in the university. It benefits also the way around. In that manner, government keeps control of actions in the institution. Moving to the second aspect, it concerns the *Budget*. This factor is greatly

affected by the characteristics of corruption in the country. As it was mentioned in chapter three, budget for higher education is a minimum part of the national budget, while a bigger amount of those resources is taken by corrupted politicians, among other actors involved. This factor constrains the actions of access to higher education, permanence and the accomplishment of studies. An informant states:

“Equity is a utopia; the University of Antioquia does not select favorite students, all present the same exam under the same conditions. It is a transparent process..., but society has already excluded them. Since the social system is not fair, there is no equity in access to higher education. Social system does not give the same opportunities to all...the University of Antioquia does not discriminate them, but the social system does” (Anonymous, 2010).

This affirmation takes us to a third aspect. *Low quality of education from previous studies, primary and secondary*. It is an identified and admitted limitation in the university. All participants pointed out the problem, which comes together with the economic factor of the student. University of Antioquia as a public institution promotes the entrance for the poorest students, but those students are who meet more troubles to enter due to a low performance in the admission exam. Poorest population of students attends to public schools which lack of resources to grant the development of skills for further schooling.

Two participants affirm:

“There is lack of commitment from education actors and the government itself regarding primary and secondary education system”...and... “the university attempts to solve academic problems from previous education, but budget is a great limitation” (Anonymous, 2010).

Strategies developed by the university, which are addressed to improve academic skills in poor students for entering to higher education and accomplish studies, do not grant that they reach the poorest students.

It is found attitudes attached to the factors just mention. It can be argued that *tolerance of wrongdoing processes* is high, which is promoted by the highest spheres of government and experienced within the institution. This tolerance can be experienced in phenomena such as transparency vs. fraud, democracy vs. anti democracy, reliable information vs. non reliable information. Secondly, it is found *institutional hopeless* in the expressions from informants like:

“Here is like begging for budget...the future of the public university in Colombia is not promising”
(Anonymous, 2010).

This attitude involves the absence of student representation, procedures for decision making, lack of resources, corruption, and other operations.

On the other hand, the impact of programs as *semilleros*, suggest *hope* for the university's actions. Especially, when low strata parents enroll their kids, even since the age of 9-10, to attend to the courses for improving academic skills for the admission exam of the university, and academic performance.

The Development Plan 2006-2016 (p.p 65) states the limitation of the no reliable information by different academic and administrative units of the University of Antioquia; as well, it highlights other social problems (p.p 42) as corruption and favoritism, among others that undergoes the country. However, the strategic framework (p.p 71-107), that seek to reach five great targets of the plan (*development of the science, technology and innovation, excellence humanistic and research formation, relationship university-society, welfare of the university community, and effectiveness in the organization procedures*) do not include any action to minimize the influence of the social problems in the institution. On the other hand, Action Plan 2009-2012 presents the actions to crystallize the strategies proposed in the development plan. The Action Plan states (pp.13) the strength of cooperation within the different units in the university, in order to unify criteria and reach the targets. Through the committees created and the initiative of members involved-mentioned in this chapter- the strategy denotes effectiveness. Nevertheless, and concerning to social problems, which constrain pursue of equity, the action plan does not include actions for minimizing this problem.

National and institutional documentation analyzed in this thesis show a general characteristic in the discourse. Documents refer to a comprehensive development of the students at all levels of education, enhancing quality and equal opportunities. *The comprehensive development* and *strategic actions* seem to be two fashion terms used in policy making in Colombia. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2003), the term

comprehensive means “*complete and including everything that is necessary*”. It can be argued that the comprehensive development of individuals can start to be reached through specific and reachable targets, based on truly information to create the effective and efficient plans and strategies. Informants in this thesis argue:

“The Ministry has their plans as an ideal...another informant affirms: ...there are institutional goals that are not feasible when you see the budget... then I ask how we are going to reach that? And they answer; we hope that the government change...” (Anonymous, 2010)

5.6 Summary

Chapter five have presented the major findings in this thesis. Results show the imbalance in the governing structure and decision making in the university, the University Superior Council. The thesis does not disregard the actual members but highlights that the council does not promote the participation of members in the governing structure, such as representative of students, of minorities, and of other institutional actors who are committed and work in favor of the social mission of the university.

University of Antioquia has implemented seven relevant strategies, such as semilleros, part time courses, flexible education, minorities, tuitions fee criteria, strategies within the regionalization program and the inclusion to vulnerable students; all of them have the aim of facilitating access to disadvantaged students.

Nonetheless, strategies, policies and actions are constrained for aspects like social problems, budget and low quality from previous education. The three aspects suggested by this thesis involve a complex dynamic that originates, promotes, and increases inequalities not only in the University of Antioquia, but in the nation.

Discussion of the Findings and Conclusions

6.1 Overview

The following chapter is dedicated to the discussions of the findings. It discusses the model of decision making at UdeA, which shows bias towards the government. It also highlights the extent of equity approach in each of the strategies implemented in UdeA. Within the strategies, it is identified a phenomena of self finance, or private education, within the public university that gives the recognition of equity actions. Also, among the strategies there are some which are included in the development plans while others are excluded. In addition, it discusses some characteristics of the strategies implemented which can be considered, to some extent, approaches to affirmative action in the UdeA; as well, some institutional barriers to enter to this specific university are suggested. Moreover, this chapter underlines characteristics of the institution under each of the three pillars of institutionalization.

This chapter starts with the characteristics of decision making at the University of Antioquia. After this, the chapter discusses the strategies meant to facilitate access for disadvantaged students. The chapter also regards to the approaches to affirmative action strategies at UdeA and denotes some barriers to HE encountered at UdeA. Later, it is analyzed the process of legitimacy and institutionalization of the University of Antioquia in light of the theoretical framework used in this thesis. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to the major conclusions of this study, recommendations and ideas for further studies.

Research Questions

Through this chapter it will be answered the two research questions that conducted the thesis:

Is the implementation of special programs in the University of Antioquia contributing to facilitate access to disadvantaged students in higher education? And are these programs interpreted by the University of Antioquia as strategies that pursue equity?

As well, the following sections will discuss the findings that answer the subsequent research questions proposed:

What actors intervene in the institutional policymaking?

What institutional strategies regarding access have been applied?

Which strategies have succeeded, and which have failed?

What are the criteria for success and for failing?

What changes has brought to the institution the creation of plans and actions to increase equity?

Which factors may constrain the development of equity policies?

6.2 Who makes the decisions in the University of Antioquia?

The findings show the imbalance in the structure of decision making in the university, both the University Superior Council and the Academic Council. USC shows a strong bias towards the government, which makes decisions politicized- oriented. It assures that decisions are taken by the government. This steering model might have great consequences in the creation and implementation of institutional policies, and might constrain the effectiveness of what the university enhances as equity.

