

## Chapter 4: Operational and Institutional Challenges

*This chapter highlights the operational and institutional challenges facing the Becas Chile Programme (BCP). First, the programme's current legal and administrative framework is outlined. Next, an account of operational problems and possible solutions are illustrated. Particular emphasis is made on the applicant evaluation and selection process. The ambiguity of Becas Chile's institutional roles and responsibilities are analysed, highlighting the implications for governance, day-to-day operations and inter-agency co-ordination. Concerning Becas Chile's role in activities related to the development of advanced human capital, proposals are made after an in-depth review.*

### Legal and administrative framework

The 2009 Budget Law legally created Becas Chile. Supreme Decree No. 644, signed by the President and the Ministers of Education and Finance of Chile on 29 December 2008, regulated the programme. President Bachelet instructed that an Inter-Ministerial Committee be established to be co-ordinated by the Minister of Education. Such a Committee was to include the participation of the ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Planning, and Economy, as well as the President of the CNIC. An Executive Secretariat was formed as the intermediating agency for policy co-ordination, housed within the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). Specific operational responsibilities were assigned to various agencies. CONICYT has the primary role in the administration of the post-graduate scholarships, including the allocation of scholarships and payments to beneficiaries. MINEDUC, through the Centre for Pedagogical Improvement, Experimentation and Research (CPEIP), the Languages Open Doors Programme (PIAP) and the Higher Education Division, has the primary role in the administration of scholarships for teachers and technicians.

## Operational challenges

Difficulties with administration of the Master’s and PhD scholarships in 2009 gave rise to problems with public confidence in the programme. The government took decisive action including major changes to senior personnel in CONICYT. Several factors were cited as contributing to the problem:

- The implementation processes for such a significantly enlarged programme, with a multiplicity of separate schemes brought under a single programme umbrella, were too rushed.
- Information available to applicants was not sufficiently clear and comprehensive to enable applicants to prepare their applications properly in the time available.
- Information available to evaluators was in some cases not sufficiently clear or comprehensive enough to allow them to make the best judgements about the relative strengths of the greatly expanded range of foreign institutions to which students could apply.
- Limited involvement of the academic community and enterprises in the conceptual and design stages of BCP development led to a lack of ownership of the programme by this important group of stakeholders.

These matters are considered below, as each of them will need to be addressed in the effort to build confidence in the programme going forward.

In general, implementation of the BCP was too rushed. There was insufficient lead time to prepare potential participants and evaluators, to develop information and materials to guide choice and decision making, and to involve people in the process.

Importantly, the BCP selection procedures allow for an undesirably high degree of variability. Evaluators estimate programme and institutional quality individually. This could lead to a situation where two students who apply to the same programme might receive very different qualifications for quality based on differing perceptions of evaluators. It also allows for “spill-over effects” of institutional quality onto programme quality; lesser quality programmes at institutions with higher overall reputations get over-rated while higher quality programmes at institutions with lower overall reputations get under-rated.

Moreover, applicants did not always have adequate information to guide their applications. The review team was advised that many students were unclear about the criteria for describing their personal objectives in applying for a scholarship, and about what was involved in taking on a post-graduate

programme in a foreign country. Additionally, it was suggested that some students may have been encouraged by the weights given for institutional quality to make their applications in respect of institutions they believed would score highly, without knowing much about the institutions, particularly in their preferred areas of study, and without any idea of their prospects for acceptance by those institutions. However, Table 4.1 shows a reasonably high proportion of applicants being accepted into their first or second preferences. Additionally, to the extent that world rankings are meaningful, a higher proportion of BCP post-graduate students went to highly rated institutions – 45% of BCP students went to the top 50 Times Higher Institutions compared with barely 20% of pre-BCP schemes.

**Table 4.1 Proportion of scholarship holders accepted by stated preference**

Applicant Preferences	Master's (%)	Doctorate (%)
First	78.0	86.8
Second	16.3	7.1
Third	5.4	6.1
Fourth	0.3	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

*Source:* Becas Chile Executive Secretariat.

Finally, insufficient involvement of the academic community and enterprises in the conceptual and design stages of BCP development led to some disaffection for the initiative and disengagement from it. In several respects the BCP was not seen as meeting the needs of either tertiary institutions or enterprises, and in some cases the initiative was perceived as undermining the efforts of institutions and enterprises to build their capacity. The review team understands that such views can reflect other self-interested pursuits on the part of the institutions, and that a momentum for reform sometimes needs to be built up initially by overcoming cultural resistance and avoiding provider capture. Nevertheless, it is important as the programme matures for the academic community to commit to such initiatives, especially as they provide advice for students on where to study, write references for scholarship applicants, and are a major source of evaluators of applications. It is no less important for enterprises and employer organisations to commit to such initiatives, in order to strengthen employer involvement so that labour market needs are reflected in programme design and evaluative criteria.

### *Problems with the selection process*

It is necessary to improve the consistency of the BCP selection process for scholarship recipients, reducing undesirable variability, effectively integrating diverse policy goals and ensuring that the numerical scoring system effectively functions. Currently, the system possesses some drawbacks that may limit its ability to identify the optimal set of candidates. The main sources of these deficiencies are:

1. Ambiguity in the assessment guidelines themselves: the BCP guidelines should provide reviewers with clear guidance on how to assess the numerous competing factors that comprise the overall score for an applicant. A brief look at Figure 2.7 in Chapter 2 provides examples of potential ambiguity:
  - a) how should a candidate with good grades from a less selective undergraduate institution be ranked versus a candidate with mediocre grades from a very selective undergraduate institution?
  - b) In assessing academic record, how should one assess a candidate who has a Master's degree from a domestic institution and seeks a second Master's from a foreign institution? Is the possession of a previous degree of the same type a positive or a negative? What if the candidate seeks a PhD and already has a Master's degree?
  - c) In considering a candidate's statement of goals and intentions, what is the proper way to balance a student's desire for personal achievement with his or her desire to make a social contribution?
2. Imprecision in the definition of national priorities; ill-considered reliance on self-reporting by applicants to determine whether and to what extent the proposed courses of study reflect national priorities.
3. Poor communication with the reviewers. Some reviewers felt they received incomplete instructions on how to carry out the review of applications.
4. Lack of systematic feedback from reviewers and evaluators to improve subsequent rounds of selection.
5. Limited ability to distinguish between institutional and programme quality. Some 30% of the weight for institution/programme performance is given to whole of the institution ranking, the remainder is based on evaluator assessment at sub-institutional level. Institutional rankings and reputations are aggregates reflecting average quality, but quality can vary significantly from programme to programme, especially at the PhD level, where departments are small and the presence of a few academics can make an enormous difference. As presently construed, the

assessment of institutional quality in the BCP rankings may allow some candidates who apply to mediocre programmes at overall good schools to benefit, while possibly penalising candidates who apply to superior programmes in otherwise less distinguished institutions.

