

Critical analysis of the policies that shape the beginnings of university studies in Argentina

Soledad Vercellino¹

National University of Río Negro/ National University of Comahue

Abstract

Higher education (HE) coverage in Argentina is among the highest in Latin America and is at the universalisation stage. This implies a transition from an elite university model to one of mass access, which has had a democratising impact by facilitating the incorporation of traditionally excluded groups. In this article, we have identified a series of policies that shape the transition into university studies through documentary analysis of research carried out in Argentina and the systematisation of the regulations of some Argentine universities. These policies have been ordered as follows: first, we will describe those focused on the first year which seek to address indicators of discontinuity in the initial stages of university studies. Then, we will describe the comprehensive, third-generation policies which organise the entire educational experience during the first year of university studies and beyond, shaping the university system.

Keywords

Educational system, Higher Education; beginning of university studies; transition between levels, democratisation of Higher Education.

¹ Institute of Public Policy and Government, Interdisciplinary Centre for Studies on Rights, Inclusion and Society svercellino@unrn.edu.ar

Introduction

The Law on Higher Education in Argentina (Law No. 24521/1995) institutes direct admission to university by establishing that "all persons who have completed Secondary Education may enter the Higher Level of Education freely and without restrictions". . However, the aforementioned regulations stipulated that, in universities with more than 50,000 students, the student admissions process would be defined at the level of each faculty or equivalent academic unit. Despite reforms to these regulations², within the framework of university autonomy, universities still follow this organizational model for the admissions process. This has created a heterogeneous scenario in which, in the majority of degree courses and universities, quotas are not usually established for entering students, nor are aptitude or knowledge tests implemented at the end of the baccalaureate for access to university. However, in other high-demand careers or professions that are regulated because their practice compromises the public interest (medicine, architecture, engineering, among others), there are selective exams with quotas (Montenegro, 2023; García, 2023).

Another characteristic of the Argentinean state higher education system is that national universities (UUNN) do not charge fees for undergraduate degrees. The national state funds universities by assigning each institution an annual global budget approved by a law of the National Congress. Throughout the period 2010-2023 the average funding was 0.75% of the Gross Domestic Product, reaching its maximum value in 2015 with 0.82% (Centro Regional de Estudios Económicos de Bahía Blanca Argentina, 2025), decreasing significantly in recent years.

Direct access and non-tuition fees (Santos Sharpe, 2024), together with other reasons such as compulsory secondary education, the expansion of the university system, etc., have made higher education coverage in Argentina one of the highest in Latin America, since while the net higher education attendance rate for the subcontinent was around 25.5% in 2023, it reached 41.6% in Argentina (SITEAL, 2024). According to the Secretariat of University Policies of the National Ministry of Education (SPU), both gross and net enrolment rates have doubled in the last 20 years (Table 1). Argentina's UUNNs had 2,011,498 students in 2023³.

² This article has been eliminated by Law No. 27.204/2015, although many universities in the framework of their autonomy have made legal filings to maintain admission systems.

³ 2023 is the last year in which university statistics have been published. Since Javier Milei's government took office, there has been no official data on the university system.

Table N° 1: School enrolment rate in the Argentine Higher Education System of the population aged 18 to 24. Years 2001 - 2023.

Range used in Argentina - Population 18-24	2001	2023
Net University Enrolment Rate"	16.0%	26.1%
Gross University Ratio	25.0%	56.0%
Gross Tertiary Education Ratio	36.0%	76.2%

Source: Department of University Information-SPU (2023).

Following the classification of Trow (1973) and Rama Vitale (2009), Argentina is already in the stage of universalisation of HE coverage. This trend implies the transition from a university of elites to a model of mass access, a transition that also had an impact in terms of democratisation, as it facilitated the incorporation of traditionally excluded sectors.

In contrast to the traditional student, widening access has reconfigured university enrolment, making it more plural, multiple and heterogeneous: students who, for the first time in their family history, reach university, "first generation"; students who combine their university studies with family responsibilities—such as marriage and parenthood—and entry into the labor market; a feminised enrolment, even though horizontal gaps persist, as there are still masculinised careers (Vercellino, Gibelli and Chironi, 2022); adult students who decided to start university studies decades after finishing secondary school, some even without having completed it; students with different previous educational trajectories, even with experience in other universities or higher education institutions and, finally, students who challenge the fictitious racial, linguistic, cultural, gender and capacity-building homogeneity (Andrade et al., 2023).

At the same time, however, this positive growth in access to higher education does not necessarily result in inclusion, as shown by the indicators for entry, length of studies and graduation. In other words, the massification of access, which would imply greater levels of democratisation, is hindered by the characteristics of educational trajectories at this level, which are marked by strong processes of discontinuity. Regional studies show that almost 30% of students have discontinued their academic activity after the first year and 50% after three years (Fernández Aguerre et al., 2022). Official statistics state that "of those newly enrolled in undergraduate and graduate courses in 2020, 62.4% continue their studies in 2021" (SPU, 2022, p.11).

These indicators have placed the problem of university starts on the political and academic agenda of the last decade and, more recently, the real duration of degree courses has begun to be questioned, as only 27.7% of undergraduate students graduate in the theoretical time expected for a given degree course, which is the duration established in the study plans (SPU, 2022).

The vast field of problems that constitutes the entry and passage through the first year of university studies has entered the agenda of Argentine educational research, giving rise to abundant literature that explores this issue (Vercellino and Pogr , 2023; Garcia, 2024; Sotelo, 2025; Santos Sharpe, 2024; Pogr  et al., 2020; Pierella et al., 2020; Mancovsky and Rocha, 2019; Parrino, 2019; Linne, 2018; Cambours de Donini and Gorostiaga, 2016; Carli, 2012; Carlino 2003; Chiroleau, 2018; Ezcurra, 2011, 2019; Fern ndez Lamarra, 2022; Garc a de Fanelli, 2015; Gluz, 2011; Kisilevsky and Velede, 2002; Marquina, 2011; among others).