According to the analysis, the state takes decisions over the University of Antioquia based on a legalized and legitimized law, but illegal in practice. The university undergoes contradictions between the principle of democracy and the imposition of a governing structure. Findings indicate that the procedure that legitimizes *institutional democracy* is limited to 'set-up elections' of rector and deans, in which the university community

participates. In the University of Antioquia, results of the elections are not taken into account when pointing the positions of these members by the USC. Such procedures have resulted into strong demonstrations³³ by students and academic staff. Gomez (2001) denotes the disregarding from other forms of governability in public universities in Colombia, which he describes a form of *subjugation*.

Wrongdoing procedure in the decision taking, lack of transparency, lack of democracy, and so on, in public universities is not a new thematic. As it has been argued by Pulido et al (2001), and Gómez (2001), among others, these critical problems have been identified in the Colombian society; wrongdoing procedure are also identified in the SWOT analysis of the development plan of UdeA. An interesting observation from this is that the governing actors recognize this weakness in the structure, but no actions are taken for solving the problem. Findings from this thesis coincide with the social problems identified previously. Farther than this, the thesis identifies attitudes that accompany the decision making. Within the thematic of equity, it is observed hopeless by the members. While on documents equity is perceived as the target that the institution and the nation promote, in the interviews equity is described as a utopia; moreover, analysis of interviews show that public university is preserved as a no promising institution; that targets are seen as no feasible; that equity and inclusion diagnosis and projects are excluded because do not fulfill expectations of coverage; that members that have felt 'abandoned' by the authorities when they have met difficulties in the inclusion processes, among others. In the dynamic of decision making, it is observed that institutional environment tend to a constant dispute among the party that represents the state, and the minority party representing UdeA. Pressures, unconformities, and distrust are some of the aspects and attitudes that shape relationships between the different members of UdeA.

³³ The demonstrations are violent reactions, the institutions can be blocked, and students report threatens against them, among others.

6.3 Institutional Strategies Regarding Access

This section presents a discussion on the access strategies implemented in UdeA. First, it is of importance to stress the efforts of some committed staff at UdeA that has made possible the implementation of actions which bring the opportunity to some disadvantaged students to enter to HE. This dynamic has given to the University of Antioquia the recognition as a university that fulfills social missions. As well, it has been possible to initiate a process of debates on issues of inclusion of new detected groups of disadvantage students.

The analysis of findings shows that these strategies do not count on the support from the state to strength them, and moreover, the strategies are run under inconsistencies of regulations. It is discussed that such characteristics have resulted into two main actions by the institution. First, the implementation of self finance courses for disadvantage students. Second, the inclusion or exclusion of the equity strategies in the development plans according to the effectiveness shown. This means that information of non effective equity, interpreted as '*coverage*', strategies are not part of development plans. These actions suggest that equity strategies exist aside of development plans. Findings also suggest that the factors that shape the policies at UdeA, categorized in this thesis as *social problems, budget and low quality of primary and secondary education*, indicate the mechanisms to implement the actions and suggest the criteria for the success or failing of the strategies. Likewise the factor of social problems, which is cognitive-culturally supported, creates and maintains the conditions for building up institutional regulations and norms based on inconsistencies, ambiguities, and on the tolerance of wrongdoing procedures.

6.3.1 Training courses for admission exams in UdeA

The objectification (Tolbert & Zucker 1996; Scott, 2008:126) interpreted as the crystallization of ideas, show facts of the effectiveness of special programs that promote access in the institution. The effectiveness of the programs in particular semilleros, and part time courses is justified by the high demand of students. These courses tend to cherish hopes of poor families for their children to enter in HE. "Low prices" of the courses can be seen as one way to legitimize the strategy. However, low prices do not grant that the

strategies are reaching the poorest students. Lack of institutional statistics taking the variables of socioeconomic strata and training courses, as well as lack of follow up studies may constrain the information about the effectiveness of the strategies. Moreover, it can be said that the discourse itself, which accompany the strategy facilitates the legitimacy of the training courses for the admission exam.

A national connotation on the legitimacy of the implementation of these strategies in University of Antioquia reveals the low effectiveness of primary and secondary education. It can be said that, the more the universities (public and private), and other institutions promote and legalize the training courses for institutional admission exams to HE and the national exam ICFES (by decrees, resolutions and agreements), the more it is proved that educative system in Colombia is failing.

Findings denote that knowledge committed staff from UdeA, have acted in response to the social and political conditions, in order to give solutions to the excluded students. The strategies show that the lack of resources led to a self finance system of the strategy. To this extent, this thesis highlights that the merchandise of training courses for exams to enter to HE (be it ICFES, or institutional admission exams) can be taken by institutions as the opportunity to gain prestige of social mission achievement, relying on self finance by poor students.

Role of the State on the training courses for admission exams in UdeA

The analysis of documents implies the idea that the state grants equity of opportunities, therefore, this thesis suggests that it is the role of the state to minimize the opportunism by different institutions, public or private, over the lowest strata regarding the training courses for admission exams. According to Barr (2003), the state has a significant role to promote access by providing information, by providing money, and by improving the quality of school education.

This thesis discusses the state's position towards equity strategies implemented in the UdeA, like *semilleros*, *part time courses*, and *flexible education*, by referring to the concept of *affirmative action* as 'any program that seeks to take steps aimed at enhancing opportunities for a unprotected group' (Tomas, 2001), and as "temporary policies or actions that seek to minimize discrimination by including groups which have been socially and historically excluded" (Lindsay & Justiz, 2001; Dias-Romero, 2006). So far, there are inconsistencies between what the state promotes on the policies, programs, and plans, and what it is experienced in the educative system. In order to reach the comprehensive point stated in article 13 of the National Constitution of 1991 (see section 2.3 Equity approaches in Colombia in this thesis), it can be discussed that it is a responsibility of the state to finance training courses for admission exams in HE; at the University of Antioquia and other institutions - without distinguishing social strata, and following a pertinent model of training-. The alternative of state financing can be promoted as a policy of affirmative action while a structural educative reform takes place in the nation. Moreover, it can be said that this kind of affirmative action can show stronger commitment to the education system by being extended until the quality of primary and secondary education report effectiveness. As well, a strong policy of affirmative action may embrace those students who already have a high school diploma and are willing to take tertiary education. Under similar a condition is Flexible Education, the third course that facilitates entrance to the UdeA, it can be considered an alternative method to finance them, and students to be treated in equal conditions as regular students at UdeA.

Understanding the funding characteristics under which the training courses for admission exams to HE works at UdeA, the grounds why the courses exist, and the fact that they are aside institutional mission, this thesis underlines that such courses are not equity strategies that facilitate access for disadvantage students to HE. Though these courses can be an approach to affirmative action, to the extent that the university intervenes in the previous levels of education in order to improve academic skills, it is not longer an equity action when it implies to be self financed by the poorest. It cannot be said that a strategy that pursue equity in access for disadvantage students is successful under the conditions they are

implemented; instead, it can be said that a phenomenon of private training for disadvantage students within a public university is giving the prestige of equity action to the university. However, the effectiveness of these courses does not influence neither in the national budget for the institution, nor the university gain revenues. These actions indicate that through the effectiveness of such courses, the institution strive to maintain social recognition, and consequently attract potential students for the public university. From this perspective it is also implied the responsibility of the state in the support of this training.

