

Twenty Years of Merit-Pay Programme in Argentinean Universities: Tracking Policy Change through Instrument Analysis

Nerina Fernanda Sarthou^{1,*}

Email nfsarthou@yahoo.com.ar

¹ National University of Central Buenos Aires (UNICEN), Pinto 399, Tandil, 7000 Argentina

Abstract

In the 1990s, one of the major concerns related to university performance in Argentina was how to encourage academics to increase knowledge production, the new central economic commodity in a global market. Therefore, in 1994 a unique faculty merit-pay programme, based on peer evaluation, was introduced: the Incentive Programme for Research professors of Public Universities. Although it has been in place for twenty years without any interruption, it is not the same policy instrument as it was 20 years ago, when first implemented, and this is a key reason for its continuity. This paper adopts a methodology based on the assumption that three attributes of policy instruments could help recognise policy change: the actors targeted, the incentives used to enrich policy objectives and the economic resources mobilised. While in its beginnings the programme was characterised as an important way of accessing funds, twenty years later the acquisition of prestige and academic power has increased its importance. This transformation explains why it remains in place today, and was not abolished with the change of government in 2003.

Keywords

Merit-pay programme

Argentina

Policy change

Policy instrument

Since the 1990s, great changes have taken place in Latin American universities (Mollis, 2007). Associated with evaluation and performance-based funding at institutional and individual levels, faculty merit-pay programmes were amongst general strategies adopted (Galaz-Fontes and Gil-Antón, 2013; Sarthou, 2015). According to Neave (1998), these initiatives are linked to the rise of what he called the “Evaluative State” in Higher Education.

Although evaluation has always been an intrinsic part of policy making, what has happened since the 1980s is that the “evaluation mode” has changed in its purpose and instrumentality. The existence of instruments such as Guideline Laws, decrees and circulars has been the very essence of what Neave (1998) calls the “historic mode” in which administrative verification and control took place. An evaluative state reflects an attempt to go beyond historic modes of evaluation and to enforce more precise and more rapid responses from institutions of higher education by devising a highly elaborate and more widely ranging instrument of judgment than existed earlier.

This evaluative state emerged in the context of the application of the new public management (NPM) paradigm to guide the state reform process. According to Lorenz (2012), fundamentally, NPM is the application of four dogmas of the neoliberal economy: (1) free market, (2) competition, (3) best value for money and (4) optimum efficiency for individuals as both consumers and owners of private property to the domain of what used to be called the public sector.

In the case of Latin American public universities, during the 1990s they experienced a period of budget contraction due to a decrease in state funding and hence they were pressured to initiate or expand their private sources of revenue through competition for research funds, fees, cost-recovery programmes and contracts with the business sector (Torres and Schugurensky,

2002). At the same time, funding became increasingly conditional, with emphasis on accountability. Hence, universities were also compelled to implement self-evaluation processes, supplemented by external evaluations.

The NPM discourse is formed by fundamental concepts such as efficiency, quality, transparency, accountability and flexibility. Applied to higher education, NPM was propagated in the 1980s as a means to make universities efficient and transparent and thus accountable. The logic of this management model also implies that financial incentives to enforce conformity with output criteria can ultimately be translated to individual faculty members via individualised contracts and performance-related pay (Lorenz, 2012). Among the more interesting instruments, faculty merit-pay programmes occupy an important place.

Although in Latin America most knowledge generation takes place in public universities, with on average a much smaller contribution of other public or private institutions (Arocena and Sutz, 2005), historically, professional training has been seen as the central task to be accomplished by universities (Mollis, 2007). In this context, one of the concerns in the 1990s was to encourage academics to increase knowledge production, a new central economic commodity in a global market (Vessuri, 1993; Marginson and Ordorika, 2010). To reach this policy goal, several governments developed a particular policy instrument directed at academics from public universities.

In the case of Argentinean higher education, a unique faculty merit-pay programme based on peer evaluation was introduced. The Incentive Programme for Research professors of Public Universities is a national and voluntary programme run jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation (MINCYT). Once every four years, the faculty members are evaluated on the basis of their teaching and research activities and awarded a tri-monthly fellowship–scholarship depending upon the level they have reached out of five possible levels. Some studies argue that the Incentive Programme promoted a powerful segmentation of faculty (Tiramonti, 1999), an individualistic perspective to academic work, simulation of substantive work and other non-productive side effects (Araujo, 2003). Others still accused the programme of offering a new way by which the state could control faculty work, much more attuned to a business environment and

a market approach to higher education and knowledge in general (Chiroleu and Iazzeta, 2005). Notwithstanding these criticisms, more than 30 % of faculty from public universities participate, and every time a call takes place, many academics submit applications. What makes academics participate in the Programme in spite of its negative effects? What happened during the first 20 years of implementation? Why is it still being implemented despite the huge changes in government that took place in 2003? Have significant changes to this policy occurred? Which are the characteristics of the Programme nowadays?

This work seeks to put forward such questions in relation to the Argentinean faculty merit-pay programme and is organised into five main sections. First of all, it presents the aforementioned approach. Next, a description of the original characteristics of the programme is provided in order to explain the transformations undergone in successive sections. Finally, some concluding comments are presented.