The state of the art in research on the subject allows us to note certain consensus, among them that it is a multidimensional problem, which does not accept explanations that only focus on the students' deficient reading, nor its counterpart, deficient reading in relation to the teachers. There is no shortage of national and international research that suggests that the focus is on questioning how the first-year experience is constructed, how students, teachers and the institution itself construct this very particular situation at the beginning of this experience, with its transitional and initiatory nature (Mancovsky and Rocha, 2019; Pogr  et al., 2020; Vercellino, 2021; Tinto, 2021; Kift, 2009, 2015, Kift, Nelson and Clarke, 2010, McInnis, 2002).

In this article, we explore, based on the analysis of secondary sources that we reference and on data from our own research⁴, the institutional policies and strategies that shape access and transit through the first year (and beyond) in the Argentine university context.

We have divided these policies into two groups: on the one hand, those policies focused on the first year, formulated to address the problem of the high rates of

⁴ PI UNRN VP 40-C-1172. "Democratizaci n de la ES: interpelaciones a los modos de organizar la experiencia del primer a o en instituciones universitarias y no universitarias de la norpatagonia". National University of R o Negro. 12/2024-12/2027. PI 04/V126 The relationship with knowledge from/in Nursing. Exploratory study located in the Nursing career of the Centro Universitario Regional Zona Atl ntica of the Universidad Nacional del Comahue. 2022-2026. PI UNLPam: "Student experiences at the beginning of traditional and emerging university careers at the National University of La Pampa: educational transitions and permanence strategies (2022-2025)". Director: Soledad Vercellino. Co-director: Patricia Far as. Start date: 01/01/2025 - End date: 31/12/2027.

discontinuity of studies in the initial stage of the degree courses. And, on the other hand, there are those more global initiatives that organise the structural and structuring elements of the first-year educational experience in universities, which institute those invariants that make up the university "form" (Lahire et al., 1994), "grammar" (Tyack and Cuban, 2001) or "device" (Querrien and Varela, 1994; Varela and Álvarez Uría, 1991; Varela, 1992, Vercellino, 2023).

We will also analyse these policies according to the categorisation proposed by Kift, et al. (2010). These authors identify three generations of proactive actions that higher education institutions have implemented to address the heterogeneity of their enrolment in contexts of mass enrolment and growing inequality. First-generation policies or strategies bring together co-curricular support actions, such as financial support (scholarships, canteens, residences, entrance fees, etc.), entrance courses, vocational guidance and tutoring. These are policies that place the problem outside the grammar and the system of practices of the university itself (Vercellino, 2021); the measures taken to tackle the problem are orthopaedic solutions designed to compensate for certain supposed deficits of the students, outside the classroom.

Second-generation research is linked to curriculum and teaching. Here we find a group of such papers, developed in Australian universities, (Kift et al., 2010; McInnis, 2002; Kift, 2015), which combine institutional policy development with policy research, conclude that the curriculum was the 'missing link' (Kift, 2009, p. 1) in studies of the first year experience (FYE). These researchers propose to articulate the huge but disjointed efforts that institutions make to address the first year problem, using the curriculum as the organiser of the different strategies: scholarships, tutoring and other institutional support. They conceive of "curriculum" as encompassing the "totality of the student experience" (Kift, 2009, p. 9). "Curriculum" in this sense encompasses all academic, social and support aspects of the student experience, focuses on the "educational conditions in which we place students" (Tinto, 2009, p. 2), and includes co-curricular proposals (scholarships, tutorials, etc.). They argue that the opposite is to leave student success to chance (Tinto, 2009) because our responses would be improvised, fragmented and decontextualised and, from the student's perspective, seem irrelevant to their learning.

Kift et al. (2010) advance in the proposal of third generation strategies, which combine the previous ones and add institutional commitment: they conceptualise the first year experience as "everybody's business", a "transition pedagogy" that involves a new collaborative and strategic leap that requires a transformation of the whole institution

(Kift et al. 2010). These initiatives coincide with what we call overarching policies, structuring the educational experience.

Development

The following is a non-exhaustive *summary* of the institutional policies that shape access and transit through the first year (and beyond). These are systematised in Table 2 and are ordered as follows: first, we will describe the policies focused on the first year, those that seek to address the indicators of discontinuity of studies in the initial stages of the university career (first and second generation according to the typology of Kift et al. (2010); Kift (2015)). Then, we will consider global, third-generation policies, those that comprehensively organise the educational experience during the first year of university studies and, beyond that, configure the university system or grammar.

Table 2: Policies shaping access to and transition through the first year of university

Targeted policies in the first year (first and second generation)	
1.	Access/entry policies
2.	Vertical articulation policies (secondary school-university)
3.	Policies for the transfer of financial resources to students.
4.	Institutional affiliation policies
5.	Institutional and scientific literacy policies
6.	Student academic support policies
Global policies structuring the first year experience (third generation)	
7.	HE expansion and diversification policies
8.	Information production policies
9.	Academic administration policies
10.	Horizontal articulation policies (intra- and inter-university)
11.	Policies for the implementation of a pedagogy of beginnings/transition.

Source: own elaboration (see preliminary versions in: Vercellino and Chironi, 2024; Vercellino and García, 2025).

1) *Access / entry policies*

Since the first decade of the 21st century, the UUNN and higher education policies have assumed that the issue of the Right to Higher Education implies transcending the indicator of access to university, to think about how the institution accompanies the student who arrives and ensures their permanence and learning achievements. Within this framework, the so-called "entrance" to university has become an object of attention for institutional

policies and strategies: this is how both new students, new *entrants*, and the strategies developed by universities aimed at them (*entrance course, entrance exam, tutoring for new entrants, entrance activities, etc.*) are qualified. These strategies make up different systems of access and admission to university.

Some studies indicate that 62% of UUNNs have incorporated non-direct admission systems, in which students are required to take and/or pass a series of activities prior to actually entering the university course. Fernández Lamarra et al. (2018) classifies these access systems into two main groups: *admission without exams*, in which all students who complete the corresponding administrative registration process have access to the institution even if they have to take compulsory or optional courses or complete other internal instances, for example, tutorials, and *admission with exams*, in which access to the institutions occurs after passing some type of assessment instance (Lamarra et al., 2018).