6. Possible “saturation” or overload of reviewers with too many applications. Realistically, there is a limit to the number of candidates a reviewer can appropriately assess, and the BCP may have pushed close to this point for some reviewers in its initial rounds.
7. Over-reliance on the point system to rank candidates in order of merit; unwarranted faith in the numerical scoring system to accurately reflect disparate measures of student potential and programme goals.

Improving the BCP performance on these points is critical for the effective functioning of the programme, and hence for the public’s confidence in it. Some of these issues can be easily remedied; others are complicated and require both a measured response and a re-organisation of how the BCP selection process is conducted.

Currently, the BCP posts selection criteria and application guidelines along with the calls-for-applications for a given round of funding. The agencies then receive applications and partially process them, focusing on the administrative aspects. The applications for Master’s, PhDs, sandwich programmes, co-advised theses and post doctorates are then sent to at least two reviewers, who complete the review and scoring. The agencies then provide the ranked applications to the Selection Committee, which selects a “cut off” point for each degree type in turn. The “cut off point” is supposed to distinguish where the marginal quality of the ranked candidates goes from acceptable to unacceptable. However, given the deficiencies and variability inherent in the points listed above, the process should be changed in several ways to make it more effective.

### ***Directions for process improvement***

The two main changes that this reports suggests are: (i) the revitalisation of the Oversight Committee<sup>1</sup> to set clear general policy for the selection process in a way that minimises potential variability and inaccuracy, and that properly incorporates programme goals; and (ii) the creation of specific “panel committees” in a variety of disciplines or areas to determine “cut off points” at a less aggregate level, and to provide other key judgments on specific issues related to sub-groups of candidates.

The revitalised Oversight Committee may need to have its composition revisited to ensure the presence of senior management of the BCP and related agencies with responsibilities for human capital development

(CONICYT, MECESUP *et al.*) with members designated by the DIVESUP or the proposed Vice Ministry for Higher Education and Research. With its revised mandate, the Oversight Committee could provide solutions to mitigate problems 1-5 above in that it could:

- Create clear policies to guide selection and balance competing goals. This might include:
  - a) Distinguishing where different treatment is required for different degree types. The Committee might decide, for instance, that Master's applications could have only two reviewers but that PhD applications require three, at least one of whom might be an international reviewer.
  - b) Decide if undergraduate grades from different institutions should be treated uniformly by reviewers and panel committees.
  - c) Decide whether and to what extent the socio-economic status (SES) of the applicant should factor in selection. The Committee could determine: (i) whether positive discrimination on the basis of SES should be a factor for all degree programmes, or only for Master's but not for PhDs; (ii) what measures will be used to determine SES; (iii) up to what age would a candidate's "family of origin" be considered the source of SES rather than current income and assets; (iv) how to implement SES as a factor of selection – should low SES candidates be given a bonus point or two? Or should high SES applicants be excluded from eligibility? Or should quotas be set for candidates by SES status?
  - d) Determine how to count previous degrees – both domestic and/or foreign, by applicants. Should those who already have a Master's be excluded from getting a second? Should they have a point deducted? Does it matter whether the first Master's was domestic or foreign? Is it a positive or a negative if a previous Master's is in a different field from the proposed course of study? Should PhD candidates who already have Master's be ranked above or below candidates who come directly from undergraduate programmes? Should consideration be given to offering loans rather than grants to those applicants with a post-graduate qualification whose case for public support is not compelling?
  - e) Elaborate on how to consider work experience, and how this ought to differ by degree type and programme.
  - f) Provide heuristic models which indicate the highly desirable candidates from the less desirable ones.

- Add precision to the definition of national priorities. This could be accomplished in two ways:
  - a) The Oversight Committee could review any list of priority areas and the weights that these have in the selection process. It could consider how to balance “vertical” priorities such as a perceived need for more specific expertise in areas such as renewable energy, aquaculture, advanced mathematics, business administration, biochemistry, etc., with “horizontal” needs such as for a greater critical mass of PhD researchers and potential academic staff for tertiary education. It would opine on whether it is best for the student, the reviewer, the Panel Committee or some combination to judge how the application reflects national priorities.
  - b) As the proposed dual structure of the Committees (the Oversight Committee for general matters and Panel Committees for individual selection) implies that each Panel Committee would need to receive a “budget envelope”, the Oversight Committee would *de facto* play a role in determining the priorities by having the authority to propose – for approval by the Inter-Ministerial Committee – differential budgets to different sub-programmes within the BCP. It would, for example, propose the amounts to the “Social Sciences Panel Committee” versus the “Life Sciences Panel Committee” based on the perceived relative need and priorities for human capital. However, in order to avoid the risk of a political competition between areas in order to get more budget and of accepting low-quality applicants just to fulfil the quota, it would be important for the Oversight Committee to establish minimum standards for academic quality which all candidates must meet; where there is budget available but no candidates who meet these minimum standards, the individual Panel Committees would not be free to make awards to substandard candidates. Unused resources from the budget envelopes would be returned to the Programme for reallocation and later use.
- ***Issue guidelines that respect different needs of different degree programmes.*** This would be handled as part of the creation of clear guidelines, described in (1.a) above.
- ***Improve the handling of positive discrimination.*** As partially described in (1.c) above, the Oversight Committee’s guidelines would determine the weight given to special goals such as favouring qualified applicants from lower SES, indigenous Chileans, applicants from outside Metropolitan Santiago, who are disabled, etc. The Oversight Committee would not only determine how to initially include these criteria, but

would study if they were effective in directing the desired awards to candidates with special characteristics. Annual adjustments would be made to make the system more responsive.