The Relevance of Policy Instruments to Trace Policy Change

The study of policy instruments has been a topic of concern since the beginning of the analysis of public policies. Every public policy is implemented through one or a mix of specific instruments: laws, fees, rewards, sanctions, permissions, prohibitions, access, restrictions, etc. According to the policy area, diversity and complexity of instruments vary significantly, thus there are different possibilities for the classification of policy instruments (Bemelmans-Videc *et al.*, 2011). Hood (1983) wrote one of the pioneering works in this regard, “The Tools of Government”. Early on, he identified two types of instruments: those that are used for gathering information and those that are used for modification of behaviour. Additionally, he classified policy instruments according to the presence of four basic social resources termed “nodality”, “authority”, “treasure” and “organisation”. In short, Hood’s approach refers to state capabilities available to face a problem: information, legal powers, money and organisational capacity.

For their part, based on government intervention strategy and also using four categories, McDonnell and Elmore (1987) identified “standards”, “economic incentives”, “institutions” and “authority”. Unlike Hood (1983), these authors

explore the interpretation of the problem and what the solution for each instrument of public policy involves; once expressed, these assumptions explicitly state the relationship between problem and policy and the basic conditions for successful implementation.

From another point of view, Schneider and Ingram (1990) developed an analytical framework to specifically explore explicit and implicit assumptions about behaviour that can be found in laws, regulations and programmes. According to these authors, “a basic assumption underlying our approach is that public policy almost always attempts to get people to do things that they might not otherwise do; or it enables people to do things that they might not have done otherwise” (ibid., 513). In this sense, if citizens do not perform certain acts, there are five reasons that lead to the implementation of five different instruments: authority, incentives, capacity building, symbolic instruments and exhortation and learning tools.

The classification proposed by Schneider and Ingram (1990), unlike that of McDonnell and Elmore (1987), differs in their starting point – the former focus on an explanation based on individual behaviour, the latter on state capabilities – but both agree on the identification of three instruments: laws, economic incentives and capacity building (institutions). This triad resembles a traditional division of policies taken up by Vedung (2011) based on ways in which the government seeks to affect the behaviour of the individual subject and the degree of “obligation”: regulation, subsidies and information campaigns, a classification popularly known by the expression “sticks, carrots and sermons”.

As can be seen above, in the existing literature, there are a large number of different typologies with a wide inventory of criteria to define and characterise a policy instrument. This work seeks to analyse a policy instrument that is easy to classify since, as its name indicates, it is an incentive instrument. However, the incentive can adopt different forms according to the actor targeted by the policy instrument. In the case of academics or scientists, it can be distinguished different tools. Latour and Woolgar (1986) wonder “what drives scientists to set up inscription devices, write papers, construct objects and occupy different positions?” (1986, 189). In other words, these authors wonder what motivates scientists. They argue that they look for “credit”, in the sense of credibility. The notion of credibility makes possible the conversion between money, data,

prestige, credentials, problem areas, argument, papers and so on. These authors introduce the notion of “credibility cycle”.

AQ1

From the point of view of Knorr-Cetina, scientists look for the imposition, expansion and monopolisation of “resource-relationships”. In words of the author, resource-relationships are at stake, for example, when a position is to be filled by a scientist, when money is to be distributed among scientists or groups of researchers, when a speaker is to be chosen for a scientific lecture, or when a result produced by a scientist is incorporated into the research of others (1981, 89). Resources may adopt diverse forms but, essentially, they are characterised as coming not only from the community of specialism but from extra-disciplinary colleagues, that is to say, the author completely erases the distinction between cognitive and social forces.

From Pierre Bourdieu’s (1999) theoretical proposal, “all scientific practices are directed towards the acquisition of scientific authority (prestige, recognition, fame, etc.)” (1999, 21). Bourdieu understands society as a macro space structured under distinct areas understood as “fields”. Within this logic, science is also a field, in particular a field of symbolic production. The scientific field shares the same features with the rest of the fields but has a particularity: the type of capital at stake, scientific capital. It could be traduced as scientific authority, which can be accumulated, transmitted and even reconverted into other kinds of capital under certain conditions. In this struggle, what is at stake is in fact the power to impose the definition of science best suited to the scientist’s specific interests, i.e. the definition most likely to enable him/her to occupy the dominant position in full legitimacy, by attributing the highest position in the hierarchy of scientific values to the scientific capacities which s/he personally or institutionally possesses.

In this paper, a Bourdieusian perspective is adopted due to its conceptual emphasis on the dimension of competition, in terms of a struggle for power. The structure of the scientific field at any given moment is defined by Bourdieu as the state of the power distribution between the protagonists in the struggle, “the structure of the distribution of the specific capital, the result of previous struggles which is objectified in institutions and dispositions and commands the strategies and objective chances of the different agents or institutions in the

present struggles” (1999, 27). The notion of power in the scientific field can help understand the increasing importance over the years of the public policy instrument analysed in this paper.

Public policy analysts have generally studied policy instruments to establish a link between formulation and implementation and to further explore the process of decision making. However, over the last decades, a set of works has emphasised the study of policy change through the transformation of policy instruments (Bezes, 2007; Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2007; De Lovinfosse, 2008; Palier, 2007).

Lascoumes and Le Galès (2007) emphasise that policy instruments are very effective indicators for understanding and tracing policy change over time. They highlight that instruments reveal a theorisation of the relationship between the governing and the governed; every instrument constitutes a condensed form of knowledge about social control and ways of exercising it. In addition, these authors identify different levels of observation: “instrument”, “technique” and “tool” and seek to explore the effects of the instruments in relation to general policy (politics), and not only in relation to policy objectives (policy).

In this sense, Palier (2007) explained the transformation of the pension system in France through gradual changes in retirement pension policy instruments, and Bezes (2007) explored internal and hidden politics of changes in bureaucracies by focusing on the introduction and use of policy instruments as institutional change without radical or explicit shifts in administrative systems.