6.3.2 Strategies led by the Inclusion Committee

The program for students with visual difficulties, run by one member of the inclusion committee, denotes a well structure program. Indeed, it can be considered as a model for other institutions. Findings have shown that the program has been affected, not only for lack of resources, but for national policies in primary and secondary education (the policy known as integrated schools, mentioned in chapter five), which have neglected a proper inclusion process of this group of students to HE. Reforms of the education system, such as integrated schools, should be accompanied by pertinent strategies and resources that embrace pedagogic, curriculum, and institutional transformation. Vexler (2007) states that integrated schools should have the specialized service, in order to provide a better condition to teachers to develop a pedagogic model towards diversity. The lack of articulation between HE and previous levels of schooling can be considered as a barrier to enter to HE and to accomplish studies as suggested by Santiago et al. (OECD, 2008).

Articulation process between high school and HE, is an action within equity policies, particularly affirmative action strategies. Findings indicate the weak implementation of the General Law of Education 115 and higher education Law 30 Of 1992 in this articulation process. The no articulation between the laws suggests limitations towards to meet the established in the National Constitution of 1991, Chapter II, articles 67-69 '*About Social Economic and Cultural Rights*'; which state the guidelines to run the education system. While Santiago et al (2008) indicates the importance of seeing education as a whole system

in order to promote equity strategies, the national laws of education in Colombia show inconsistencies between them and both act as isolated laws.

Other programs involving additional target groups of disadvantage students or vulnerable students, in the inclusion committee are still on debates at the University of Antioquia. It is observed the high equity commitment through this committee. It can also be observed the interest by policy implementers on carrying out projects to reach the university mission, although the interests of some of the policy makers do not promote them.

In accord with León-Holguín (2004), a debate on affirmative action does not exist in Colombia. From this affirmation, and according to the *social problems and budget*, it can be assumed that such debates are not allowed to take place. Findings from this thesis suggest that the sharing meanings of the wrongdoing processes condensed in the social problems that the country undergoes constrain the institutional transformation towards to meet what it is consigned in the national and institutional guidelines.

6.3.3 Minorities

It is observed that this group has obtained recognition for participating in the inclusion committee at the UdeA, which is a positive achievement in pursue of equity. Findings show that this group of students does represent a low percentage 4, 2% (913 Afrocolombians and 669 indigenous) of the student population in the university, including sub- regions. However, the institution seems to fulfill national guidelines. The lack of systematic information limits to specify the number of students per semester. Findings suggest the failing of this strategy to the extent that a high percentage of dropouts (47%) affect these specific groups of students. Moreover, this failing is not faced by the university; instead, the procedure for not affecting institutional and national rates of dropouts, the institutional mechanism is the omission of this *minority variable* (as it was called by an informant, 2010). As a national policy, the state shows low interest in increasing the participation of these students, which is based on quotas. In addition to the low number of students admitted per program, it is observed that these students meet difficulties to achieve the academic

requirements; and sum up the characteristics of students from low socioeconomic strata. As if these were not enough, they are often victims of violent attacks in the rural areas (massacres and forced displacement) from different armed groups that operate in the country, such as paramilitary groups and guerrilla. Though it sounds extreme, Garcia-Sanchez (No year cited) affirms that in Colombia, after the legal ethnic recognition, involving the rights of territory for indigenous and afrocolombians, it started an ethnocide against these groups. Obviously, such disadvantage group demands a special treatment in the institutional and national level. As well as those rehabilitated students with any armed group background. Universities cannot work alone in this, as it was revealed in the findings when an informant affirms the lack of clarity of procedures in the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Justice. With these limitations that implies others procedures, it is highlighted the need of a legal advisory member in this committee, specialized on the social-political conflicts that affect the country. UdeA has institutional resources within this discipline, the Faculty of Law and Political Science³⁴, which may become a great contribution for the committee, and likewise enhance the institutional cooperation. Moreover, this faculty counts with lines of research with groups dedicated to Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, Conflict Resolution and others, which can develop interdisciplinary research within the thematic of equity in HE.

6.3.4 Regionalization program

Development plans underline this strategy as a strong action in the university as the achievement of coverage and equity. On one hand, to low scores on the admission exam for rural students is an alternative to equity pursue, but on the other hand it brings inquiries like, *Is it pursue of coverage instead of equity? Is this action building a lower quality university for rural students? And how the university allocates resources for regionalization when the state does not increase the budget for expansion achievements?*

³⁴ See <http://www.udea.edu.co/portal/page/portal/SedesDependencias/DerechoCienciasPolitic>

It is important to highlight the adoption of training courses for admission exam strategies in the regionalization program, under the same self financing conditions; this implies the same discussion above.

6.3.5 Tuition fee Criteria

The strategy of following a criterion for establishing tuition fees, it is a factor of equity at the University of Antioquia. This equity action is a success strategy, and an important achievement to be highlighted. The low prices ease the disadvantage students to enter to UdeA. Tuition fee is not a barrier to enter to UdeA. The discussion on this strategy is addressed to the criteria for verifying the information of the students about socioeconomic strata and the tolerance to fraud. When referring to the taken for granted action as a strong characteristic of the institutionalization process (Scott, 2008:127; also see table 9 in chapter 2 of this thesis), it can be said that fraud is an expected conduct, not only in educational field, but in other sectors. It is the way things are done, and it seems it is set in the cognitive structure of the individuals in this system. Interpreted as *habitualization* (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996), it shows the way of how to solve the problem of entrance to HE related to socioeconomic strata. The university is aware of this event but does not strength strategies against this issue that promotes inequity.

6.4 Approaches to affirmative action at the University of Antioquia

Although the University encounters some characteristics that can be considered approaches to affirmative action, it is clear that there is not an established institutional policy on this strategy. Through denotes the lack of debate on equity strategies, particularly within affirmative action at UdeA, as Gómez (2001, 2009) suggested. Some of the actions that meet characteristics of affirmative action at UdeA are: *the reevaluation of admission measure score of the exam* (applied for minorities, and regionalization program); *tuition fee criteria* (which recognized the issues of family income and locale of high school), *institutional transformation for students with visual difficulties* (adaptation of exams, academic processes and infrastructure). Other actions show to be weak implemented like

the identification and recruitment of able poor students in high schools. This recruitment is limited to diffusion of information of programs and benefits through ‘high school festivals’ and through the media. Actions like *merit reward* by high scoring in the institutional admission exam were not encountered at UdeA. The merit reward to enter to HE is only granted when it concerns ICFES exam, as it was described in chapter two. This aspect rises a inquire in this study, *on how effective and supported, by the university, it would be the creation of a merit reward, in the form of a scholarship program to disadvantage students, that takes highest scores in institutional admission exam, plus the location of high school, plus academic record in high school, and plus family incomes?*