- ***Assure high quality training materials are available for evaluators and committee members.*** Such materials should anticipate and answer any reasonable questions evaluators or committee members might be expected to have. The materials should be available in easy-to-use formats such as training videos on a BCP website for reviewers.
- ***Oversee the solicitation of feedback and the analysis of selection process effectiveness and efficiency.*** Information from one year's selection process should systematically contribute to the improvement of the next round, principally through changes instituted by the Oversight Committee.

The creation of Panel Committees would address problems 1-3 below and would facilitate the implementation of improvements made by the Oversight Committee. The BCP would need to decide on the exact Panel Committee Structure, but one imagines there would be one for Technician Programmes, one for Teacher Programmes, and then a variety of Disciplinary Panel Committees for the Master's, PhD, sandwich, co-advised theses and Post-doctoral Programmes (life sciences, social sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering, etc.). Separate Panel Committees might be desirable for the Institutional Development Sub-Programme and the Private Sector Internships Sub-Programme. In general, each Committee would be composed of 8-10 senior professionals with recognised standing in the given fields. The Panel Committees would mitigate the deficiencies described above by acting to:

1. ***Create a uniform ranking of programme/institutional quality by discipline.*** Once all applications were received, specific panel committees would receive lists of the institutions and programmes which the relevant applicants had applied or to which they were intending to apply. With no reference to individual applicant names, each Panel Committee could group the programmes into three broad categories: (i) superior; (ii) highly suitable; (iii) other. The advantage of this system is that it would create a uniform ranking based on the specific knowledge of a group of active professionals on programme quality within institutions. This could mitigate both the variability of the individual reviewer judgments and the spillover bias of "institutional reputation" on individual programmes.

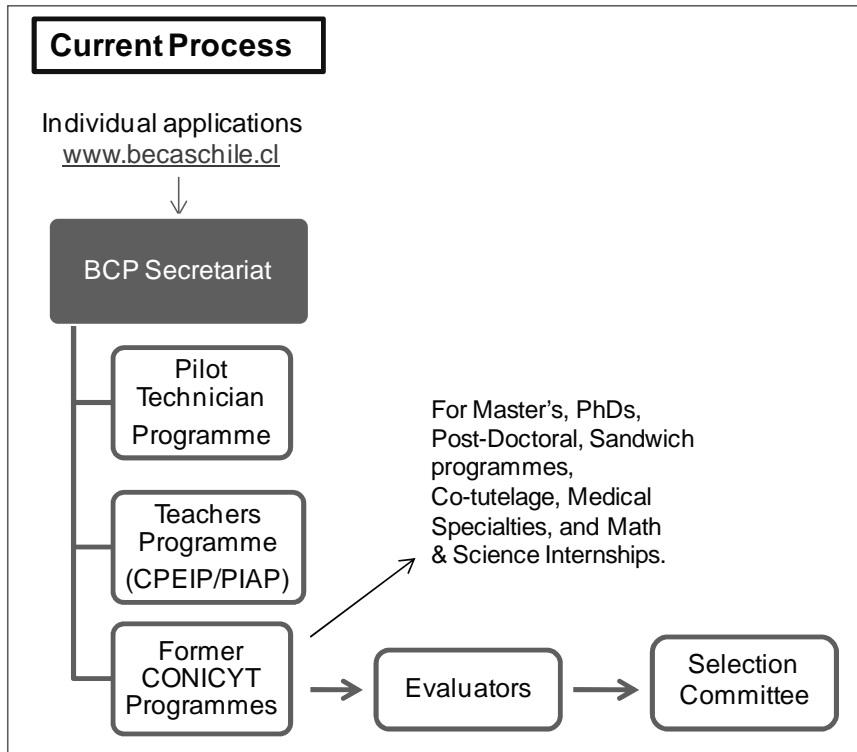


2. ***Monitor evaluator saturation and propose solutions where needed.*** Each Panel Committee could monitor the workload of the individual evaluators, ensuring that they do not become overloaded. In cases where qualified candidates very clearly outnumber available spaces and where programme quality is uniform (in professional Master’s programmes, for example), a Panel Committee might eliminate the bottom third of candidates to lessen the load on evaluators. This should only be done when needed and when the ratio of remaining candidates would be 3:1 or more – ensuring that pre-screening does not eliminate likely winners. In cases where two assessments deviate from one another by a significant margin, an applicant should be referred to a third evaluator.
3. ***Determine individual “cut off points” per Panel Committee to better reflect candidate qualifications.*** Currently, the numerical point system appears to have no way to prioritise a solid biochemistry candidate against a “horde” of superior economics candidates. The result is that Chile will end up with a *de facto* prioritisation of academic excellence at the expense of disciplinary breadth. It is not clear that bonus points given for “national priorities” have enough weight to change this tendency – since these are currently very broadly construed. With Panel Committees, the individual budget allocations are already an exercise in priority setting: some excellent candidates in one area may not be selected because intra-disciplinary competition is high. The result will likely be a better overall distribution of scholarships reflecting national needs. General standards of excellence – respect for the minimum levels of acceptable quality as set by the Oversight Committee – can be maintained without making excellence in a vacuum the determining factor in selection.

The management of the BCP requested specific suggestions for improvement of the selection process as part of this report. The model proposed here is one way – but by no means the only way – of making needed changes to decrease variability and increase public confidence in the BCP selection process. The current process and the suggested new approach are depicted in Figure 4.1.

Additionally, both applicants and evaluators could benefit from the availability of information about the relative quality of international programmes and institutions. Pending the development of a Chilean system for qualifications recognition, use might be made of material developed by other countries about their education systems, qualifications frameworks and institutional characteristics.