This paper adopts the scheme employed by De Lovinfosse (2008) who chose to address the question of policy change with a focus on the formulation of policy programmes. While analytical approaches presented above allow the classification of policy instruments, the work of De Lovinfosse allows the exploration of policy change. This author assumes that public policy materialises in public decisions and that by analysing their content the main dimensions of policy can be revealed. Besides, her methodology for addressing policy change is adopted based on the assumption that three attributes of policy instruments could help recognise policy change.

The Actor Targeted by the Policy Instrument

Policy instruments aim to influence the behaviour of a specific group. Target groups are the actors whose behaviour needs to be modified in order to reach a given policy goal. The choice of a specific target group refers to a particular causal assumption about the policy problem (who caused it and how). If the target group changes, it is considered that the instrument changes.

The Incentives Used to Enrich the Policy Objective

Each policy instrument contains a tool to induce a modification in the actor's behaviour. This tool may vary according to the assumption about what could work best. If the type of incentive changes, it is assumed that the instrument changes.

The Economic Resource Mobilised by the Instrument

Different criteria can apply as to how to characterise the resource: the nature of the resource, the effect of the resource or/and the origin of the resource. If the economic resource changes, it is believed that the instrument changes.

It is believed that these three levels of observation of the policy instrument will help best characterise and understand the change of higher education policy towards academics in Argentina. In this paper, it is considered that the Incentive Programme for Research professors of Public Universities is an instrument of Argentinean Higher Education policy towards academics. This programme is operationalised through a Manual of Procedures that has changed several times, affecting the implementation process. This article seeks to identify the transformation that Higher Education policy towards academics underwent by exploring changes and continuities of the instrument throughout the last 20 years. It is considered that these transformations explain why it is still being implemented.

The Argentinean Incentive Programme: The original version

The Incentive Programme for Research Professors of Public Universities was created in Argentina at the end of 1993, in a context of a set of transformations of the Argentinean state under the first presidency (1989–1994) of Carlos Saúl Menem. From that moment, a process known as Reform of the State began. It

was sustained by the ideas of the neoliberalism; the country witnessed a fundamental restructuring of State–society relations. Public services and utilities were privatised, public investment in education, housing and health fell, and new controls over the labour movement were introduced (Grugel and Ruggirozzi, 2012). Higher education policy was not an exception to this, but it had its peculiarities.

The Incentive Programme replicated the logic of other reforms in universities, although due to the particularities of the sector the process was slower and gradual, and a period elapsed between being politically sanctioned, approved by parliament and its eventual implementation (Chiroleu and Iazzeta, 2005). While discussions about university reforms began in 1990, the new Law of Higher Education (Number 24,521) was enacted in 1995 and has applied to all institutions of higher education since 1996. It introduced substantial changes into the system (Mollis and Marginson, 2002).

In Argentina, universities are located throughout the country and the government heavily subsidises higher education. The subsidy comes in the form of the central government financing tuition-free public universities, and which is enjoyed by all students regardless of their economic and academic background. However, there are also private institutions that are financed by charging their students tuition, and by contributions made by private firms. By 2012, the Argentinean university sector, which awards undergraduate and graduate degrees, was composed of 49 public and 48 private universities and 1.8 million students, 80 % of whom are concentrated in the public sector (SPU, 2014).

Consistent with the neoliberal notion of the university as an economic corporation, the 1995 law authorised universities to establish their own salary regime, guaranteed them control of funds they generated and enabled them to create entities to support financing and enhance relations between the university and the community; and moreover, institutions were empowered to establish an autonomous system of student admission and graduation (Vessuri, 1993; Mollis and Marginson, 2002). In this context, the Incentive Programme emerged as a course of action from the national government in relation to scientific research at public universities, embodied by Presidential Decree number 2427/93, which directs and regulates it, and in its three annexes that define how to implement it. Unlike other instruments for promoting scientific research, this programme is

a policy measure aimed exclusively toward public universities. The key national agencies were the Ministry of Culture and Education (MCE) and the new Secretariat of University Policies (SPU).

The content of the policy, that is, the policy objectives/goals (De Lovinfosse, 2008) emerged from the decree that created the programme: “to promote an integrated development of academic careers in public universities”, understanding that purpose as jointly carrying out activities of teaching, research, extension and management, as an answer to a series of circumstances which are also mentioned in the decree: i) the low proportion of faculty involved in research activities (15 % of all staff); ii) the importance of scientific and technological development for economic growth and social justice; iii) the need for more research activities at national level and for conversion of faculty staff, encouraging a greater commitment to university activities and the creation of research groups and iv) the simultaneous contribution of the programme to improve the income of academic staff during the period in which they participate in research projects, in a context of resource allocation to universities through specific programmes based on objective criteria that favour performance of academic work.

The implicit assumption in this policy instrument is that in order to motivate academics to engage in research, they should be given an incentive. According to Schneider and Ingram (1990), the incentive category assumes that individuals are utility maximisers and will not be positively motivated to take policy-relevant actions unless they are influenced, encouraged or coerced by manipulation of money, liberty, life or other tangible payoff. In this case, the Incentive Programme distributes money and prestige as incentives.

In line with McDonnell and Elmore (1987), the Incentive Programme could be classified as an “economic incentive”, which in terms of state capacities is a financial instrument seeking to achieve policy objectives through functioning as a stimulus for research professors. But this stimulus does not just provide a monetary incentive; it also represents a symbolic one: the equivalent research category (ERC).