6.5 Creation of Actions to Increase Equity and Changes to the Institution

According to the analysis of findings, the creations of the strategies discussed above have brought to the institution five main positive changes. First, the *articulation between units*, this has facilitated the coordinated work in the strategies like flexible education, and the development of regionalization academic programs. Second, *the creation of committees*, this has made easy an interdisciplinary work, the carrying out debates on equity issues, and the development of projects to present to the governing actors. Third, *the decentralization of the units*, this change is highly promoted by the institution. Though it is not strong in all units, it has brought more knowledge about specific cases within the thematic of equity. Fourth, *establishment of municipality and regional alliances*, following a cultural tradition, the university has reinforced this characteristic through the development of strategies that pursue access. And fifth, increasing of *recognition as a leading public university*, the changes mentioned above have given the university more recognition in the country. The other changes important to highlight are the adaptation of infrastructure for students with visual difficulties. However, infrastructure changes are not enough for the development of strategies such as semilleros, part time courses and flexible education.

6.6 Barriers to enter to the University of Antioquia

At the University of Antioquia, ICFES exam is not a barrier to enter. As it was mentioned in chapter two, this university does not require this score. Sanchez et al (2002) discussed that besides ICFES, access to a university can be more difficult when the student also faces an institutional admission exam. As it had been mentioned in previous sections, this institutional exam can derive debates regarding the training courses. It is considered in this thesis that beside the barriers discussed in chapter three, there are the following barriers in at UdeA. (i) *The means of the training courses for admission exam* are barriers to enter to the University of Antioquia. (ii) It is also highlighted that *the governing structure at UdeA* is a barrier in the extent that constrains many procedures that may improve equity strategies. (iii) *The social problems and budget* are main and deep barriers to enter to the institution. And (iv) *the lack of knowledge about equity strategies by administrative and academic staff* at UdeA is a great barrier that constrains leading debates with the different stakeholders.

6.7 Understanding the legitimacy and Institutionalization Process at the University of Antioquia

This section gives an approach of the characteristics of the process of legitimacy and institutionalization based on Regulative, Normative and Cultural-Cognitive pillars. It is of importance to point out that the institutional level is directly influenced by national level.

According to the **Regulative** pillar, this thesis discusses two characteristics at UdeA. One is the *incongruity* between the statements and the practice of those statements. In other words, the existence of regulations that, “*in theory*”, regulate the institution. The second is the *lack of feasibility targets* proposed in the statements that steer the university which makes processes confusing and reactive. This thesis highlights the tendency of creation of policies and development plans based on none clear institutional statistics and non reliable information. In addition, the findings suggest that plans and policies which steer the institution are often the product of a demagogue rhetorical discourse that meets people’s hopes.

Moreover, the establishment of institutional rules, regulations, and plans shows expedience and interest of the university governing authorities. The regulations show to be implemented through an imposition mechanism. This model threatens the principles of democracy, among others principles, enhanced in the National Constitution and the principles of the University of Antioquia itself.

When it concerns of how the regulation operates regarding penalty of non desirable conducts, it can be said that the institution shows a weak position on these issues. For instance, the tolerance on the non attendance of the chair member to the USC debates, and sending instead delegation that is not allowed to vote; tolerance on wrongdoing procedures that benefit favoritism to get a position in the institution; and tolerance on fraud commits are some of the non desirable conducts described in this study. These non desirable conducts do not meet penalty neither in the institution nor in the national level.

Under the perspective of this pillar, legitimacy of processes in UdeA is reached through the imposed regulations, accompanied with a rhetorical discoursed that characterizes policies. Together with this, there are unwritten codes (such as the support to wrongdoing processes) that allow any person to break the regulation without being punished.

Normative pillar is a complex process in the university. An important characteristic to be highlighted is the initiative and attempt of innovation of strategies by members in the UdeA. This has maintained the university among the most prestigious in the nation. The creation of strategies for enhancing access to disadvantage students and the changes that the university has undergone through the creation of the actions, encounter the *initiative* as a share institutional value, which is expected in the regional context. However, though a variety of values and desirable acts are identified UdeA, there is a complex practice of them. It seems that values follow the expedience of the regulation, in other words, values can be changeable in order to meet regulations that allow the non desirable conducts. Informants show clarity in the conceptions about appropriateness and the non appropriateness, about *norms* or *how things should be done*. However, the clarity of concepts contrasts with *how things are done* at UdeA.

Institutional regulations indicate to be weak, particularly regarding penalties for the non desirable acts. This fact suggests that feelings of shame seem not to be strong developed under this model. Scott (2008: 51) suggests that through normative pillar, the legitimacy of processes is morally governed; according to this, it is observed that at UdeA, there are different levels of morally in an individual and within the different members, which are adjusted to the circumstances. This changeable feature may enhance the institutional incongruities of regulations. Characteristics from this pillar lead some inquiries concerning processes such as the criteria for internal/external certification and accreditation of the institution; *under what appropriateness criterion is accreditation of programs and accreditation of the institution carried out?, And who and how those processes are granted as appropriateness?*

Within the **Cultural - cognitive** pillar, anthropologist like Geertz and Douglas; sociologist like Berger, Goffman, and Meyer; organizational scholars such as DiMaggio, Powell and Scott, *'stress the centrality of cultural- cognitive elements of Institutions: the shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made'* (Scott, 2008: 57). According to the two pillars above, the cognitive maps built on the social reality suggest a system of ambiguous values and norms in the University of Antioquia. Findings indicate that considering clear targets in the plans, policies, or regulations would not lead to the continuity of the common meanings of the context. This suggests that actors create regulations and build norms and values according to what is expected to the social context. Cultural – Cognitive theorist emphasis that ideas, beliefs, schema and assumptions play a powerful role in institutional processes; Campbell (2004: 93) points out that among the most powerful is the *taken for granted assumptions* (Scott, 2008).

Tolerance of wrongdoing procedures in the UdeA, and at the national level, mentioned in this thesis, is recognized as a fact that constrains aims of the institution. While on the one hand non desirable acts are rejected it, on the other hand non desirable acts are promoted.

The taken for granted characteristic shapes institutional meanings, which have been set in cognitive structure of individuals during their socialization processes.

It is noticed that in order to get the subsidization for HE is not strange to commit document fraud, it is accepted conduct as long as it is not corrected by the institution. As well, the manipulation of information by the governing actors is supported under the same game of values, ideas beliefs and schemas. Even extreme violent events within the institution are taken for granted as reactions against impositions from governing actors. Students, administrative, and academic staff meet the characteristics of the social context in the higher education arena. Though demonstrations, claims, and formal complaints take place, it seems there is a sharing idea that illegitimate procedures are the means to reach the objectives by the different individuals in the institution.