Figure 4.1 Current process for applicant selection

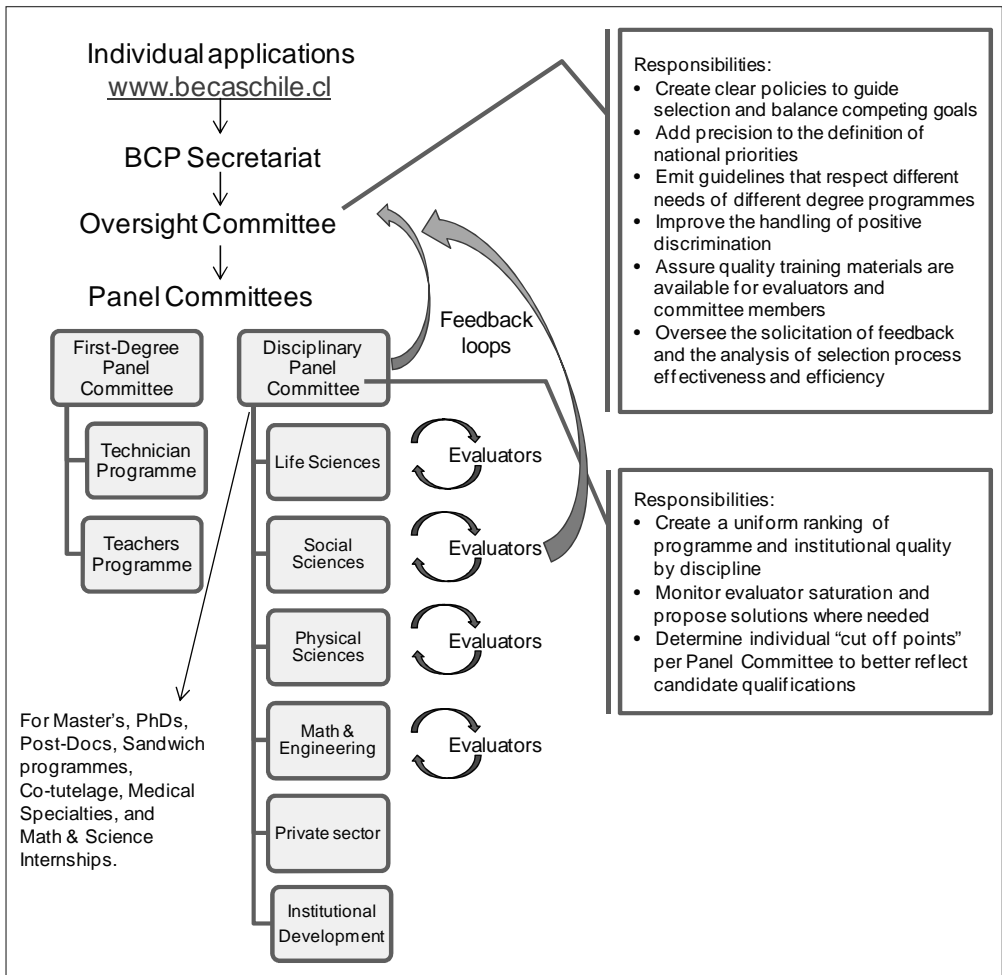


Source: Review team analysis.

Work is underway in various countries with a view to developing more nuanced comparisons of higher education institutions. A broad approach to the construction of “typologies” is being developed (See Van Vught *et al.*, 2005). One particular approach is that of the Centre for Higher Education Development in Germany, illustrated in Figure 4.3 for Physics, where Olympic games style “medals” are awarded where there are comparable qualitative performance metrics, and a hotel-style “stars” system is used for grouping institutions according to scale and shape factors.

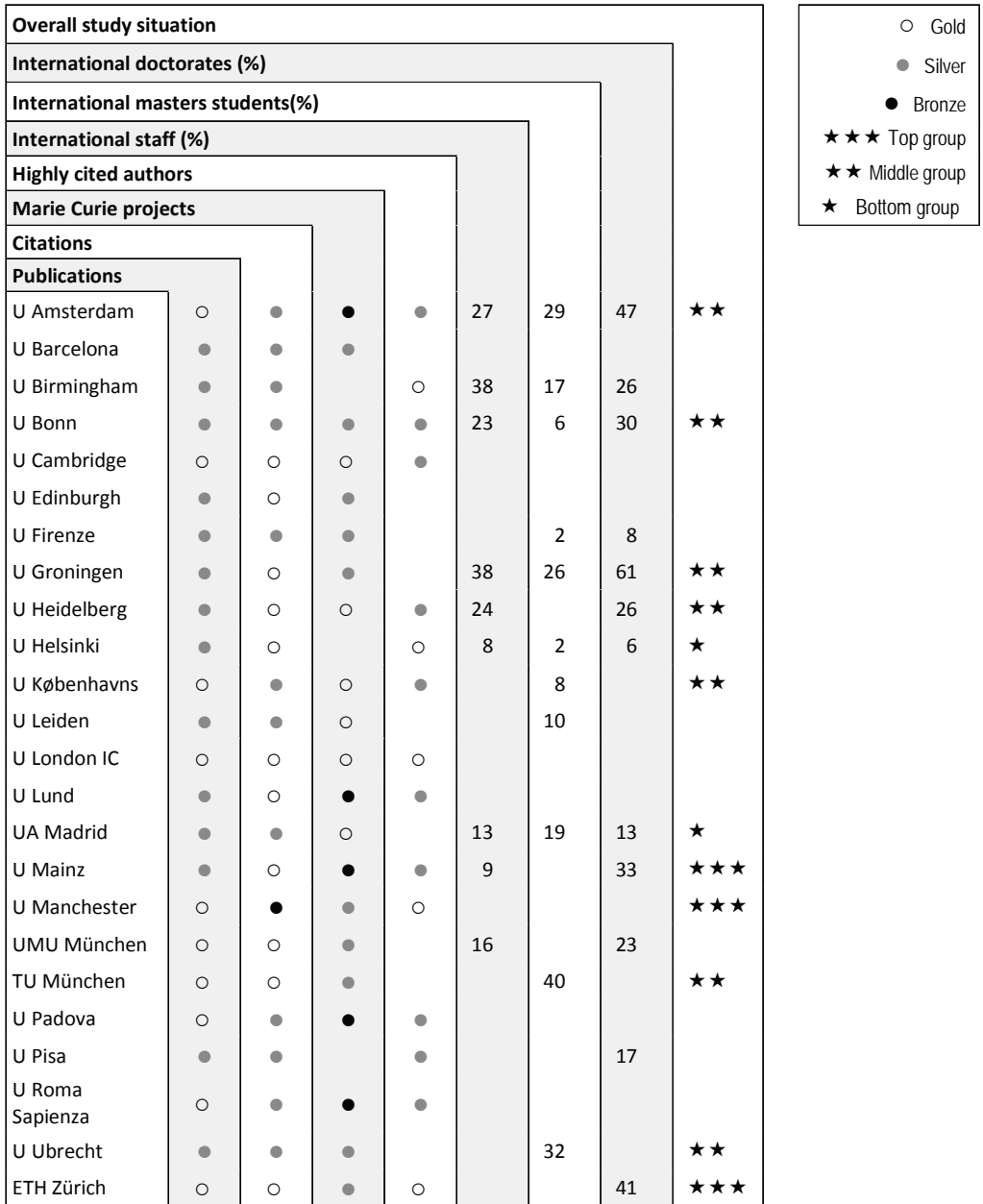
Finally, deliberate arrangements need to be made for engaging the academic and business communities in the development and evaluation of the programme.