The scheme to distribute incentives was the assessment: economic incentive and the ERC would be assigned after assessment of academic trajectory

(Sarthou, 2015). On the one hand, following evaluation a position within a hierarchy was assigned to each applicant: according to the result obtained by each professor, they were “categorised”, that is to say, they obtained an ERC. These categories were, in descending order: A, B, C and D.

On the other hand, if applicants met the requirement of a minimum of courses, they were also able to perceive the economic incentive; the amount meant a significant proportion in relation to faculty salaries, representing for some categories up to 100 % during the 1990s (Sanllorenti, 2003). Those who did not meet the required minimum of courses were categorised but did not obtain the monetary incentive.

In Argentina, prior to implementation of the Incentive Programme, the activities of a professor at a university were largely based on teaching for non-academic professions; most of them did not compete for prestige in terms of activities such as publishing articles in scientific journals, training in human resources or pursuing a doctorate degree, nor it was a stratification criterion accepted by peers (Vaccarezza, 2000). The Incentive Programme stimulated the construction of a notion of academic prestige linked to the research conducted at the university; it converted the university to a *locus* for the production and reproduction of academic status, encouraging competition and definition of strategies to obtain or increase academic prestige. In this sense, Incentive Programme effects were not only material-growth research professor income-related but also symbolic: they changed the social academic structure.

Financially, the programme became operational in April 1994. For the first year, 42 million Argentinean pesos were awarded, while for 1995 and 1996, 70 million Argentinean pesos were allocated annually (Palacios et al., 1996). The first categorisation process was conducted at the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1994. Applicants came from 30 public universities and in 1996, out of a total of 103,913 professors, 18 % perceived the monetary incentive (SPU, 1996). This showed extensive involvement of universities and wide acceptance of the programme in the academic community; however, this participation exceeded the expectations of the SPU so an adjustment of several issues relating to the implementation of the instrument was promoted.

The First Modification: Academic Power and Low

Budget

In October 1997, it was decided to put an end to the categorisation procedure implemented between 1994 and 1997, and the MCE was empowered to issue a manual of procedures for implementing the Incentive Programme from 1998 onwards. The evaluation process was radically transformed by the introduction of a Bank of Evaluators, rules and patterned instructions. On the one hand, scores were established to reach each category (now five and instead of letters they used numbers: I, II, III, IV and V) and an evaluation grid with quantitative criteria to be used during the development of assessments in commissions was compiled.

On the other hand, categories I and II were merged into a National Bank of Evaluators, so they would be leading the entire evaluation process. This transformation led to a change in the type of incentives selected to reach the policy goals. Each instrument based on incentive allocation could add, remove or modify the type of tool to induce actor behaviour. In the case of the Argentinean Incentive Programme, it continued distributing prestige and money, but explicitly added the granting of “power” in the academic realm. The novelty of the categorisation process lay in the distribution or delegation of “power” between categories I and II; in other words, its memberships strengthened their prestige and their “power” to integrate, as of 1998, a set of outstanding research professors with the authority to decide whether the academic career of a professor was adjusted to what the Incentive Programme promoted.

Belonging to a Bank of Evaluators and an effective participation in an Evaluation Committee provides scientific capital (Bourdieu, 1999). Specifically, it confers a specific type of power identified by Bourdieu as “temporary or political power”, defined as institutional and institutionalised power related to the occupation of notable positions in scientific institutions, laboratories or departments, membership evaluation committees, etc. and to the power over the means of production and reproduction that ensures that prominent position (Bourdieu, 2008). This is a new type of incentive used by the instrument to reach policy goals.

The other change was associated with the volume of economic resources mobilised by the instrument. In 1999, after the call to categorise in 1998 from a

total of 85,518 faculty members, 16,017 received the monetary incentive, i.e. 19 % of faculty staff from 32 public universities in the country (SPU, 1999–2003). Although this participation meant interest from the university community in the maintenance of the instrument, declining economic incentive began to transform the policy instrument. In 1999 and 2000, the budget of the programme was reduced markedly, as is shown below (Table 1).

Table 1

Funds allocated by the National Budget Law to the Incentive Programme

Year	Funds
1998	70.000.000 pesos
1999	53.000.000 pesos
2000	55.250.000 pesos
2001	65.000.000 pesos
2002	65.000.000 pesos
2003	65.000.000 pesos

Source: own elaboration based on SPU University Yearly Statistics (1999–2003 and 2000–2004).

Although in 2001 the budget was increased, in fact, research professors did not receive the monetary incentive that year; only at the beginning of 2002 did they receive the first payment corresponding to 2001. Moreover, legalising this situation, a resolution from April 2002 from the Secretariat of Higher Education – previously SPU – decided to change the shape and timing of this payment, determining that as from then, the monetary incentive would be perceived by year up exercise (García de Fanelli, 2005). In December 2001, a massive wave of riots and protests triggered a string of presidential resignations. An extended recession and a severe financial crisis culminated in debt default, a chaotic devaluation, and a descent into the deepest depression in Argentina’s history (Levitsky and Murillo, 2003). The 2001 crisis in Argentina profoundly altered public policies that were being implemented in the country; the Incentive Programme was not an exception.

The Second Modification: Economic Incentive Loses Value

A decade after the creation of the Incentive Programme, a new Procedures Manual was presented in 2004 (Ministry of Education, 2003). This modification occurred under Nestor Kirchner, who assumed the office of President in May 2003. Argentina witnessed a reformulation of the development model after the crisis of 2001–2002, from neoliberalism in the 1990s under Carlos Menem to a more State centric “developmentalist” model. A new model was articulated, one that possessed elements of continuity as well as change with both pre-crisis neoliberalism and more historical forms of political economy (Wylde, 2011). This post-neoliberal model of political economy in Argentina was applied from 2003 to 2015 and can be summarised as a desire to re-install the “productivist” pact between labour and capital, with the state acting as the key arbiter of those interests (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012).