García (2023) organises the regulatory mechanisms for admission into four groups or types: a) *absence of regulatory mechanisms*: once the bureaucratic registration and the presentation of supporting documentation have been completed, students begin the degree courses as their first academic activity and this time is accompanied by simultaneous complementary activities that seek to contribute to the construction of the student's profession; b) *a single regulatory system for all of the institution's degree courses*, generally with a focus on preparation/sensitisation for university life, generally without exams and with procedural assessment; c) *a single admission system with variations according to the degree course* to be entered, with a general component of preparation/sensitisation for university entrance and training in academic writing, plus disciplinary seminars that are considered a priority as necessary knowledge to start the course; d) *no regulatory admission system common to all degree courses*: d) without common entry regulations for all university degrees: admission requirements vary depending on the academic unit (faculties, departments, or even between different degrees within the same academic unit).

In any case, such systems are heterogeneous in their objectives and design, but they start from the same assumption: the beginning of university studies is critical for students, they require the development of special strategies on the part of the institutions and, in general, these strategies involve compensating for certain deficits or shortcomings of the students (be they knowledge, habits, cultural capital, information on institutional functioning, etc.).

2) *Vertical articulation policies (secondary school-university)*

The most developed *articulation policies* within the education system are those that refer to vertical articulation, with the secondary level (Pogré et al., 2023; Marano, 2023). The moment of transition from one level of the education system to another is a key point and involves multiple macro-, meso- and micro-social scales (Causa, Di Piero and Giovine, 2022).

Up to 2023, a series of articulation actions were developed through ad hoc calls for proposals developed at the federal level by the SPU, such as the "University works with secondary schools", the "Support Programme for the Final Year of Secondary School" or the "Nexos Programme" (Fernández Lamarra, 2022) and the "Let's Keep Studying Programmes" (Di Piero and Causa, 2024; Scalcini, 2025). There are also a number of initiatives that emerge from the institutions themselves or from groups of teacher-researchers (Pogré et al., 2023).

In general, research warns that the articulation promoted by the university system starts from a diagnosis of the problems that appear in the first year of university based on the deficit: the knowledge and skills offered by secondary school are not sufficient for students to be able to develop adequately at university. Taking this as a starting point, the main articulation programmes have focused on providing secondary school students with the knowledge or methodologies they need for university, or on preparing secondary school teachers to adapt their practices. There are also dissemination programmes that bring the university's academic offerings closer to secondary school students and open up spaces for them to begin to familiarise themselves with this new institution (Pogré et al., 2023; Marano, 2023; Causa, Di Piero and Giovine, 2022).

3) *Policies for the transfer of financial resources to students*

These initiatives include financial aid grants, the canteen service or food reinforcement, the provision of halls of residence, grants for transport, photocopiers or a note bank, etc. In 1996, the National University Scholarship Programme (PNBU) was created within the SPU of the National Ministry of Education. This social policy arose in a context of state reform and in line with the recommendations of the World Bank (Cerezo, 2024). Since its creation, it has been modified by incorporating sub-programmes that cater to special populations or situations: students with disabilities, indigenous students; students enrolled in degrees that require them to travel more than 200 km from their place of

residence to the university; students in *priority* or strategic *degrees* (Natural Sciences, Agricultural Sciences, Applied and Exact Sciences and Engineering); sports students; students in *ICT and nursing degrees*; scholarships for the completion of strategic degrees (Galli et al., 2025).

The Programa de Respaldo a Estudiantes Argentinos (PROG.R.ES.AR) and the Programa Nacional de Becas Estratégicas Manuel Belgrano (Manuel Belgrano National Programme of Strategic Scholarships) are currently in force. PROG.R.ES.AR was created in 2014, implemented by the National Social Security Administration, and aims to ensure the inclusion of socially vulnerable young people by means of a monetary transfer so that they can complete their primary or secondary education, continue in higher education or receive professional training. Unlike other scholarship programmes, PROG.R.ES.AR does not require academic performance, but rather the social need of the beneficiaries. It is the programme with the largest number of beneficiaries. The Manuel Belgrano Scholarships were created in 2021 and are also aimed at students from low-income households pursuing a university degree considered strategic for the economic and productive development of the country (the areas covered vary each year, but generally refer to the fields of Food, Environment, Computing and Information Technology, Conventional and Alternative Energy, Gas, Logistics and Transport, Mining and Petroleum).

For their part, the university institutions themselves provide other types of aid from their own budgets: financial grants, canteen or food reinforcement services, student residences, grants for transport, photocopiers or a note bank, etc. In addition to these direct contributions, all UUNNs develop policies known as "student welfare", which include other indirect economic aid such as student canteens or the provision of meals, transport subsidies, bicycle grants (free bicycles for one year for those who wish to use this vehicle as a means of transport to and from the university); grants for making copies of bibliographies, free medical, dental and psychological care, nurseries for students' children, housing coverage, etc. (Arias and Lastra, 2019).

4) *Institutional affiliation policies*

These are policies that promote the social integration of students, particularly among peers, and that favour a sense of institutional belonging (Tinto, 2021). These are policies

developed at the ministerial level, such as the Dual Career Programme⁵ for student athletes, the Argentine University Games (JUAR)⁶, or the University Volunteering⁷; as well as others promoted by the universities themselves, consisting of the development of recreational physical activity, extracurricular artistic activities, political participation programmes in student centres and community outreach (known as university extension).

In relation to political participation, universities host different forms of youth militancy (Vázquez, 2023), in a wide spectrum of collectives, some formalised within institutional norms such as student centres, others non-formal such as socio-environmental, feminist, gender diversity groups, among others.

5) *Institutional and disciplinary literacy policies*

Several universities develop during the first year or in the months prior to the start of the first year, actions aimed at what is called, inspired by the studies of Coulon (2005), learning the craft of being a university student (Sotelo, 2025; Berenstein, 2024). This involves developing skills in academic writing, reading complex texts, producing materials for oral presentation and knowledge of institutional academic management rules and systems (Sotelo, 2025).