Regarding the inconsistencies of institutions in the process of institutionalization, Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue that *an organization can promise reform. People may picture the present as unworkable but the future as filled of promising reforms of both structure and activity. But by defining the organization's valid structure as lying in the future, this strategy makes the organization's current structure illegitimate.* This affirmation connotes the suggested operation of the decision making structure at the University of Antioquia, as a strong characteristic of the shape of the three pillars of institutionalization.

This thesis highlights that UdeA shows characteristics of a weak, and inconsistent, model of regulations and norms. This structure leads the institution to a cultural cognitive condition that creates, legitimizes, and maintains common beliefs, ideas, and schemas based on ambiguity acts in the university. University of Antioquia denotes a complex dynamic within the three pillars, in which the characteristics seem to be distorted by the social-political and economic context. It can be said that, the pillars of institutions suggested by Scott (2008), in which one pillar is the result of the other, encounter institutional contexts that may distinguish clearly each aspect, and other contexts in which the aspects are hardly met, ambiguous or distorted.

Finally, the thesis highlights that the process of institutionalization at the University of Antioquia, has occurred through the objectification of a social economic stratification reality. As a public university this implies the control of the state over the individuals that are in a disadvantaged position. Low commitments to strengthen regulations make easier the procedures according to the interest of the different members. Procedures are internalized as norms, and therefore set in the cognitive processes. Strengthen internal and external control in procedures in UdeA would imply to bring to the surface the hidden elements or variables –particularly for the state- such as *social problems, budget and low quality of primary and secondary education* that affect equity targets.

6.8 Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions of the thesis by answering the two main research questions.

According to the first research question proposed, *is the implementation of special programs in the University of Antioquia contributing to facilitate access to disadvantage students in higher education?* It can be said that even though the University is a symbol of equity, not all the strategies implemented reach equity; neither facilitates access of the poorest students in HE. Analysis reveals two characteristics of the special programs at UdeA. First, there is a phenomenon of self finance, by students from the lowest socioeconomic strata, for participating in the training courses for admission exams. In this direction, what it was meant to pursue equity has become a private service within the public university. This event differs from what the term equity involves as just and opening opportunities to society. Instead of facilitating access to disadvantage students, the implementation of these mechanisms contributes to the remark socioeconomic differences and inequalities. The analysis shows also that the effectiveness of these courses is used to enhance the equity achievements of the university; though the state does not allocate budget to develop such strategies. Second, there are strategies that, so far, have not had the support by institutional governing actors to be promoted, neither to be included within the institutional plans. This thesis considers that actions such as those promoted by inclusion

committee show a strong equity attention. It is highlighted the interest of some members of having in the agenda the new identified groups of vulnerable students e.g., forced displaced, rehabilitate students from guerrilla and paramilitary armed groups, as well as the sensorial disability students, the traditional identified groups from lowest socio economic strata, and minorities. It can be said that even if some of these strategies might not show a high percentage of numbers to fulfill coverage suggested by national plans, these strategies with the support of the governing actors would truly reach the most disadvantage students.

This thesis also denotes the achievements to equity in the programs of regionalization, and tuition fee criteria, which are highly promoted by the institution through the development and action plans. These strategies contribute to a great extent to the access of students, though it cannot be affirmed that they grant the access to the disadvantaged students.

The thesis shows that, with no exception, all equity policies or actions in the University of Antioquia are distorted by issues identified as aspects that shape policy like *social problems* (i.e., corruption, favoritism, non reliable information, and fraud), *budget and the low quality in primary and secondary education*.

According to the second research question, ***are these programs interpreted by the University of Antioquia as strategies that pursue equity?*** Analysis of the findings have shown that though the social problems, budget and low quality in previous education, the strategies like semilleros, part time courses, flexible education, and regionalization achieve effectiveness that is interpreted as equity achievement by the institution. Through the application of mechanisms like self finance courses with the idea of low prices, the effectiveness is reported as equity. In the case of minorities, it is interpreted as equity to the extent that the institution fulfills national requirements for this group of students. Regarding tuition fee criteria, it is highly interpreted as a factor of equity, though the knowledge that fraud in documentation affects the effectiveness of the strategy.

This thesis denotes that the special programs or strategies at UdeA can be interpreted as effective strategies that pursue equity when those strategies assure reputation to the

institution, and hence they included in the development plans. As well, other programs and strategies that show institutional failing are diminished, reports are disregarded, and it seems there are not strong actions for solving them. The low and non official percentage (between 5 % and 6%) of students from socio economic strata 1 and 2 suggest that, for the university, effectiveness does not refer to access to disadvantage students neither as pursue of equity.

According to the review of the plan, policies, and the rhetorical discourse that characterizes the statements, the thesis suggests that targets proposed in the plans attempt to cover much more than what it is feasible in a term of time. One of the aspects that make targets more unfeasible is the fact that they are made based on non reliable statistics, on assumptions, and on hopes. For instance non reliable information about rates of coverage, the rate of access of students from lower socio economic strata, dropout rates, poverty, etc. These events can grant the low effectiveness of the plans. This thesis also implies that the maintenance of the apparent equity achievement by UdeA is reinforced paradoxically by strategies that are aside the institutional plans, and low supported by the governing actors of the institution.

Finally, the thesis also points out that the issues that regard, in particular, social problems, are strong enough to have effects over the model of regulations, which can be observed both in the national level and experienced in the University of Antioquia. Social reality is built through imposed weak regulations that promote the wrongdoing processes without the pressure of penalty. Moreover, the values learnt during the socialization stages, give the knowledge to apply the values according to the circumstances.

6.8.1 Limitations

This thesis has been developed under a context in which getting institutional information is a challenge. Most of the information requested was provided. However, a first limitation was the no supply of the statistics from the admission and registry department, regarding the number of students from each of the socioeconomic strata; nor statistics from part time

studies and flexible education; nor statistics of the students with visual deficiencies. The information missing is important to shed light the demand of each of the target groups through the strategies that pursue equity. However, information related to SES, is a sensitive data which even for institutional members is not clear.

A second limitation concerns the lack of information from studies that were not followed up by the units in UdeA. To some extent, it constrains evidences of the background of strategies implemented.

These two limitations, regarding the kind of information that was not provided and the kind of information that is not available, are important aspects that may show what it is important for the university to show; as well, to some extent , it evidences the inconsistencies of procedures at UdeA.

Though the following event is not considered as a limitation, it was a big challenge encountered while collecting data. It concerns getting in contact with any of the student leaders/ spokesman. No informant from any unit provided this contact. By accident at the end of the data collection process, the contact of one student spokesman was provided. This event itself gave relevant information to understand the context of the university, and the social conditions exposed in the thesis.

A study of a single institution can be seen as a limitation. To the extent that generalizations cannot be made for a whole system. However, this thesis has taken an important public institution in Colombia; besides this, the two methods of data collection applied involve institutional and national documents and in many cases, the informants reveal issues that concern not only the institutional level but the national level. Moreover, since all public universities in Colombia are run under the same national guidelines, this study case shed light the context of other institutions that are less prestigious and which might be easier for the state to control.