Significant changes occurred in the university environment, transforming the context of implementation of the Incentive Programme. Two aspects constituted a clear rupture with the style of government of the nineties: a steady increase in the budget for universities and a fluid relationship between the government and public universities’ authorities (Suasnábar and Rovelli, 2012). From 2004, public university education expenditures climbed from 0.48 to 0.87 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009, while the public university expenditure per student increased from (an estimated) US\$ 1382 to 3254 in purchasing power parity (PPP) (García de Fanelli, 2012).

As a result of the categorisation process convened in 2004, the sum of incentivised increased from 16,545 to 19,778 research professors in 2005, i.e. the number of incentivised increased by 19.5 % (SPU 2006). Meanwhile, the budget allocated to the programme between 2004 and 2008 consisted of the following amounts:

As can be observed, in 2007 funds allocated for the operation of Incentive Programme have significantly increased over the previous year, specifically 28 %. This increase was directly related to the payment of incentive fees to 2006 new research professors that had applied in 2004, which totalled 2946 new incentives. However, in relation to faculty salaries, the increase in the total

amount allocated to the programme did not reflect the proportion represented by the economic incentive. Since 2004, the economic resource mobilised by the instrument was considerably transformed; it suffered a radical reduction.

As a result, the monetary incentive had a much lower impact than before, particularly if the proportion of faculty salaries it represents is taken into account (García de Fanelli, 2012). Specifically, what happened between 2003 and 2008 is that the economic incentive did not grow along with salaries and it began to be distributed across a larger field of research professors (Table 2).

Table 2

Funds allocated by the National Budget Law to the Incentive Programme

Year	Funds
2004	65.918.827 pesos
2005	59.023.600 pesos
2006	69.600.000 pesos
2007	89.000.000 pesos
2008	74.362.295 pesos

Source: own elaboration based on SPU University Yearly Statistics (2000–2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008).

AQ2

The amount received by each research professor depends on the index value set each year by the number of beneficiaries, the number of hours devoted to teaching and research and the category they possess. Based on this information and on the stipulated budget, the value of the coefficient is defined, which serves to determine the amount to be received by each research professor. Due to the fact that public universities can set their own salary scale and to the variability of the categories, workload and seniority, it is difficult to quantify the amount that the economic incentive represents to faculty salaries. However, García de Fanelli (2005) tested a hypothetical situation and compared the amount received for each ERC with the average compensation of each full-time position and 15 or 10 years of seniority. The results showed that in 2001 the average monetary incentive accounted for categories I and II was 54 % of the

salary, for category III 30 %, for category IV 33 % and for category V 25 %.

Taking this approach into account, a similar exercise was conducted and the following table (Table 3) was developed with the aim of showing the amount represented by the economic incentive in relation to faculty salaries for certain categories and for exclusive and semi-exclusive workloads.

Table 3

Proportion incentive/faculty salary with average seniority, 2004

Rank and Workload	ERC	Wage in Argentinean pesos	Economic incentive in Argentinean pesos	% incentive/salary
Full-time Full Professor	I	2382	870	37
	II		580	34
Full-time Associate Professor	I	2210	870	39
	II		580	26
Full-time Assistant Professor	I	1880	870	46
	II		580	31
Full-time Senior Assistant	III	1664	377	23
	IV		319	19
Full-time Assistant	IV	1508	319	21
	V		232	15
Part-time Full Professor	I	948	348	37
	II		232	25
Part-time Associate Professor	I	889	348	39
	II		232	26
Part-time Assistant Professor	I	733	348	47
	II		232	32
Part-time Senior Assistant	III	630	150.8	24
	IV		127.6	20
	IV		127.6	23

Part-time Assistant	V	567	92.8	16
<i>Source:</i> own elaboration based on SPU University Yearly Statistics 2010, Procedures Manual 2003 and SPU Resolution N° 175/05.				

As is shown here, in 2004 the percentage that economic incentive represents in relation to faculty average salary went down compared to 2001. For the positions of full-time Full Associate or Assistant Professor and category I or II, the incentive represented between 26 and 46 % of monthly faculty salary, while for full-time Senior Assistant and Assistant and categories III, IV or V, the incentive represented between 15 and 23 %. Meanwhile, for part-time Full, Associate or Assistant Professors and category I or II, the amount represented between 25 and 47 %, while for Senior Assistants, Assistants and categories III, IV and V, the amount represented between 16 and 24 % of the monthly faculty salary.

Higher categories and higher positions of professors with full workloads are combinations that give rise to a greater proportion of the economic incentive. However, since 2004 that proportion has fallen, reinforcing the statement that prestige and “academic power” resources distributed by the Incentive Programme have begun to acquire greater value in relation to economic resources. In this sense, the instrument also suffered a change in the type of incentives used to reach the policy objective.

As was mentioned above, in the scientific field, researchers search for scientific capital, a specific kind of symbolic capital that confers “power” within a field. Again in this work, this conception is employed to interpret Incentive Programme tools. According to Bourdieu, there are two kinds of scientific capital: temporary or political –defined above – and personal prestige, i.e. specific power which is more or less independent of the first depending on the fields and institutions, and is based almost exclusively on the recognition of peers (Bourdieu, 2008). In this paper, it is argued that due to the change in the economic resource, the instrument changed: the ERC started to become a valuable resource, even exceeding the superiority which the economic incentive originally had.