Disciplinary literacy actions that introduce students to reading, writing and forms of study in the discipline have been strongly promoted by academic literacy studies (Carlino, 2003, 2005). In some universities, these topics are worked on in co-curricular instances within the entrance requirements (as we saw above), in others they are incorporated as subjects of "academic reading and writing" and "introduction to the discipline" within the study plans (Birgin et al., 2023; de Marziani, 2023; Vercellino et al., 2024) and in others they are promoted as tutorial actions developed by different actors: teachers, non-teachers or other advanced students (Berenstein, 2024).

6) *Student academic support policies*

Another corpus of institutional actions and strategies are those related to *student academic support* policies. Following Tinto (2021), these can be differentiated between those that

⁵ The aim is to enable medium and high-performance student-athletes to pursue and complete a university degree.

⁶ Annual and federal tournament, where students representing public and private higher education institutions participate in 14 sports disciplines.

⁷ A national Ministry of Education programme which consists of the participation of students in different types of community support without financial compensation.

are carried out independently of the course of the subjects (peer tutorials; tutorials by teachers who are not from the subjects; workshops or propaedeutic courses), and those that are carried out in addition to the course of the subjects (study support groups; teacher tutorials).

With different formats, diverse actors involved and very different modes of operation, tutorials, understood as a space for guidance and continuous support, contribute significantly to mitigating dropout factors and promoting continuous and complete educational trajectories (García, 2024). Other initiatives aimed at academic support for students include the creation of care facilities for mental health problems, the configuration of support for students with disabilities (Andrade, et al., 2023) and the vocational/occupational guidance proposals (Virgili et al., 2023) developed by several universities.

7) HE expansion and diversification policies

These policies range from macro-policy strategies linked to the creation of new educational institutions to counteract the concentration of supply in large urban centres (Fernández Lamarra, 2022; Fernández Aguerre, 2023), to institutional initiatives for the creation of new degree courses, diversification of their characteristics by contemplating different training stages with short - technical - and long - bachelor's degrees, engineering and modalities of study: face-to-face, distance, hybrid (the latter strongly after the COVID 19 pandemic, see Vercellino, 2023).

Throughout the 21st century, the national state has promoted the creation of new UUNNs with the aim of expanding access to higher education, decentralising the educational offer and strengthening territorial development. The Argentine state university system is made up of 61 university institutions distributed throughout the country's 2,800,000 square kilometres. This expansion was not only manifested in the creation of new institutions, but also in the growth of university enrolment. Official data show that the total number of university students grew from 1,437,611 enrolled in 2013 to 2,011,498 students in 2023, an increase of 40 per cent in a decade.

The universities created from the 1990s onwards and during the first quarter of the 21st century (2000-2023) were characterised by being "proximity offers" (Pérez Rasetti, 2014), i.e. by being located as proximity offers in territories where there were no university institutions (currently all Argentine provinces have at least one national university). But in addition to this particularity, these UUNNs have defined an

"innovative" academic proposal, proposing, in addition to traditional degree courses, others that address areas of vacancy, diversified, with short proposals (technical courses, one- or two-year Complementary Curricular Cycles, articulated with previous degrees), linked to local needs and with distance learning.

In relation to face-to-face and distance education modalities, although for more than a decade the Argentine university system has been implementing policies to promote technology-mediated education, the incorporation of these technologies has intensified, as in the rest of the world, since the COVID 19 pandemic. In this context, there has been a strong official effort to reformulate the field of available notions in order to reconceptualise current educational modalities. Thus, firstly, documents have appeared from bodies with functions of evaluation, regulation and supervision of universities⁸ that recognise the impact that the "reconfiguration of the pedagogical options" of face-to-face and distance education had in times of the pandemic in terms of inclusion and expansion of the university, while at the same time trying to define these new options. These efforts have culminated in the issuing of the Resolution of the National Ministry of Education No. 2599/2023, which modifies the scope of face-to-face and distance education.

Nevertheless, the current panorama in relation to educational modalities is extremely heterogeneous: face-to-face courses, with and without the implementation of technological mediation; distance courses, recently created universities that offer courses in both modalities, combined teaching spaces with different degrees of planning: incorporation of virtual classes in face-to-face courses, classrooms on educational platforms, and even combined strategies of simultaneous face-to-face and virtuality (Aranciaga and Ambrosino, 2022; Vercellino, 2023).

8) *Information production policies*

Since 1996, with the implementation of the University Information System (SIU), progress has been made towards an integrated system of statistics for this level. The SPU's University Information Department is responsible for developing a consolidated system of statistical information on the national university system. To this end, it compiles and systematises the information that university institutions submit through the SIU-ARAUCANO system. In other words, the production of the primary data that give rise to national statistics takes place in the universities themselves.

⁸ Such as the National Commission for University Evaluation and Accreditation, the National Inter-University Council, the National Directorate of University Management and the Council of Universities,

Although the SIU has had the primary objective of "introducing the culture of using information for decision-making" (Gurmendi, 2019, p.35), in addition to generating statistics, it has made progress in standardising the management systems of practically 90% of the university system. Thus, for example, in practical terms, this system institutes, through its academic management module - called SIU - GUARANÍ - management practices for university life, both for students and teachers. Students use the system to self-manage their enrolment for subjects and exams, annual re-enrolment and consultation of their academic history. In the case of teachers, this system allows them to consult those enrolled for courses and exams, upload grades, attendance, etc.

The culture of data production has been accompanied by initiatives of the universities themselves which have developed specific studies, commissioned by management bodies, focusing on the profiles of students, teachers, graduation rates, regularity, etc. University quality assessment policies have contributed to the improvement of information systems. "The data required for external evaluation forced institutions to improve the collection and availability of information" (Marquina et al., 2022, p. 118). Added to this is the incipient development of so-called Institutional Research. A recent study argues that the influence of data production on the decision-making process still tends to be weak (Marquina et al., 2022).

9) *Academic administration policies*

The university academic regime consists of those regulations that organise the activities linked to teaching but also to learning, of those who integrate the daily life in an educational community and structure the experience within the universities (Cerezo, 2024).