6.8.2 Recommendations

In this section the thesis provides recommendations of what was observed in the process. The University of Antioquia has a strong value of innovation for the development of strategies.

First, it is important for UdeA to consider alternative forms of financing for the training courses offered by the institution. It is a fact that, in present time, expecting budget from the state to support the development of the strategies may be a non-feasible target. The university has shown great skills in establishing alliances; using this institutional value, other sectors can be involved for contributing to the better conditions to run equity strategies.

Second, it is also recommended for the improvement of equity strategies, the likelihood that leaders acquire knowledge and develop the skills for a better performance in the new management of higher education.

Third, it is recommended for the institution processes to know (at least internally) the real statistics and percentage of their students. This aspect is essential for the development of feasible plans.

Fourth, for institutional efficacy, it is suggested the creation of a database to organize the information from the different strategies carried out in the institution.

Fifth, it is important the promoting and encouragement of the participation of the student representative in the councils and committees. This is directly related to the structure of the governing of the UdeA, and public universities in general. This thesis has described the social problems and that constrain the participation of important members. Due to the low interest by state in promoting the democratization in public universities, and low effectiveness of national control against those events, it could be an important step to turn to international regulatory organizations in order to study the situation of public universities in Colombia. It is necessary an interdisciplinary work to reach a wider and deeper view of the problem.

Sixth, this thesis recommends a review of the different committees and inclusion of potential members that may contribute from the different disciplines.

Seventh, it is recommended for the development and improving of the strategies, to reinforce debates on equity within the institution, between institutions and other sectors.

6.8.3 Ideas for Further Research

This thesis has carried out the study under a topic that is little in-depth discussed in Colombia for multiple reasons. First, it can be said that the term of equity is itself new and confusing in the definitions within the Colombian context. And second, there is little commitment from the state to apply the term further than on the institutional and national statements, and the demagogue discourse. In order to contribute the knowledge on this topic, it is of importance to develop studies that go in depth in the different aspects discussed in this thesis.

It is suggested to carry out a comparative study of public universities in Colombia in order to identify similarities and differences of mechanisms for the implementation of strategies regarding equity that may suggest patterns in the procedures.

It would be interesting to make a longitudinal study of the students that attend to semilleros in the University of Antioquia, in order to find how those students perform in higher education. Such studies may contribute to the evaluation of effectiveness of the training courses from the perspective of lifelong learning. These kinds of studies may also be useful as a way of monitoring aspects that may constrain access after taking a training course.

Regarding the new groups of vulnerable students identified by the inclusion committee of UdeA, it is essential to carry out studies on the impact of the inclusion of these groups of students. Understanding the processes of inclusion of this target groups may shed light to create the appropriate proactive strategies that ease the transformation the institution.

Finally, this thesis also suggests research about the discourse of the policies and development plans in Colombia under the perspective of linguistic field. Identification of patterns, meanings, interpretations of the regulations may bring contribution for instance in the feasibility of targets. Semantic, lexis, among others linguistic elements, are essential in the creation of national and institutional guidelines in forms of laws, decrees, development of plans and so forth.

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ASCUN Asociación Colombiana de Universidades, available at <http://www.ascun.org.co/ascun/>

CRES: Conferencia Regional de Educación Superior. Portal de Iniciativas de Educación superior en Latino América y el Caribe, available at <http://www.cres2008.com/>

ICETEX Instituto Colombiano de Crédito y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior, available at <http://www.icetex.gov.co/portal/Default.aspx>

ICFES Instituto Colombiano Para el Fomento de la Educación Superior, available at <http://web2.icfes.gov.co/>

Ministry of Education in Colombia, available at <http://www.mineduccion.gov.co/1621/w3-channel.html>

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Appendix 1- SWOT Analysis of University of Antioquia, Development Plan 2006-2016

Strengths

- University in research capacity based on human talent and infrastructure.
- University with academic quality and institutional processes (Institutional accredited and accredited undergraduate programs)
- Wide offer of undergraduate and graduate programs
- Management capacity developed by the different government agencies.
- National leadership in different areas of knowledge
- Access to students and join of teachers at the University by merit of performance.
- Existence of branches of the university in all regions of el Departamento de Antioquia.
- Social recognition of the quality of graduates trained in the university.
- Free (of charge) higher education to students with low incomes.
- Proper administration of financial resources.
- Institutional policies for Access and permanence of ethnic minorities and handicapped in the University.
- Wide cultural offer, represented in spaces, program, mass media, etc.

Weaknesses

- Insufficient articulation of the basic functions-research, teaching and extension, and weak policies to revert the situation.
- A large number of teachers with only undergraduate training and increase recruitment of adjunct professors.
- Few strategies to attract and retain highly qualified talents.
- Incipient development of foreign languages
- Low offer of master and PhD programs, in relation to the needs of the country.
- Poor implementation of pedagogical tools in teaching.
- Difficulties in the organizational environment that constrain the interdisciplinary work.
- Low development of interdisciplinary work.
- High dropout rates at the undergraduate level.
- Little experience for carrying out inter institutional projects, and between universities-industry-state projects. Incipient incorporation of new information and communication technologies, ICT, in the process of teaching-learning and management.
- Rigid and outdated curricular and administrative structures.
- Weak institutional capacity to manage resources for international cooperation.
- Incipient development of technology management and, of the processes of knowledge transfer to the environment.
- Little recognition and appropriation of the Extension University System by the university community and the absence of the University System of Teaching.
- Incipient development of comprehensive management systems.
Weak policy and insufficient resources to train non-academic staff for the development of labor skills.

- High dependency on state funding, and inadequate management capacity to access to other financial resources
- Low wages for academic staff and administrative employees.
- Lack of transparency in the selection of positions.
- Lack of a development plan for the university infrastructure.

Opportunities

- Great developments in science, technology and innovation that enable the creation of new programs, and more creation and transfer of knowledge.
- The demand for highly qualified human resources in R + D + I, able to tackle and confront new problems and find creative solutions.
- Increasing trends of integration and cooperation at the national and international scientific communities.
- Large regional, national and international demand for higher education with excellence
- Increasing demand for new knowledge and specialized services for national and international organizations.
- The demand for further developments in cultural creation and preservation, research, promotion and dissemination of cultural heritage of the region and country.
- Emergence of new forms of learning and appropriation of knowledge generated by the rapid advance of information technology and communication.
- Need to strengthen the management of local bodies and state enterprises.
- Increasing of public and private investment in programs that promote entrepreneurship.
- Increasing of public and private investment to carry out research projects, development and innovation that promote entrepreneurship.
- Increased demand for transferring the knowledge generated at the university to the society.
- New trends in higher education related to the formation of propaedeutic cycles and to the emergence of the professional master degrees and research.
- Demand for strategies to enable the articulation of the various levels of technical education, technology, university and continuous studies.
- Possibility of recognition of programs and dual degree with other universities.
- Generation and application of new knowledge from the richness and diversity of the regions of the Colombian regions.
- Political and social environment in favor to the relationship between university-industry-state.
- Free trade agreements and multilateral agreements that open opportunities for the provision of services.
- Demand for greater social relevance of the universities.
- Reduction in the duration of the undergraduate programs, specializations and master programs.
- Possibility of exchanging foreign debt for investment in higher education and research.
- Existence of outstanding alumni in the society
- Recognition of the importance of identity and cultural diversity in the development of the country
- Emergence of new high quality institutions and technology and research centers, national and international.