In particular, the ERC began gradually to be considered as a guiding and ordering element within university research systems. To the entire university system, the ERC reveals the quality of work and the trajectory of the research professor under a uniform parameter for all disciplines and universities nationwide. In this sense, some universities began to require being categorised in the Incentive Programme, for example, to guide a thesis or to apply to research subsidy calls. To lower categories such as V and IV, it implied possession of recognition inside the university sphere and it was the initial step required in order to reach the highest categories. Moreover, the ERC was also taken into consideration as an important distinction when different calls for grants for research subsidies from other research institutions took place.

2009 and 2014 Categorisation Call: Deepening the Transformation

Fifteen years after the programme was created, the Ministry of Education discussed a new manual (Ministry of Education, 2008). This process took place under Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's presidency, which she assumed in December 2007, adopting her husband's main established policies (Wylde, 2011). According to Calvo and Murillo (Calvo and Murillo, 2012), economic activity was fostered by heavy spending on public works, by a favourable exchange rate that boosted exported industrial production and by a battery of public subsidies covering food, energy, transport and industry.

By the year 2009, when a new categorisation was introduced, the falling value of the economic incentive was accentuated. While there was an increase in the budget for the operation of the programme in 2009 (Table 4), the downward trend in the proportion that the monetary incentive represented in relation to faculty salaries deepened.

Table 4

Funds allocated by the National Budget Law to the Incentive Programme

Year	Funds
2008	74.362.295 pesos
2009	90.000.000 pesos
2010	95.000.000 pesos

2010	75.000.000 pesos
2011	90.000.000 pesos
2012	98.978.088 pesos
<i>Source:</i> own elaboration based on SPU University Yearly Statistics (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012).	

Table 5 shows the average percentage that the economic incentive represented in relation to faculty salary in 2009 for some positions and workloads.

Table 5

Proportion incentive/faculty salary with average seniority, 2009

Rank and workload	ERC	Wage in Argentinean pesos	Economic incentive in Argentinean pesos	% incentive/salary
Full-time Full professor	I	8273	915	11
	II		610	7
Full-time associate professor	I	7601	915	12
	II		610	8
Full-time assistant professor	I	6515	915	14
	II		610	9
Full-time senior assistant	III	5946	396.5	7
	IV		335.5	6
Full-time assistant	IV	5171	335.5	6
	V		244	5
Part-time full professor	I	3817	366	10
	II		244	6
Part-time associate professor	I	3507	366	10
	II		244	7
Part-time assistant professor	I	3006	366	12
	II		244	8

Part-time senior assistant	III	2743	158.6	6
	IV		134.2	5
Part-time assistant	IV	2385	134.2	6
	V		97.6	4

Source: own elaboration based on SPU University Yearly Statistics 2010, Procedures Manual 2008 and Resolution SPU N° 337/09 ([Secretariat of University Policies, 2009](#)).

By 2009, the percentage that economic incentive represented in relation to faculty salaries decreased significantly. Also, in general, this percentage was minimal, regardless of category, workload or the position of the research professor. As the table shows, for Full-time Professor Positions and category I or II, the incentive represented between 7 and 14 % of the monthly faculty salaries, while for Full-time Assistants and categories III, IV or V the incentive represented between 5 and 7 %. Meanwhile, for Part-time Professor positions and category I or II the incentive represented between 6 and 12 %, while for Assistant positions and categories III, IV and V the incentive represented between 4 and 6 % of the monthly faculty salary.

Despite the transformation of one of the programme's central tools, money, in the categorisation call for the year 2009, 30,723 research professors submitted applications. That situation marked a historical record, surpassing the figures recorded in the three previous categorisations; furthermore, 46 % of applicants were new entrants.

In September 2014, the Ministry of Education approved a new Procedures Manual to be used in the Categorisation Call for 2014–2015. By 2014, the percentage that economic incentive represented in relation to faculty salaries continued to decrease. In general, this percentage is small regardless of category, workload or the position of the research professor.

As Table 6 shows, for the posts of full-time Full, Associate or Assistant Professor and category I or II the incentive represented between 4 and 9 % of the monthly faculty salaries, while for full-time Senior Assistants, Assistants and categories III, IV or V the incentive represented between 3 and 4 %. Meanwhile, for part-time Full, Associate or Assistant Professor and category I

or II the incentive represented between 5 and 7 %, while for Senior Assistants and Assistants and categories III, IV and V the incentive represented between 3 and 4 % of the monthly faculty salary.

Table 6

Proportion incentive/faculty salary with average seniority, 2014

Rank and workload	ERC	Wage in Argentinean pesos	Economic incentive in Argentinean pesos	% incentive/salary
Full-time full professor	I	21,304	1515	7
	II		1010	5
Full-time associate professor	I	19,111	1515	8
	II		1010	5
Full-time assistant professor	I	16,918	1515	9
	II		1010	6
Full-time senior assistant	III	14,725	656.5	4
	IV		555.5	4
Full-time assistant	IV	12,532	555.5	4
	V		404	3
Part-time full professor	I	9828	606	6
	II		404	4
Part-time associate professor	I	8817	606	7
	II		404	5
Part-time assistant professor	I	7805	606	8
	II		404	5
Part-time senior assistant	III	6793	262.6	4
	IV		222.2	3
Part-time assistant	IV	5781	222.2	4
	V		161.5	3

Source: own elaboration based on SPU University Yearly Statistics 2012,

Thus, it is noted that in the two decades since its implementation, the programme suffered two main transformations related to the type of incentives used to reach policy goals and to the amount of economic resources mobilised. Budget reduction and decline in weight represented by the economic incentives confirmed that policy makers' assumptions about what could work best changed over time. This seems to be the truth as in the last call for categorisation in May 2015, 27,875 research professors presented their applications to access, maintain or obtain a higher category.