Figure 4.2 Suggested process for applicant selection



Source: Review team analysis.

Figure 4.3 Excellence Group: Physics, Centre for Higher Education Development in Germany



Source: Adapted from the Centre for Higher Education Development, Germany.<sup>2</sup>

## Institutional roles and responsibilities

The Budget Law and Decree 664 establishes roles for the different entities within the Becas Chile administrative structure. However, there is some ambiguity of intent and interpretation with regard to the decree. Various stakeholders indicated some confusion about agency roles and responsibilities in their representations to the OECD-WB review team.

In seeking to understand the impact of the BCP and its operational features, it is important to recognise that its administrative arrangements are quite new and that policies and procedures are still being developed. Additionally, some aspects of the initial conception of the programme have been adapting to unanticipated changes in circumstances. At the same time, entities previously involved in awarding international scholarships for Chileans – not only government based, but also independent and even international ones – were caught in the middle by the changes induced by the creation of an agency and continue to “negotiate” their revised roles.

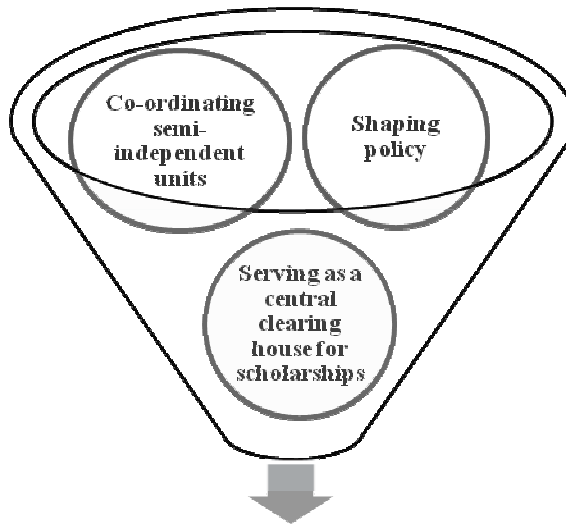
Part of the confusion about the BCP’s initial stage of operations has to do with three apparently conflicting points of view regarding its role and the chain of reporting authority, supervision and accountability within the government’s bureaucracy. This results in various interpretations of Decree 664:

1. ***Shaping policy:*** The first of the interpretations made by some stakeholders is that Becas Chile has, or should have, a broader role at the policy level and a higher hierarchical status within the government structure. This viewpoint is reinforced by the fact that its Executive Secretariat is defined in the Decree as the “Executive Secretariat of the Inter-Ministerial Committee” rather than that of the BCP, and is thus entitled to present proposed programmes to the Inter-Ministerial Committee and is charged with the proper implementation of the ones that are authorised. The Executive Secretariat in this interpretation then assumes the role of official representative of the Inter-Ministerial Committee. Under this set of assumptions, it would seem that BCP is just “*housed*” at the Ministry of Education but informally has some higher type of status than the government entities offering scholarships. In fact, the management team for the BCP is accountable to the entire Inter-Ministerial Committee rather than to the Ministry of Education.
2. ***Co-ordinating and negotiating:*** A second interpretation advanced by others is that Becas Chile does or should serve as a co-ordinating or liaison unit among government entities in matters related to the awarding of international scholarships. The perception here is that BCP would bring some order and sense of coherence to an otherwise unco-ordinated and unclear set of discreet policies, entities and scholarships

which were developed over the years by separate government agencies. These include scholarship programmes handled by government agencies such as CONICYT, CPEIP, *Idiomas Abren Puertas*, etc. Given that most of the scholarship programmes are administered by units within the Ministry of Education, this interpretation sees BCP more as a unit “*of*” MINEDUC.

3. **A Central Clearinghouse:** A third interpretation made by some is that Becas Chile is or should be merely a channel through which all scholarship opportunities should be advertised in a coherent and understandable way. This includes offering a user-friendly process and application form. For those inclined towards this approach, the BCP is or should be an on-line database of funding opportunities. Under this interpretation, it really becomes of little relevance whether BCP is a unit “housed” or “belonging” to MINEDUC.

Figure 4.4 Various current interpretations of the role of Becas Chile



### Becas Chile’s conflicting roles

Source: Review team analysis.

It is not argued that all three roles of BCP are in conflict or incompatible. In fact, at least two of them – co-ordinating the related work of semi-independent units and serving as a processing “central clearing-house” for scholarships – are highly related. Problems could arise however if, in addition to the aforementioned roles, BCP was also expected to serve as an entity which defines or shapes the national policies surrounding the preparation of advanced human capital. Not being explicit about the limits of the role of BCP is and could continue to be the cause of political and operational problems which may limit its future effectiveness.