In the last decade, Argentinean educational research has begun to analyse academic regimes, but those of secondary school, considering their study to be very useful for systematising the ways in which the rules governing the student's position in the schoolwork regime determine educational experiences and trajectories. The academic regime of the university has scarcely been investigated.

The academic regimes of universities, together with other *academic administration* initiatives, order the "form" (Lahire et al., 1994), "grammar" (Tyack and Cuban, 2001), or "organisational mode" (Terigi, 2011) of the university, as they establish certain invariants: student status (requirements, grounds for non-compliance); teaching status (modes of entry and permanence in teaching); academic itineratio: curricular

policies (Vercellino and González Bruzzese, 2025; Vercellino, 2023); calendarisation (of the course, of the year/semester, of the weeks); rites of passage (qualifications and modality of approval and examination); among others. These are certain strategic arrangements, with strong historical roots and not exempt from conflict, which generate certain conditions of possibility, certain rules of the game or forms of rationality that organise the ways of doing university in a context of progressive expansion of the population it serves (Vercellino, 2024).

10) *Horizontal articulation policies (inter- and intra-institutional)*

Horizontal articulation between degrees from different universities and from the university itself has been stimulated by a series of recent initiatives linked to the creditisation of HE. The first precedent is the proposal for the development of a National Academic Recognition System in 2018 and the creation of the Argentinean University Academic Credit System in 2023. These initiatives are recent compared to their implementation in the region and are not without controversy (Vercellino and González Bruzzese, 2025).

The communality index (existence of common intra-institutional training cycles that allow mobility between degree programmes) and the horizontal mobility between degree programmes and horizontal mobility within institutions (Crosa and Soubirón, 2008) constitute, from certain perspectives, indicators of curricular flexibility and also inter-institutional and international mobility that emphasise the student's possibility/capacity to choose between different curricular itineraries.

As analysed in Vercellino and González Bruzzese (2025), one risk of these curricular innovations is the relapse into utilitarian and technocratic strategies, in the uncritical adoption of imported fashions, with little or no effect on the problems that these policies seek to address.

11) *Pedagogy of beginnings*

Finally, in recent times, the literature emphasises the need to generate policies that abrogate the development of a *pedagogy of beginnings*, that is, in the implementation of developments that assume the particularity of the first year/transition (Mancovsky and Rocha, 2019; Mancovsky, 2023).

A pedagogy that is assumed to be transitional, in its comprehensiveness, takes into account the following principles: the protagonism of the student and the negotiation of

itineraries assuming that we are facing differentiated learning processes and temporalities (Fernández Aguerre et al., 2022), which impacts on the revision of the prevailing assessment system (Vercellino, 2024); the incorporation of knowledge omitted from the curriculum, of those academic skills and habits considered critical and essential but not incorporated as domains of activity and relationship to be taught (Vercellino et al., 2024); the problematisation of the subject of university education, which implies working on latent institutional expectations and on students' expectations, among others (on the pedagogy of the beginnings, see also the developments of Mancovsky, 2023).

However, if we follow Terigi's (2011) conjecture that the pedagogical model is a specific production that has emerged and developed within the framework of the constraints posed by the organisational realities of educational institutions and their materiality, the development of a pedagogy of beginnings must be accompanied by organisational innovations and, vice versa, organisational innovations that do not impact on the predominant pedagogical model will find it very difficult to be implemented.

Conclusion

This article set out to map educational and institutional policies that are linked to the problem of the beginning of university studies, both because they are formulated in a targeted manner to address the problems that are detected at that initial stage and because they shape the educational experience at that time or are designed to address the commitment of state institutions to the right to HE.

The mapping of these policies allows us to see that the hegemonic model is that of first-generation actions, which is also the hegemonic model in the world. These are peripheral actions, which take place on the margins, prior, preparatory, complementary, for - educational: access/entry devices (courses, exams); transfers of economic resources to the student; co-curricular institutional and scientific literacy strategies, articulation with secondary school-university conceived from ideas of knowledge compensation; complementary academic support policies (tutorials, courses). This has two consequences: on the one hand, they are strategies with little effect on student retention or persistence and, on the other hand, they are not very institutionalised and can therefore be easily discontinued.

In some universities, progress has been made in some second-generation actions such as the redesign of study plans, anticipating a first year with introductory

characteristics with the incorporation of subjects linked to scientific and academic literacy in the first year. We hypothesise that these proposals persist with a compensatory and parallel tone to the degree itself, at the heart of the discipline and training.

In any case, the prevailing institutional strategies are focused, more student-oriented than teacher-oriented, more extracurricular than classroom teaching and learning, more focused on what should be "added" outside the curriculum than on the daily pedagogical experience, which Ezcurra (2011) defines as "peripheral interventions" that may be ineffective in overcoming problems that occur in everyday practices.

On the other hand, we have made progress in the identification of those norms that make up university grammar, those linked to the expansion and diversification of the educational offer; the production of information and consequent standardisation of certain academic management processes, the horizontal intra- and inter-university articulation based on curricular policies and academic administration policies.

Several of these policies have contributed to the expansion of access to higher education, while others persist without recognising the effects of massification on university grammar.

Moving towards third generation strategies would entail articulating the ten initiatives developed above into a comprehensive, coordinated policy with a certain degree of institutionalisation. It is a collaborative and strategic leap that requires a comprehensive transformation of the institution (Kift et al., 2010). This approach will only be achieved when first and second generation policies are integrated, when it is assumed that the first year is a transitional year and as such requires a particular organisational and pedagogical configuration, a revision of the system of practices that shape the first-year experience. In this context, developing a pedagogy of beginnings, that is, producing knowledge about teaching for another university grammar, will be a condition of possibility and opportunity.