Concluding Remarks

This work has shown that by exploring instruments and tools of public policy, changes can be revealed over time. The case study shows how, through modifications in the tools, the nature of an instrument of higher education policy was transformed. In this regard, some considerations that should be emphasised arise.

Since its inception, the programme maintained as the main line of continuity the same target group: research professors from public universities. But it suffered two main changes: the budget magnitude allocated to the programme and the type of incentives. These transformations brought about a change in policy, allowing the continuity of the programme in the context of a new government. From this point on, the Incentive Programme, formerly used within the policy of the neoliberal evaluative estate, maintains its validity during the *neodesarrollista* state framework. Why? Because the instrument was modified, implying a transformation of the policy directed at academics in Argentina.

The original version of the programme set up an instrument that had as central factors the distribution of an economic incentive, which represented a significant percentage of faculty salaries and the allocation of a research category after performance evaluation. Thus, the programme was the main access to economic resources and prestige to the community of research professors of all public universities. However, since 1999, the programme budget has been markedly reduced and the monetary incentive has started to

lose weight in relation to faculty salaries.

The gradual reduction of the budget allocated by the Ministry of Education to the Incentive Programme implementation can be interpreted as a loss of government support for the policy instrument. However, the instrument is still being implemented regularly and every time a call for categorisation opens an important sum of professors submit applications. Specifically, what has happened since 2004 is that the sum of the monetary incentive has not grown along with salaries and has begun to be distributed among a larger number of research professors, causing a decisive transformation of the instrument. While in its beginnings the Incentive Programme was synonymous with “extra money” representing the “carrot” incentivising professors to do research, since 2004 prestige and academic “power” have acquired more relevance. As such, in the fourth and fifth editions of 2009 and 2014, the number of applicants accessing, maintaining or obtaining a higher category markedly exceeded the expectations of programme authorities showing that the interest in economic resources was not the only motivation to categorise.

AQ3

The Programme not only had an impact in terms of monetary resources, it also affected the symbolic realm. It introduced an institutional identity for those who conduct research at university: “research professor”, a notion which organised and gave visibility to research conducted at universities throughout the whole system. Until the early 1990s, research evaluation at public universities was poorly developed; in this context, extra-university institutions were those that defined criteria, procedures and assessment bodies for activities that were developed within the university. This situation produced, in general, researchers whose work was developed at universities and who did not enjoy the same status than researchers from organisations such as the CONICET, because university assessment procedures were less rigorous and reliable. After two decades of implementation, the Incentive Programme has contributed to developing the discussion and practice of research evaluation at universities reinforcing and extending the implication of having an ERC. To be categorised in the Programme started to represent a credential validation in all disciplines and universities. It emphasises the standardisation of research evaluation throughout the country and institutions. In this regard, universities also began to organise and collect important information about their faculty staff activities,

information that, until then, very few of them had.

Focus on the instrument provides evidence that some educational policy departures can occur through other routes than big, public reforms. After 20 years, the structure of the instrument was able to condense the interest of three key players: the government, universities and academics. To the government, the programme is an instrument with a low budget and low administrative costs. For universities the programme represents, on the one hand, a source of financial resources and academic prestige and, on the other hand, a powerful management tool at the institution. To research professors the programme represents an increase to their income but essentially represents a certain prestige attached to carrying out teaching and research in a university position.

References

Araujo, S. (2003) *Universidad, investigación e incentivos. La cara oscura*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones Al Margen.

Arocena, R. and Sutz, J. (2005) Latin American Universities: From an original revolution to an uncertain transition', *Higher Education* 50(4), 573–592. doi: 10.1007/s10734-004-6367-8

Bemelmans-Vidéc, M., Rist, R. and Vedung, E. (ed). (2011) *Carrots, Sticks, and Sermons: Policy instruments and their evaluation*, New Brunswick: Transaction Books.

Bezes, P. (2007) The Hidden Politics of Administrative Reform: Cutting French Civil Service Wages with a Low-Profile Instrument, *Governance*, 20(1): 23–56.

Bourdieu, P. (1999) The specificity of the scientific field, *Social Science Information*, 14 (6): 31–50.

Bourdieu, P. (2008) *El oficio de sociólogo*, Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.

Calvo, E. and Murillo, M. V. (2012) 'Argentina: The Persistence of Peronism', *Journal of Democracy* 23(2): 148–161.

Chiroleu, A. and Iazzeta, O. (2005) 'La reforma de la educación superior como capítulo de la reforma del Estado. Peculiaridades y trazos comunes', in Rinesi, E.; Soprano, G. and Suasnábar, C. (Ed.) *Universidad, reformas y desafíos. Dilemas de la educación superior en Argentina y en Brasil*, Buenos Aires: Prometeo/UNGS: pp. 15–38.

De Lovinfosse, I. (2008) *How and why Do Policies Change?: A Comparison of Renewable Electricity Policies in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK*, Brussels: Peter Lang.

Galaz-Fontes, J. and Gil Antón, M. (2013) The Impact of Merit-pay Systems on the Work and Attitudes of Mexican Academics, *Higher Education*, 66(3): 357–374. doi: 10.1007/s10734-013-9610-3

García de Fanelli, A. (2005) *Universidad, organización e incentivos: desafíos de la política de financiamientos frente a la complejidad institucional*, Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila.