### Assignment of responsibilities

Two units comprise the organisational structure of BCP; they were established in the domains of governance and operations by Decree 664. A third domain of work has been established at the advisory level, mainly in response to criticisms associated with inefficiencies identified during the initial operations of the programme, and as a way to push for more effective results.

1. **Governance level:** According to Decree 664, the principal policy authority of BCP is the Inter-Ministerial Committee which has as its official functions “to define the policy, guidelines, strategies, programmes, work plans and goals of BCP regarding the formation of advanced human capital abroad” (Article 3, Decree 664). As explained earlier, the Inter-Ministerial Committee is presided over by the Ministry of Education. Most individuals consulted during the OECD-WB review visit agreed that it is the Ministry of Education which has the authority, expertise and resources to carry-out the co-ordination of the Inter-Ministerial Committee. This matter is discussed further below.
2. **Operational level:** At the operational level, the BCP’s work is undertaken by the executive agencies (CONICYT, CPEIP, PIAP, etc) and co-ordinated by an Executive Secretariat, established under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Its official role is “to provide technical and administrative support for the fulfillment of the objectives established by the Inter-Ministerial Committee.” This role includes a specific mandate to “articulate activities” related to the awarding of international scholarships.
3. **Advisory level:** This third level of activities, not officially established under the Decree 644, has emerged as a way to foster greater effectiveness in the work of those government agencies directly or indirectly involved in the awarding of scholarships. The Inter-Ministerial Committee, although central in defining the policy and goals for the BCP, would not easily function without the work of the staff of

the Ministries involved, either in the preparation of the meetings of the Committee or in following-up with the implementation of their decisions. Based on this perceived deficiency at the operational level, an Oversight Committee was established with the official role of “implementing the agreements, policies, strategies, programmes and instruments defined by the Inter-Ministerial Committee” (*Gobierno de Chile*, 2009). This Committee is composed of staff from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Economy, as well as the head of the Advanced Human Capital Programme at CONICYT; and the heads of the MINEDUC programmes Technicians Going Abroad, Languages Open Doors (PIAP), and CPEIP. In addition, three Advisory Committees were created as a way to guide and legitimise the actions being undertaken by the BCP Executive Secretariat. Not officially established by Decree, these three committees are: the Graduate Advisory Committee, the Technical Formation Advisory Committee and the *Ad Hoc* Pedagogical Advisory Committee. The first two of the three committees are presided over by the Minister of Education and each of them has the involvement of the Executive Secretary of BCP, as well as the participation of academicians and experts.

Although the organisational structure looks lean in general, operational problems are more linked to vagueness in the definition of the organisation’s scope of activities and purview, which, unless they are more clearly determined, will continue to be a source of concern. This vagueness is exemplified by the way that the official Organisational Chart of BCP is presented on its Web site, where the impression is given that the authority of BCP over-rides that of the governmental units with which it is intended to work. Furthermore, the chart shows no formal relationship of authority from the Ministry of Education (see Figure 4.5). Additionally, the creation of a range of advisory committees has been met with some scepticism on the part of the academic community. Some have perceived their association with the exercise to be primarily for public relations purposes, given that they have had only minimal involvement in the provision of advice. Others have indicated that these committees have had a real influence on the development of implementation guidelines.

## **Relationships with other governmental and external agencies**

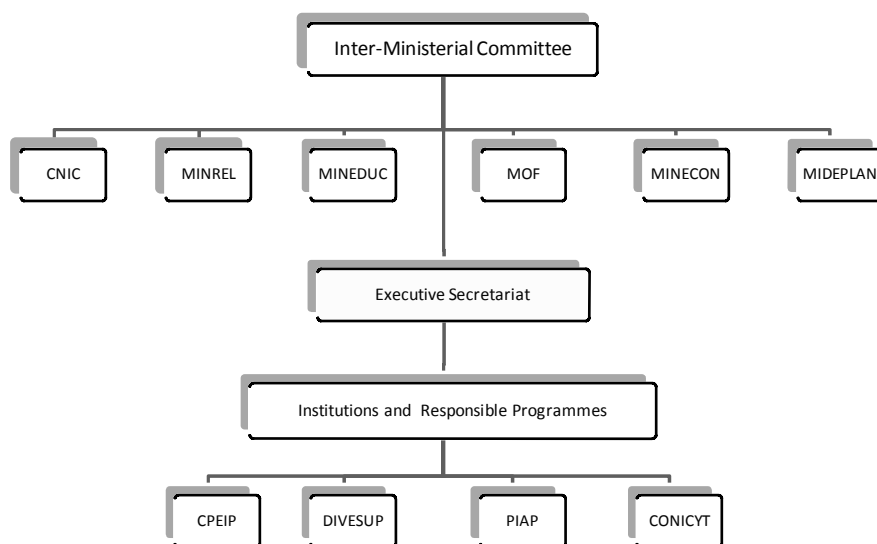
Part of the ambiguity in the creation and initial operations of BCP was in the not always adequately understood or properly clarified level of both formal and informal authority, vested by the President in the newly created government entity. At the operational level, there were seen to be some overlapping areas of programme policy decision making with CONICYT.



The intention of the government when establishing BCP in terms of the management of scholarship programmes was to bring together the activities conducted by the following entities in a more organised way:

- The Centre for Pedagogical Improvement, Experimentation and Research (CPEIP) at the Ministry of Education;
- The Division of Higher Education (DIVESUP) of the Ministry of Education;
- The Programme Languages Open Doors (formerly known as English Opens Doors) of the Ministry of Education;
- The National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICYT).

Figure 4.5 **Becas Chile: organisational chart**



Source: Becas Chile (2009) [www.becaschile.cl/que\\_es/institucionalidad.tpl](http://www.becaschile.cl/que_es/institucionalidad.tpl)

Officially, it was intended that those entities would give effect to the agreement and guidelines adopted by the Inter-Ministerial Committee when establishing and disseminating their respective Calls for Participation (*Convocatorias*). Behind the scenes, intense negotiations were held among the various government entities involved in order to make the necessary

adjustments. These discussions took place during the course of their respective scholarship programmes and as a result were not exempt from resistance, confusion and tension especially during the first Call for Participation, as this new approach was introduced hastily. At the same time, the launching of the BCP has created high expectations within the general public and, as a consequence, an unexpected and overwhelming volume of work. This new “unified” approach offered to the general public, still shows signs of miscommunication among the involved government entities.