Threats

- Increasing restrictions on state funding
- Better pay conditions for scientists and highly qualified professionals in other institutions in the country and abroad.
- Influence of social and armed conflict.
- Lack of articulation between higher education and previous levels of education
- Low quality in the education of high school students in some regions of the Departamento de Antioquia
- Lack of consistency and continuity of policies and programs from the government.
- Little scientific and technological awareness by the enterprises and low investment in R + D + I.
- New demands to broaden coverage without proper growth of human resources, and physical, technological resources.
- Low employment opportunities for graduates in the labor market.
- Tendency to the subsidization or funding for the students in educational services.

Appendix 2- Interview Guide

University of Antioquia, Medellín, June 2010

Questions adapted from Lindsay &Justiz (2001: 217,239-240)

1. What is your position at the University?
2. How long have you tenured your position?
3. What is the term period for your position?
4. What is educational equity for you?
5. What is affirmative action to you, personally?
6. What, if any, is the role of affirmative action in today's university?
7. How is affirmative action manifest in your campus?
8. What were the first steps in building up conditions that bring to widen access in this institution?
9. Describe the Academic criteria in your campus.
10. What of the selectivity criteria meets the University?
 - ___ Aggressive recruitment efforts (regards to the contact that the University has with high schools in order to provide information on programs, benefits of higher education, scholarships, student aids, information about best students from the different socioeconomic strata, among others)
 - ___ Initiatives to expand the pipeline of appropriately prepared candidates from disadvantage socioeconomic strata.
 - ___ More than one reviewer for the student profiles.
 - ___ Others.
11. What term would you use for describing the actions that the university has implemented: Policy of admission, policy of access, actions or strategies?
12. Has the affirmative action from this university influenced in the creation of strategies by other institutions within the same geographical region or other regions in the country?
13. Do you know other universities in Colombia that have implemented strong strategies for access to disadvantage students?
14. What are the major internal pressures that influence equity and affirmative action?
 - ___ In this university
 - ___ In other universities

15. What are the major external pressures that influence equity and affirmative action?
 - ___ In this university
 - ___ In other universities
16. What barriers have policy makers/actors in the development of affirmative action and policies to increase equity?
17. Is widen admission enough?
 - ___ Has the Institution created special programs for disadvantage students in order to solve problems that can be caused for their background, such as low academic record in main subjects (Workshop programs), and other such as acculturation programs, campus activities, centers for students, Intergroup programs?
18. What physical/structural/organizational barriers are in the university which make difficult for students to access to higher education?
19. Has the University monitored the results of recruitment for disadvantage students? If so, what the monitoring includes?
 - ___ Data on the number of students from lower socioeconomic strata; how many applied, receive, or denied.
 - ___ Verification of applicants' socioeconomic strata
 - ___ The total amount of aid awarded to these students
 - ___ Criteria used to process financial aid applications.-
Does the university verify the academic record of students in high school? Or only check IFCES scoring? Are there interviews to applicants in order to widen information about background, experiences and talents?
 - ___ Maintaining files of rejected applicants for any request from state.
20. Which national agency follows the legality of the implementation of the actions and admission policies for access to disadvantage students?
21. Does the University receive external/internal advice by an entity about financial aid programs, the modifications for conformity, as appropriate?
22. Does the university examine the programs to assess the effectiveness in meeting the goals of access?
 - ___ How often?
23. Who leads those meetings?
24. What procedures follow after these meetings?
25. Are reports sent to a national institution(s)? Which?
26. Do these reports influence the allocation of national educational budget?

27. How much money is allocated for each program of student aids, and other affirmative action?
28. What are the economic implications for the University choosing to offer special access programs for disadvantage students?
29. How has the country's economic situation affected the climate regarding the creation of strategies, actions or policies for access to disadvantage students?
30. Can you tell me how the university has evolved since the constitution of 1991 was issued; taking into account that it supports the creation of actions and plans such as affirmative action?
31. Moving along from Law 30 of 1992 as the national law that supports higher education, what have been the most relevant reforms that the university has had within this issue? And can you provide me the acts/decrees that support these reforms?
32. How has been the impact of implementing the reforms in the past?
33. Have attitudes, and institutional culture/behavior, been transformed along the implementation of the plans/policies? Describe this transformation please.
34. What actions remain in the university, which may contradict the strategies for meeting the goals of equity in the access to disadvantage students?
35. What reactions has the institution showed regarding to the creation of strategic actions and the concept of equity?
36. What are the plans to achieve during the following 5 years at your university in terms of equity and diversity?
37. Are there issues or areas that were not covered in our interview and discussion which you would like to address?

Appendix 3 –Semilleros, Faculty of Nature Science and Mathematics

Semilleros	Students semester 2008-I		Students semester 2008-II		Students semester 2009-I		Students semester 2009-II		Students semester 2010-I	
	Enrolled	No of Groups	Enrolled	No of Groups	Enrolled	No of Groups	Enrolled	No of Groups	Enrolled	No of groups
Biology I	38	2	37	2	49	2	34	1	34	1
Biology II	9	1	22	1	--	--	25	1	--	--
Biotechnology	18	1	--	--	21	1	--	--	37	1
Integrated (Math-Biology)	70	3	51	2	60	2	40	1	38	1
Integrated (Math-Biology) level II	14	1	20	1	--	--	32	1	5	1
Physics I	54	3	28	2	33	2	42	3	53	2
Physics II	--	--	17	1	13	1	--	--	7	1
Operative Mathematics	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	82	2
Mathematic 6	125	2	65	1	99	2	64	2	78	2
Mathematic 7	147	3	81	2	87	3	99	3	81	2
Mathematic 6 &7	--	--	28	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
Mathematic 8	179	5	143	4	166	4	156	4	123	4
Mathematic 9	250	6	158	4	185	5	148	4	155	4
Mathematic 10	317	7	175	4	217	5	176	4	206	5
Mathematics 11	620	12	191	5	461	11	246	7	485	12
Introduction to Calculus	41	1	37	1	33	1	29	1	31	1
Mathematics	1679	--	878	22	1248	--	1091	--	1243	32
Chemistry I	30	1	20	1	47	2	33	2	26	1
Chemistry II	10	1	15	1	--	--	--	--	14	1
Parents	--	--	--	--	--	--	7	1	--	--
Total of students enrolled in the semester	1922	49	1088	33	1471	41	1131	35	1457	41
	Decentralized Semilleros				Students semester 2009-I		Students semester 2009-II		Students semester 2010-I	
	Location (Sub-region and others)				Enrolled	No of Groups	Enrolled	No of Groups	Enrolled	No of Groups
	Municipio de Tarso				48	1	41	1	--	--
	Institucion Educativa Santo Angel				60	2	60	2	--	--
	Seccional Oriente				30	1	16	1	32	2
	Seccional Caucasia				98	3	22	1	60	3
	Municipio de Girardota				420	9	--	--	--	--
	Institución Educativa la Salle				28	1	28	1	--	--
	Institución Educativa Javeriana Londoño				44	1	44	1	--	--
	ICFES Project				2000	44	2000	44	--	--
	Total of students enrolled in the semester				2728	62	2211	51	92	5