García de Fanelli, A. (2012) Financiación de la Educación Superior Argentina: Cambios y continuidades entre los años 90 y la primera década del 2000, *Educación Superior y Sociedad*, 16(1): 16–36.

Grugel, J. and Riggirozzi, P. (2012) Post-neoliberalism in Latin America: Rebuilding and reclaiming the state after Crisis, *Development and Change*, 43(1): 1–21. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-7660.2011.01746.x

Hood, C. (1983) *The tools of government*, London: Macmillan.

Knorr-Cetina, K. (1981) *The manufacture of knowledge: An essay on the constructivist and contextual nature of science. An Essay on the Constructivist and Contextual Nature of Science*, Exeter: A. Wheaton & Co. Ltd.

Lascombes, P. and Le Galès, P. (2007) 'Introduction: Understanding public

policy through its instruments - from the nature of instruments to the sociology of public policy instrumentation', *Governance*, 20 (1): 1–21.

Latour, B. and Woolgar, S. (1986) *Laboratory of Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton: University.

Levitsky, S. and Murillo, M. V. (2003) 'Argentina weathers the storm', *Journal of Democracy* 14(4): 152–166.

Lorenz, C. (2012) 'If you're so smart, why are you under surveillance? Universities, neoliberalism, and new public management'. *Critical inquiry* 38(3): 599–629.

Marginson, S. and Ordorika, I. (2010) 'Hegemonía en la era del conocimiento: Competencia global en la Educación superior y la investigación científica?', México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Seminario de Educación Superior. <http://works.bepress.com/ordorika/47/>

Mc Donnell, L. M. and Elmore, R. (1987) *Alternative Policy Instrument*, Santa Mónica: The Rand Corp.

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Resolution No 811/2003. Procedural Manual 2003. Argentina.

Ministry of Education. Resolution No 1543. Procedural Manual 2014. Argentina.

Ministry of Education. Resolution No 1879/2008. Procedural Manual 2008. Argentina.

Mollis, M. (2007) 'Latin American university transformation of the 1990s: altered identities?' in Forest, J. and Altbach, P. G. (ed.) *International handbook of Higher education*, Netherlands: Springer, pp. 505–515.

Mollis, M. and Marginson, S. (2002) 'The assessment of universities in Argentina and Australia: Between autonomy and heteronomy', *Higher*

Education 43: 311-330.

Neave, G. (1998) 'The evaluative state reconsidered', *European Journal of Education*, 33(3), 265-284.

Palacios, C.; Curti, C. and Alonso, A. (1996) 'El programa de incentivos a tres años de su creación', *La Universidad. Boletín Informativo de la Secretaría de Políticas Universitarias*, III, núm. 7. Buenos Aires, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación: 3–8.

Palier, B. (2007) Tracking the evolution of a single instrument can reveal profound changes: the case of funded pensions in France, *Governance*, 20(1): 85–107.

Sanllorenti, P. (2003) 'El Modelo Neoliberal en las Universidades Nacionales: La Maldición de los Incentivos a los Docentes Investigadores', Buenos Aires: CONADU.

Sarthou, N. (2015) 'Los instrumentos de política como enfoque de análisis de los sistemas de pago al mérito: contribuciones analíticas a partir del caso argentino', *Perfiles Educativos*, Vol. 150 XXXVII, núm. 149, 150–168.

Schneider, A. and Ingram, H. (1990) Behavioral assumptions of policy tools, *The Journal of Politics* 52 (2): 510–529.

Secretariat of University Policies (SPU). Resolution No 2078/14. 2014 Index value. Argentina.

Secretariat of University Policies (SPU). Resolution No 175/05. 2005 Index value. Argentina.

Secretariat of University Policies (SPU). Resolution No 337/09. 2009 Index value. Argentina.

Secretariat of University Policies (SPU) *University Yearly Statistics*. 1996, 1999–2003, 2000–2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012. Buenos Aires: Ministry of Education.

Suasnábar, C. and Rovelli, L. (2012) 'Impensar las políticas universitarias en la Argentina reciente', in Chiroleu, A.; Marquina, M. and Rinesi, E. (Ed.) *La política universitaria de los gobiernos Kirchner: continuidades, rupturas, complejidades*, Los Polvorines: Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento, pp. 49–74.

Tiramonti, G. (1999), 'Los cambios en la universidad: una modernización diferenciadora', in Tiramonti, G.; Suasnábar, C. and Seoane, V. (Ed.) *Políticas de modernización universitaria y cambio institucional*, La Plata: Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Serie Estudios e Investigaciones, vol. 38, pp. 9–46.

Torres, C. A. and Schugurensky, D. (2002) 'The political economy of Higher education in the era of neoliberal globalization: Latin America in comparative perspective'. *Higher Education* 43(4): 429–455.

Vaccarezza, L. (2000) 'Las estrategias de desempeño de la profesión académica. Ciencia periférica y sustentabilidad del rol de investigador universitario'. *Redes* 7(15): 15–43.

Vedung, E. (2011) 'Policy Instruments: Typologies and theories', in Bemelmans-Videc, M.; Rist, R. and Vedung, E. (ed). *Carrots, Sticks, and Sermons: Policy instruments and their evaluation*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books, pp. 21–58.

Vessuri, H. M. (1993) The development gap: implications for Higher education and research in Latin America, *Higher Education Policy* 6(4): 25–28.

Wylde, C. (2011). State, society and markets in Argentina: The political economy of neodesarrollismo under Néstor Kirchner, 2003–2007. *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 30(4): 436–452.