Additionally, there is a set of independent agencies which have historically established a variety of international scholarships for Chileans, some in partnership with the Chilean government, which have also expressed feelings of alienation or marginalisation. These sentiments have been compounded by the fact that they have been forced to make significant changes to their timelines and/or to their guidelines and eligibility criteria just to adjust their offerings to the Becas Chile Call for Proposals. Although the intention to provide information which is easier to “navigate” is a good one and highly commendable, it simultaneously creates significant limitations when intending to present all scholarship opportunities under a single format, in a single annual call for applications and with only one channel of communication with applicants. In addition, issues surrounding miscommunication, improperly defined roles and some operational mistakes could continue to weaken the effectiveness of the initiative.

## **Connecting Becas Chile with policies and programmes**

The functionalistic approach behind the decision to establish the BCP has opened the door to considerations that are important to address in ensuring its long term viability. By further analysing intended and unintended consequences of decisions made in response to doubts about the programme, a stronger and more effective positioning of the BCP can be fashioned in future stages. Table 4.2 outlines some additional activities where BCP might play a more purposeful role.

As the different roles previously suggested for BCP reveal, a more technical/operational scope of work seems to be the most appropriate, rather than one which is confined to influencing policy decisions. It would be cost-effective for a single human capital agency to be established, with responsibility for the operation of all relevant programmes and for the executive agencies to cease their current functions in relation to those programmes. Developing the technical expertise for supporting national policies for the development of advanced human capital could be of great benefit to the country and to the policy decision making bodies.

**Table 4.2 Suggested role for Becas Chile in activities related to the development of advanced human capital**

Activities	Principal ministries and agencies	Lead agencies	Possible roles for Becas Chile
Definition of national strategic priorities for innovation and the development of advanced human capital	Presidency (Inter-Ministerial Committees). MINEDUC, MINECON (CORFO), CNIC	MINEDUC / MINECON / CNIC	Increasing the weight of national priorities in the evaluation mechanisms established to support scholarships abroad regarding area of studies/countries/institutions. Establishing monitoring/evaluation systems aimed at measuring its contribution to national strategic priorities.
Government funded scholarship programmes abroad	MINEDUC, CONICYT, BCP	BCP	Co-ordinated dissemination of opportunities, channeling applications, outsourcing the evaluation of applications, administering selection, and conducting follow-up.
Bilateral scholarship programmes negotiated with foreign governments	MINREL, MINEDUC, CONICYT	MINREL	Implementation. Dissemination of opportunities. Providing leads about opportunities to MINREL and being involved in discussions in matters related to outbound students as required.
Scholarship programmes abroad negotiated with particular agencies	MINEDUC, CONICYT, BCP	BCP	Identifying opportunities. Providing leads to MINEDUC/MINREL/CONICYT. Once negotiated: channeling applications, outsourcing evaluation of applications, administering election, and conducting follow-up.
Government sponsored scholarships for graduate programmes in Chile	MINEDUC, CONICYT	CONICYT	Identifying opportunities for connection with outbound programmes. Providing technical assistance in fostering flexible approaches to programmes with a component abroad (e.g. joint and dual degrees, "sandwich programmes").
Research and academic staff development programmes in Chilean universities and research centres	MINEDUC (MECESUP), CONICYT	MINEDUC	BCP supporting MINEDUC in the management of MECESUP-type government funded international scholarship opportunities directly linked to institutional development.  Identifying opportunities for connection with outbound programmes.  Providing technical assistance in fostering flexible approaches to programmes with a component abroad (e.g. joint and dual degrees, "sandwich programmes").
Follow-up with Chilean students studying abroad	MINEDUC (BCP), CONICYT, MINREL (DICOEX)	BCP, CONICYT	Establishing efficient communication mechanisms for appropriate follow-up and support of Chileans studying abroad.  Establishing monitoring/evaluation systems in collaboration with other agencies such as CONICYT.

**Table 4.2 Suggested role for Becas Chile in activities related to the development of advanced human capital (continued)**

Activities	Principal ministries and agencies	Lead agencies	Possible roles for Becas Chile
Repatriation of advanced human capital	MINEDUC, CONICYT, MINECON (CORFO)	CONICYT, CORFO	Supporting CONICYT and CORFO in the implementation of programmes aimed at connecting Chileans being prepared abroad with opportunities in Chile.
Connecting with the diaspora of Chileans involved in advanced human capital activities	MINREL (DICOEX), MINEDUC, CONICYT	DICOEX	Supporting DICOEX-MINREL in developing connections with Chilean communities abroad, with emphasis in individuals and networks involved in advanced human capital activities.  Supporting the connection of the advanced human capital Chilean diaspora with relevant counterparts in Chile.
Development of competencies in foreign languages	MINEDUC	BCP	Directly administering the component involving the offering of scholarships which currently exists within the programme aimed at supporting second language competencies, which is currently housed in a different area of MINEDUC.  Dissemination of opportunities, channeling the application process, administering an externally conducted selection process, conducting follow-up.
Internationalisation of higher education and research institutions	MINEDUC, CONICYT, MINREL	MINEDUC	Supporting efforts of MINEDUC in the establishment of goals for inbound and outbound students and faculty mobility.
Promoting Chilean higher education abroad	MINEDUC, Fundación Imagen de Chile, ProChile	MINEDUC, Fundación Imagen de Chile	Supporting efforts of MINEDUC and Fundación Imagen de Chile in the promotional efforts of Chilean higher education abroad, serving as a basis for scholarship opportunities.

Source: Review team analysis.