Bibliographical references

- Andrade, R., Delgado, M., Méndez, M., Mischia, B. y Prieto, L. (2023). Interrogar la universidad: ingreso e interseccionalidad. En: Vercellino, S. y Pogré, P. (2023). *Transiciones. Instituciones y subjetividades en los inicios de los estudios universitarios*. Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Río Negro, pp. 155-166.
- Aranciaga, I., & Ambrosino, A. (2022). Tendencias de la educación mediada por tecnologías en las UUNN argentinas, políticas públicas, prácticas de gestión

- académica y tecno-pedagógicas emergentes entre presencialidades y virtualidades en el período 2018-2022. *Políticas Educativas-PolEd*, 16(2).
- Arias, M. F., & Lastra, K. (2019). Políticas de inclusión en la universidad argentina: El caso de las becas y el bienestar estudiantil en la Universidad Nacional de San Martín. *Actualidades investigativas en Educación*, 19(1), 246-280.
- Berenstein, D. (2024). Las tareas docentes y la construcción del oficio de estudiante universitario en los inicios a la educación superior ante la llegada de nuevos públicos. Avances de una tesis doctoral en curso. *RELAPAE: Revista Latinoamericana de Políticas y Administración de la Educación.*, (20), 82-91.
- Birgin, J., Iparraguirre, M. S. y Zambianchi, V. (2023). Ingresar a la universidad, un proceso de construcción y reconstrucción de trayectorias e identidades en y a través de la lectura y la escritura. En Vercellino, S. y Pogr , P. (2023). *Transiciones: Instituciones y subjetividades en los inicios de los estudios universitarios*. Editorial UNRN, pp. 195-208.
- Cambours de Donini, C., y Gorostiaga, J. (2019). Acceso y permanencia en universidades del Conurbano: logros y l mites de las pol ticas institucionales. En: Ezcurra A.M (coord.) *Derecho a la educaci n. Expansi n y desigualdad: tendencias y pol ticas en Argentina y Am rica Latina*. S enz Pe a, EDUNTREF, pp. 71-83.
- Carli, S. M. E. (2012). *El estudiante universitario: hacia una historia del presente de la educaci n p blica*. Siglo XXI.
- Carlino, P. (2003). Leer textos cient ficos y acad micos en la educaci n superior: obst culos y bienvenidas a una cultura nueva. *Uni-pluriversidad*, 3(2), pp. 17-23.
- Carlino, P. (2005). *Escribir, leer y aprender en la universidad. Una introducci n a la alfabetizaci n acad mica*. Fondo de Cultura Econ mica.
- Causa, M., Di Piero, E. y Giovine, M. (2022). Desigualdades, trayectorias y transiciones interniveles en la pandemia. En: Causa, M.; Di Piero, E. y Santucci, P. (Comps.). *Educaci n secundaria, desigualdad, pandemia y horizontes pospandemia*. Puntoaparte.
- Centro Regional de Estudios Econ micos de Bah a Blanca Argentina (2025). An lisis del presupuesto destinado a UUNN(2010-2024) y la situaci n actual de la UNS. Indicadores de Actividad Econ mica, Estudios Especiales. Disponible en: https://www.creebba.org.ar/iae/iae186/3_universidades_IAE_186.pdf
- Cerezo, L. (2024). An lisis de las implicancias del r gimen acad mico universitario en las experiencias estudiantiles: estudiar en cursos de hasta 30 personas en la UNAJ (Argentina). *InterCambios. Dilemas y transiciones de la Educaci n Superior*, 11(2).
- Coulon, A. (2005). *Le m tier d tudiant: l entr e dans la vie universitaire* (2e  d.). Paris: Economica.
- Crosa, L., & Soubir n, E. (2008). Indicadores de flexibilidad en carreras universitarias de grado. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educaci n*, 44(7), 1-7.
- de Marziani, P. (2023). El ingreso a la universidad en pandemia: reflexiones en torno a una experiencia de dictado de clases en l nea en el Curso de Iniciaci n Universitaria de la UNTF. En: Vercellino, S. y Pogr , P. (2023). *Transiciones. Instituciones y subjetividades en los inicios de los estudios universitarios*. Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de R o Negro. pp. 209-2017.
- Di Piero, E. y Causa., M. (2024) “Entre Nexos y Seguimos Estudiando: pol ticas de articulaci n entre los niveles secundario y superior en la provincia de Buenos Aires en pandemia. Nuevos lineamientos, di logos y reconfiguraciones”. En: Atairo, D., (comp.) *Acceso a la educaci n superior en clave de derechos: aportes*

- desde la investigación, el n°6 de la Colección Ágora del Doctorado en Ciencias de la Educación de la UNLP, año 2024 (en prensa).
- Ezcurra, A. (2019). Derecho a la Educación. Expansión y Desigualdad: Tendencias y Políticas en Argentina y América Latina. En: Ezcurra, A. (comp). *Derecho a la Educación. Expansión y desigualdad: tendencias y políticas en Argentina y América Latina*. UNTREF.
- Ezcurra, A. M. (2011). Abandono estudiantil en educación superior. Hipótesis y conceptos. *Admisión a la universidad y selectividad social. Cuando la democratización es más que un problema de “ingresos*, 23-62.
- Fernández Aguerre, T. (2023). Las dificultades de una política de descentralización universitaria en el territorio como instrumento para el objetivo de la democratización. El caso de la UdeLaR (2007-2018). En: Vercellino, S. y Pogrè, P. (2023). *Transiciones. Instituciones y subjetividades en los inicios de los estudios universitarios*. Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Río Negro. pp 51-63.
- Fernández Aguerre, T., Kunrath, R., & Trevignani, V. (2022). *Perfil de ingreso, puntos de bifurcación en la trayectoria y desafiliación en el ingreso a la universidad: un estudio de caso comparado en tres universidades de Argentina, Brasil y Uruguay*. Universidad Nacional del Litoral.
- Fernández Lamarra, N. (2022). *Iniciativa de políticas sobre el derecho a la educación superior: Argentina (Seguimiento de buenas prácticas de Derecho a la Educación Superior alrededor del mundo)*. UNESCO IESALC.
- Fernández Lamarra, N., Pérez Centeno, C., Marquina, M., & Aiello, M. (2018). *La educación superior universitaria en la Argentina: situación actual en el contexto regional*. Editorial UNTREF.
- Galli, M. G., García, P. D., & Mazzeo, I. D. (2025). Becas universitarias: Un mapeo de políticas nacionales para compensar las desigualdades económicas en la educación superior en los cuarenta años de democracia de Argentina. *REVISTA SOCIEDAD Y DESIGUALDADES*, (2), 92–115. Recuperado a partir de <https://cientificas.unpaz.edu.ar/edunpaz/index.php/IESCODE/article/view/1640>
- García de Fanelli, A. (2015). La cuestión de la graduación en las universidades nacionales de la Argentina: Indicadores y políticas públicas a comienzos del siglo XXI. *Propuesta educativa*, (43), 17-31.
- García, P. D. (2023). Mapeo de dispositivos de ingreso a las UUNNen Argentina. *Praxis Educativa*, 27(3), 1-25. ISSN 0328-9702 E-ISSN 2313-934X. *Revista Praxis*, <https://doi.org/10.19137/praxiseducativa-2023-270302>
- García, P. D. (2024). Las tutorías como estrategias de acompañamiento a las trayectorias estudiantiles en los inicios de la universidad. *Revista Literatura en Debate*, 19(34), 199–222. <https://doi.org/10.31512/19825625.2024.19.34.199-222>
- García, P. D. (2025). La “vida universitaria” como objeto de enseñanza en los inicios de la universidad. Reflexiones sobre algunos dispositivos diseñados para acompañar el ingreso al nivel superior. *Revista El Cardo* (21), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.33255/18511562/1946>
- Gluz, N. (2011) “Recapitulación: cuando la admisión es más que un problema de “ingresos””. (p. 231 - 239). En Gluz, N. (Ed.) *Admisión a la universidad y selectividad social*. Los Polvorines: UNGS.
- Gurmendi, M. de L. (2019). ¿Los sistemas de información se han insertado en el ámbito de las universidades públicas de Argentina? *FACES*, 25(53), pp. 35-50. <https://eco.mdp.edu.ar/revistas/index.php/faces/article/view/56>