Appendix 4- Dropout rate, University of Antioquia

Period	No graduated	Number of Dropouts	Dropout %	Retention %
1998-1	804	0		
1998-2	1030	0		
1999-1	2561	223	27,74%	72,26%
1999-2	3270	196	19,03%	80,97%
2000-1	4307	437	17,06%	82,94%
2000-2	4541	666	20,37%	79,63%
2001-1	5451	853	19,80%	80,20%
2001-2	4164	1272	28,01%	71,99%
2002-1	7633	962	17,65%	82,35%
2002-2	8480	921	22,12%	77,88%
2003-1	9766	1606	21,04%	78,96%
2003-2	11030	1521	17,94%	82,06%
2004-1	8178	1803	18,46%	81,54%
2004-2	13794	2122	19,24%	80,76%
2005-1	13850	1296	15,85%	84,15%
2005-2	15871	2004	14,53%	85,47%
2006-1	19721	1912	13,81%	86,19%
2006-2	21607	1743	10,98%	89,02%
2007-1	23596	2186	11,08%	88,92%
2007-2	23356	2252	10,42	89,58%
2008-1	27238	2539	10,76%	89,24%
2008-2	29133	2279	9,76%	90,24%
2009-1	0	2563	9,41%	90,59%
2009-2	0	2914	10,00%	90,00%

Source: SPADIES (2010), Universidad de Antioquia

Appendix 5- SWOT Analysis of University of Antioquia, Inclusion Committee, 2009

Aspects	Weaknesses	Strengths
Access and Permanence	The University of Antioquia does not have a comprehensive policy on inclusion of diverse groups	Intention and willingness of policy by the administration, in order to strength present and future initiatives, which shows the equity and inclusion philosophy highlighted in the next Action Plan 2009 – 2012.
Access and Permanence	The Institutional Development Plan (2006-2016) does not incorporate in an explicit way, cross and comprehensive the theme of inclusion of diverse populations in the University, constraining the design and implementation of strategies for Action Plans.	The existence of the Inclusion Committee
Access and Permanence	The University of Antioquia does not have an information system about the diversity of students that could facilitate identify them, characterize them, and give a proper and pertinent monitoring.	Permanent disposition by the Department of Admission Registry in order to give information about the diverse students.
Permanence	Disarticulation of experiences, processes and initiatives about inclusion that arise from the different academic and administrative units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existence of different experiences, processes and initiatives concerning inclusion and the intention to integrate them in the Inclusion Committee. • The information service for the students with visual difficulties is located in the library system, besides fulfilling its mission; it works for the diffusion of information and orientation about other services that exist in the university.
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no systematic information about the experience in the adaptation of the admission exam that enables the continuity of the process, and the transference to other HE institutions. • Nonexistence of an accompany strategy and affirmative action that could grant the continuity in the entrance of diverse groups in the UdeA. 	The Department of Admission and the Registry has a normatively framework and adapted procedures for the admission exam for diverse students (indigenous, Afro descendents, visual and hearing handicapped, applicants for students from difficult access and under conflict towns) that enable access to the University.
Permanence	Insufficient preparation and literacy in the different aspects of inclusion in the university community (academic and administrative staff, students and visitors)	Incorporation of inclusion thematic in the Diploma of University Pedagogic and Didactic from the Academic Affairs Vicerectory and the Faculty of Education.
Access and Permanence	Weak articulation between research and the initiatives, experiences and institutional needs about social and educative inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of the bachelor degree in Pedagogic of the Earth Mother in the Faculty of Education. • The existence of some works from undergraduate and master in the field of the situation of the ethnic communities and handicap in the university.
Permanence	Insufficient capacity of the university for creating specific and specialized programs that enable the permanence of students from ethnic minorities.	Programs and services in the university welfare department help the sustainability and permanence of the students, besides of some activities regarding cultural

		extension.
Permanence	Lack of a strategy or program that may involve, in a permanent way, the different handicapped members of the university, in the evaluation, design and monitoring of strategies of physic access and in the information of the university community.	The <i>Maestro Plan</i> from the Department of sustainability embraces explicitly the thematic of physic accessibility.
Access and Permanence	Difficulty in the transference of technology, continuity of human resources and adequate infrastructure for the access and permanence of “persons that have abilities or different cultural conditions from the average of the inhabitants; for these grounds, these persons are at risk of exclusion from the education service, from the active economic, social, political, and cultural participation ..” in the regions (academic agreement 317 of 2007)	Concerning regionalization, it is conceived as a policy for widening coverage and inclusion in the sub- regions of the Departamento de Antioquia: Special program of access to the university. Seven academic programs specially created for the regions. Program “Formación de formadores”
Permanence	Lack of policy formation, organization and articulation from and between groups in the university, which could enable to dialogue and consultation of strategies as co-responsibility of all actors.	Existence of organizations of indigenous, afrodescendent students and blind students at the university. These organizations have a structure, aims, and independent operation forms.

Aspects	Threatens	Opportunities
Access, permanence-institutional policy	Lack of clarity and explicit addressing in the normative and policy framework on inclusive HE promoted by the Ministry of Education	Slow positioning of educative and social inclusion thematic in the public institutional HE agenda
Institutional and national policy	Pressures between a coverage policy and quality, Equity and inclusion policies.	The prestige of the UdeA in the HE system due to the leading and initiative in inclusion thematic.
Access	Nonexistence of mechanisms that enable confirm the guarantee of accuracy of ethnic minorities and applicants from places of difficult access and conflict.	Participation and exchange between institutions and government bodies in the country that have been working with inclusion thematic.
Access and Permanence	Weak accompany by the origin communities in the academic permanence of the indigenous and afro descendent students.	Constant advance and renovation of ICT as a strategy of access to information and inclusion.
Access and permanence	Low quality in previous levels of education in ethnic communities; groups with physic and sensorial disabilities (visual, hearing); and disarticulation between the levels of colombian education system.	Disposition of human and economic resources by the current administration of Departamento de Antioquia in order to improve the quality of primary and secondary education.
Access	Nonexistence of strong and permanent inter sectorial strategies that could decrease the conditions of exclusion and inequity in the society.	Positive academic and policy environment in Latin America in terms of equity in HE, which are led by international bodies (such as IESALCUNESCO).