## The locus of responsibilities

The diverse set of activities outlined in Table 4.2 are all directly linked to a sound national strategy for the development of advanced human capital for which ambitious expectations have been set. These activities must be linked to an adequate support system. However, the current structural disposition of the Chilean government and more specifically the one existing at MINEDUC, makes it difficult to assume that the goals associated with the national advanced human capital agenda can be fulfilled as desired. In this respect, the problem of adequately positioning the BCP is not only a matter of finding the right fit within the current government structure, but also of considering whether or not it is an opportune moment to propose a rearrangement inside MINEDUC which pairs ambitious advanced human

capital and innovation goals with adequate structural support. If this does not occur, the effectiveness of the BCP will be jeopardised regardless of where it is positioned.

In analysing possible responses to the question posed to the OECD-WB team about where to place Becas Chile, a variety of pros and cons were considered. Among the principal options put forward were:

1. Making BCP an independent entity outside the government (similar to Fundación Chile);
2. Granting BCP semi-independent status within the government structure (similar to CONICYT or CNIC);
3. Merging BCP into the structure of CONICYT;
4. Placing BCP within another Ministry (MINREL, MOF, MINECON);
5. Keeping BCP within the Ministry of Education but in a different organisational setting;
6. Keeping BCP the way it is.

The review team considered the options for enhancing the role of the BCP as the integrating entity for all study abroad scholarships. Options 1 and 2 represent variants of this approach. However, there is an overarching need to integrate study abroad and domestic human capital formation investments, and to connect them more effectively with national development strategies. Viewing the future challenges only from a study abroad perspective is to lose sight of wider needs and possibilities. The structural separation of the BCP from other human capital investments would impede rather than facilitate the necessary integration. There are also particular matters pertaining to options 1 and 2, and these are outlined below.

1. ***An independent entity outside government.*** The option of taking the programme outside the government arena is disproportionate to the problem to be solved. The BCP relates directly to the government's goals for Chile's development, and its connection with those goals should be strengthened not weakened, and its operations made more responsive not less. The programme has been designed in such a way as to curtail any political interference in the selection process; hence, one of the bases for functional separation from government in other jurisdictions is not compelling in the case of Chile.
2. ***A semi-independent entity within government.*** The review team also considered the option of establishing a completely new agency for the administration of the BCP. The attraction of this option is that it makes

and is seen to make a clean break from the problems associated with past arrangements. Hence, it might help in the process of rebuilding community confidence, achieving cultural change in the administration of the BCP and enhancing administrative capabilities. However, it would be at best only a partial solution, and offers no guarantees that it would not be beset by problems similar to those faced by CONICYT in its administration of the programme. Indeed, it is arguable that some limit to CONICYT's "autonomy" might facilitate a more purposeful and integrated R&D effort in Chile.

3. ***Merging the BCP into CONICYT.*** The possible advantage of this option is that it could remove the tension between the policy and operational arms of the BCP, and increase the integration of the BCP with other forms of investment in Chile's knowledge base. The major disadvantage of the option is that it could distract CONICYT from its core business, which is about developing the knowledge base and its links to innovation through R&D. CONICYT would lack the know-how to administer scholarships for teachers and technician training. CONICYT does play a role in advanced human capital formation, including through the provision of scholarships for domestic and international take-up, but its primary function relates to research discovery and translation.
4. ***Placing BCP in a different ministerial portfolio.*** A more joined-up, whole-of-government approach to advanced human capital formation might be facilitated by one of the central agencies of the government taking the driving role. In the case of the BCP, where the initiative for its creation came from outside the Education portfolio, and with its internationalised outlook, it is arguable that a more committed and externally-oriented agency might provide a more energetic and integrated approach to the development of the programme. However, the longer-term logic suggests that it will be increasingly important for Chile to harmonise its human capital development strategy, across the different sub-sectors of the national education and training system. A focus on advanced human capital needs to be located within this broader human capital formation purpose, and the Education portfolio is its natural home.
5. ***Keeping BCP within the Ministry of Education but in a different organisational setting.*** The preferred option is to position the BCP within the responsibilities of the Education Ministry, in order to achieve an integrated commitment to human capital formation, across the various education and training sectors, and involving domestic and international investments. The review team is attracted to the option of a

national Human Capital Development Agency within the Education portfolio, whose governing body would include representatives of other government ministries and business sector organisations.

6. ***Maintaining the status quo.*** The *status quo* is simply unsustainable. Part of its public credibility has been harmed and in the short term it may not have sufficient capability to restore confidence in the programme and realise its contributions to Chile to its full potential.

#### *The review team's preferred option*

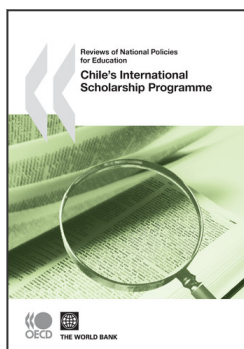
The review team is most attracted to the option of creating a Vice-Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology with responsibility for policy in relation to all investments in education and training and research, including domestic and international scholarships. Reporting to the Vice-Minister could be (a) a strong policy development and co-ordination unit; and (b) a Human Capital Development Agency which brings together Chile's domestic and international efforts to raise skills-based productivity. Thus, in order to avoid duplication and increase efficiency in the system, the administration of scholarships, both domestic and foreign, should be removed from CONICYT, CPEIP, PIAP and DIVESUP and absorbed by a new Human Capital Development Agency. Careful consideration would need to be given, in this changed context, in order to allow CONICYT to continue funding for doctoral and post-doctoral personnel embedded within its funded research projects.

The advantage of this option is that it attacks the operational problems at their source, provides for a joined-up approach to policy and programme development, and builds a strong foundation for an integrated set of initiatives for building the skills and R&D capabilities that Chile needs for the achievement of its national goals.

### *Note*

1. The report describes a role of an active, dynamic and engaged Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee would receive general policy guidance on major issues from the Inter-Ministerial Committee and, subsequently, work with the BCP Executive Secretariat to develop detailed policies and guidelines as described here. If this more active role for the Oversight Committee is accepted, it may be necessary to review both the terms of reference and the composition of the Committee to ensure compatibility with this expanded role.
2. Centre for Higher Education Development, [www.che-ranking.de/cms/?getObject=632&getLang=en](http://www.che-ranking.de/cms/?getObject=632&getLang=en).





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