- Kift, S. (2009). Articulating a transition pedagogy to scaffold and to enhance the first year student learning experience in Australian higher education: *Final report for ALTC senior fellowship program*. Strawberry Hills, NSW: Australian Learning and Teaching Council.
- Kift, S. (2015). Una década de la pedagogía de la transición: un salto cualitativo en la conceptualización de la experiencia del primer año. James Cook University, Townsville, Australia. *Revista HERDSA de educación superior*, vol. 2.
- Kift, S., Nelson, K. y Clarke, J. (2010). Transition pedagogy: A third generation approach to FYE-A case study of policy and practice for the higher education sector. *Student Success*, 1(1), 1-20.
- Kisilevsky, M., & Velea, C. (2002). *Dos estudios sobre el acceso [a] la educación superior en la Argentina* (Vol. 140). Paris, France: UNESCO, Instituto Internacional de Planeamiento de la Educación.
- Lahire, B., Thin, D. y Vincent, G. (1994). Sur l'histoire et la théorie de la forme scolaire. En Vincent, G. (ed.). *L'Education prisonnière de la forme scolaire? Scolarisation et socialisation dans les sociétés industrielles* (11-48). Presses Universitaires de Lyon.
- Linne, J. (2018). El deseo de ser primera generación universitaria. Ingreso y graduación en jóvenes de sectores populares. *Revista latinoamericana de educación inclusiva*, 12(1), 129-147.
- Mancovsky, V. (2023). La relación con el saber del profesor a cielo abierto: diálogo desde una pedagogía de los inicios a la vida universitaria. En Vercellino, S. y Pogré, P. (2023). *Transiciones: Instituciones y subjetividades en los inicios de los estudios universitarios*. Editorial UNRN. Pp. 185-193.
- Mancovsky, V., & Rocha, S. M. M. (Eds.). (2019). *Por una pedagogía de "los inicios": más allá del ingreso a la vida universitaria*. Editorial Biblos.
- Marano, M. G. (2023). Problemáticas y desafíos en la articulación entre el nivel secundario y la universidad. Algunas reflexiones a partir del análisis de las políticas de articulación 2006-2020. En Vercellino, S. y Pogré, P. (2023). *Transiciones: Instituciones y subjetividades en los inicios de los estudios universitarios*. Editorial UNRN. pp. 239-252
- Marquina, M. (2011). El ingreso a la universidad a partir de la reforma de los 90: las nuevas universidades del conurbano bonaerense. *N. Gluz (Comp.), Admisión a la universidad y selectividad social*, 63-86.
- Marquina, M. M., Giménez, G., Gomez Rodriguez, W. E., & Mazzeo, I. (2022). Implicancias del Aseguramiento de la Calidad (AC) en las universidades argentinas.
- Montenegro, J. (2023). Políticas de ingreso a la universidad en Argentina. Un estudio sobre la formulación de una política estatal y su implementación en una institución universitaria. En: Vercellino, S. y Pogré, P. (2023). *Transiciones: Instituciones y subjetividades en los inicios de los estudios universitarios*. Editorial UNRN. Pp. 79-88.
- McInnis, C. (2002). The place of foundational knowledge in the Australian undergraduate curriculum. *Higher Education Policy*, 15(1), pp. 33-43.
- Parrino, M. (2019). La construcción de caminos de equidad en educación superior: políticas de permanencia. *Derecho a la Educación. Expansión y desigualdad. Tendencias en Argentina y América Latina*. UNTREF.
- Pérez Rasetti, C. (2014). La expansión de la educación universitaria en Argentina: políticas y actores. *Integración y Conocimiento: Revista del Núcleo de Estudios e Investigaciones en Educación Superior de Mercosur*, 3(1), 8-32.

- Pierella, M. P., Peralta, N. S., & Pozzo, M. I. (2020). El primer año de la universidad. Condiciones de trabajo docente, modalidades de admisión y abandono estudiantil desde la perspectiva de los profesores. *Revista iberoamericana de educación superior*, 11(31), 68-84.
- Pogré, P., De Gatica, A., y Krichesky, G. (2020). *Los inicios de la vida universitaria II: aportes de la investigación*. Editorial Teseo.
- Pogré, P., Cambours de Donini, A.M., Vidondo, M. y Bifano, F. (2023). Concepciones, políticas y prácticas para abordar la articulación. En Vercellino, S. y Pogré, P. (2023). *Transiciones: Instituciones y subjetividades en los inicios de los estudios universitarios*. Editorial UNRN. pp. 219-230,
- Querrien, A., Varela, J. (1994). *Trabajos elementales sobre la escuela primaria*. Ediciones de La Piqueta.
- Rama Vitale, C. (2009). La tendencia a la masificación de la cobertura de la educación superior en América Latina. *Revista iberoamericana de educación*.
- Santos Sharpe, A. (2024). Debates en torno a la gratuidad universitaria: A 75 años de su establecimiento; *Pensamiento Universitario*; 22; 11-2024; pp. 55-64.
- Santos-Sharpe, A. (2021). Representaciones de cuatro carreras de la Universidad de Buenos Aires y su vínculo con el abandono de estudios. *Revista iberoamericana de educación superior*, 12(34), 21-45.
- Scalcini, C. (2025). *Se hizo lo que se pudo* (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Nacional de La Plata).
- Secretaría de Políticas Universitarias (2022). *Síntesis de Información Estadísticas Universitarias 2021-2022*. Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, CABA, República Argentina
- Sistema de Información de Tendencias Educativas en América Latina -SITEAL-(2024). Indicadores de Educación Superior. Disponible: <https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/indicadores>
- Sotelo, L. A. (2025). Los Inicios a la Vida Universitaria en Argentina: hacia la construcción del campo de estudios. *Espacios en Blanco. Revista De Educación*, 2(35). <https://doi.org/10.37177/UNICEN/EB35-442>
- Terigi, F. (2011). Ante la propuesta de “nuevos formatos”: elucidación conceptual. *Quehacer educativo*, 107, 15-22.
- Tinto, V. (2009). Taking student retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of university. *ALTC FYE Curriculum Design Symposium* (Vol. 5).
- Tinto, V. (2021). Ingresos e Ingresantes a la Universidad. Presentación y traducción Vercellino, S.. *Revista Pensamiento Universitario* N° 20. [Ingresos e Ingresantes a la Universidad. Conferencia de Vicent Tinto - Pensamiento Universitario](#)
- Trow, M. (1970). Reflections on the transition from mass to universal higher education. *Daedalus*, 1-42.
- Tyack, D. y Cuban, L. (2001). *En busca de la utopía: un siglo de reformas en las escuelas públicas*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Varela, J. (1992). Categorías espacio-temporales y socialización escolar: del individualismo al narcisismo. *Revista de Educación*, (298), 7-29.
- Varela, J. y Alvarez-Uria, F. (1991). *Arqueología de la Escuela*. Madrid: Ediciones de la Piqueta.
- Vázquez, M. (2023). Pandemia, políticas públicas y participación: estrategias y modos de promoción de la participación juvenil desde ámbitos socio-estatales nacionales y locales en Argentina. *Civitas-Revista de Ciências Sociais*, 23, e42247.

- Vercellino, S. (2021). El primer año de la universidad como analizador institucional. *Polyphōnia. Revista De Educación Inclusiva*; 5 (2); pp. 236-254. <http://rid.unrn.edu.ar/handle/20.500.12049/8747>
- Vercellino, S. (2023). Los procesos de democratización de la universidad argentina y sus derivaciones institucionales. *Trayectorias Universitarias*, 9(17), 131. <https://doi.org/10.24215/24690090e131>
- Vercellino, S. (2024). Masificación, heterogeneidad y sistemas de evaluación en la Educación Superior: interpelaciones al dispositivo “universidad”. En: Rosa, F. [et al.], organizadoras. *Estudos interdisciplinares sobre a universidade: saberes em construção*. - Salvador: EDUFBA, 2024. 332 p. (v.1), pp. 105-128.
- Vercellino, S. y González Bruzzese, M. (2025). Educación Universitaria: la flexibilización del curriculum en cuestión. Estudios de casos en Argentina y Uruguay. Preprint *Revista Electrónica Educare*. <http://rid.unrn.edu.ar/handle/20.500.12049/12785>
- Vercellino, S. y Pogr , P. (2023). *Transiciones: Instituciones y subjetividades en los inicios de los estudios universitarios*. Editorial UNRN.
- Vercellino, S., Chironi, JM. (2024). Los inicios de los estudios universitarios: an lisis cr tico de las pol ticas y estrategias institucionales. *VIII Congreso Nacional y VI Congreso Internacional de Investigaci n Educativa*, Facultad de Ciencias de la Educaci n de la Universidad Nacional del Comahue. Cipolletti, R o Negro (Patagonia Argentina), 11 y 12 de abril de 2024. <http://rid.unrn.edu.ar/handle/20.500.12049/11525>
- Vercellino, S. y Garc a, P. D. (2025): Pol ticas institucionales e inicios de la vida universitaria. Estado de la cuesti n y desaf os para la universidad p blica argentina. En VVAA (2025): *Tejiendo puentes y saberes: la red de estudios sobre los Inicios a la vida universitaria*- 1a ed. - Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes. 26-45. <http://rid.unrn.edu.ar/handle/20.500.12049/13649>
- Vercellino, S., Gibelli, T. I., & Chironi, J. M. (2022). Caracterizaci n de los/as ingresantes a carreras de ciencias aplicadas de la Universidad Nacional de R o Negro. *Revista Argentina de Educaci n Superior*, (24), 25-45.
- Vercellino, S., Lozano, E. y Morales, A. (2024). Ingresar a carreras de ciencias aplicadas: saberes y actividades intelectuales que son demandadas en el primer a o y las consideradas relevantes por las y los estudiantes. *KAIROS. Revista de Temas Sociales*, 28 (53), 55-78. <http://rid.unrn.edu.ar/handle/20.500.12049/11820>
- Virgili, N. A., Quattrocchi, P. R. y Cortijo, C.B. (2023). Abordajes y estrategias de orientaci n en la transici n de la escuela secundaria a la UBA: experiencias del Departamento de Orientaci n Vocacional. Vercellino, S. y Pogr , P. (2023). *Transiciones: Instituciones y subjetividades en los inicios de los estudios universitarios*. Editorial UNRN. Pp. 231-238.