

ECUADORIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: A HISTORY IN SEARCH OF DETERMINING YOUR QUALITY

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Abstract– *In Ecuador, the discussion on the concept of quality of Higher Education Institutions becomes relevant when the obligatory evaluation for accreditation purposes appears in the university work; however, there are historical antecedents that must be discussed in order to anchor this concept to reality and relevant facts that guided its construction; its result will serve as a guide to establish educational quality as a university culture in academic work. Initially the quality of higher education was considered as inherent to institutions, for a century this affirmation became an axiom, then there was a first moment of expansion of the Institutions with great impulse of the State, in that stage there was already an empirical differentiation of quality universities and they are linked to their history, this stage lasts around four decades; the next moment, which refers to something more than three decades, there is a new expansion of the institutions in this case with impulse from the private sector in which definitions of quality or efficiency almost disappear, since the law of higher education of the Year 2000 assumes quality verification as a substantial element of higher education. From there, two evaluations have been carried out, with an obligatory evaluation process for recategorization that has mobilized new actions within the universities. The results of the research will guide in the construction of the concept of quality of higher education mediated by history, the State and the strategies provoked by the Academy, the purpose of establishing the premises to build a model of Quality Management of Education is prioritized Higher.*

Keywords–vehicle routing, carrying capacity, heuristic model

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Abstract— En Ecuador, la discusión sobre el concepto de calidad de las Instituciones de Educación Superior toma relevancia cuando aparece en el quehacer universitario la evaluación obligatoria con fines de acreditación; sin embargo, existen antecedentes históricos que deben ser discutidos con el fin anclar éste concepto a la realidad y hechos relevantes que guiaron a su construcción; su resultado servirá como orientador para establecer a la calidad educativa como cultura universitaria en el trabajo académico. En un inicio se consideraba a la calidad de la educación superior como inherente a las instituciones, durante un siglo esta afirmación se convirtió en un axioma, luego existe un primer momento de expansión de las Instituciones con gran impulso del Estado, en esa etapa hubo ya una diferenciación empírica de universidades de calidad y van ligadas a su historia, esta etapa dura alrededor de cuatro décadas; un siguiente momento, que refiere a algo más de tres décadas, existe una nueva expansión de las Instituciones en este caso con impulso desde el sector privado en el cual definiciones de calidad o eficiencia casi desaparecen, desde la vigencia de la ley de educación superior del año 2000 se asume a la verificación de la calidad como un elemento sustancial de la educación superior. Desde ahí se han realizado dos evaluaciones con obligatoriedad un proceso de evaluación optativo para recategorización que han movilizado a nuevas acciones a lo interior de las universidades. Los resultados de la investigación orientarán en la construcción del concepto de calidad de la educación superior mediado por la historia, el Estado y las estrategias provocadas por la Academia, se prioriza el propósito de establecer las premisas para construir un modelo de Gestión de Calidad de Educación Superior.

Keywords: Higher Educación, Quality of education, indicators, Higher Education Institutions

I INTRODUCTION

The Ecuadorian Higher Educational System has been inherit from the XX century.

In Ecuador, the nineteenth century began with four universities: Universidad Central del Ecuador (1826), Universidad de Guayaquil (1867), Universidad de Cuenca (1867) and Escuela Politécnica Nacional (1869), which assist the development and urbanism process since the foundation of the Republic. In the twentieth century, the creation of new institutions was very special because other institutions were set up, for example, Universidad Nacional de Loja¹ (1943), Pontificia Universidad Católica (PUCE) (1946), which was the first one that was private and co-financed at the same time. In the fifties, two universities were created (Universidad Técnica de Manabí and Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral). In the sixties, there were six institutions (Universidad Católica Santiago de Guayaquil, Universidad Laica Vicente Rocafuerte, Universidad

del Azuay, Universidad Técnica de Ambato, Universidad Técnica de Machala, and Escuela Superior Politécnica del Chimborazo)². In the seventies, other five universities were established (Universidad Técnica Luis Vargas Torres, Universidad Católica de Cuenca, Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo, and Universidad Estatal de Bolívar). And in the eighties, five more were created (Universidad Técnica Estatal de Quevedo, Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial³, Universidad Técnica del Norte, and Universidad San Francisco⁴). In 1980, there were already 19 universities and at the end of that decade there were 23 legal universities, from them, only six were private and the others were public.

It can be said that there has been three different periods for three types of universities in Ecuador. The first group corresponds to Public Universities, which since the foundation of Universidad Central [1] has grown along with the increase of the population of the country and the need for development of other cities that do not include only Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca. The birth of these institutions was motivated more in the local and even in the political request than in the planning either of the State or of the Higher Education. The second group begins with the creation of PUCE and ends up in the early 90s, these universities are called co-financed; in other words, being private bodies receive a budget from the State, for example, some of them are the Catholic ones. There are two periods for their creation: the first one goes from 1946 - 1971 to 1986 - 1994 [1]. And the second group includes the Self-financed Universities, which were created since 1993 and became the majority of educational centers created in less than two decades.

The number of students in 1968 was 14.826, in 1970 was 20.396, and in 1972 was 43.060. This was the result of several disagreements and failures in the higher education policy based on the "conquest" of the "free admission to the university". In 1980, the total population of students was 122.940 and by 1988 it was 186.618 [2], of whom 152.071 (81.49%) belonged to public institutions and 35.547 (18.51%) to private ones.

During the nineties and the first decade of the 21st century, the number of Universities increases without precedents, reaching 71⁵ universities [3]. Later on, two of them are suspended and closed due to lack of quality.

By the end of the 20th century, public universities would be 25 and at the time of the evaluation carried out by the National Council for Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEA) the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were 29 in 2008.

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The co-financed Universities⁶, which were created from 1946 to 1997 are nine, such number has not been increased in the future.

From 1993 on, several Self-financed Private Universities, which did not receive any state contributions were set up. At the end of the 20th century, there are 23 universities; this was an

unprecedented fact since in less than a decade they almost are the same in number as the public ones, which were created in almost two centuries; however, there were 34 universities that were evaluated in 2008. This number almost doubles all the higher existing institutions.

Figure 1: Creation of Universities in Ecuador



By 2013, the number of students from higher education [4] is quantified with the following values and variables. There were 532.859 undergraduate students, of which 210.582 were in private universities and 322.277 in public ones. From them, 239.604 were male and 293.255 were female. By areas of knowledge, in education there were 68.414 students (19.638 male and 48.776 female). In humanities and arts there were 17.421 students (9.427 male and 7.994 female). In social sciences, business education, and law there were 232.713 students (90.330 male and 142.383 female). In sciences there were 41.327 students (26.474 male and 14.853 female). In engineering, industry, and construction, there were 67.195 students (51.510 male and 15.685 female). In agriculture there were 18.717 students (11.605 male and 7.112 female). In health and social services there were 68.033 students (21.795 male and 46.238 female), and in services 19.039 students (8.825 men and 10.214 female).

There were 28.372 graduate students; 16.336 in private institutions and 12.036 in public ones.

Regarding to Teachers, they increased in public universities from 2010 to 2013 in the following quantities per year: 19.537, 20.007, 19.991, and 21.876 respectively; in the case of co-financed universities: 7.668, 8.019, 8.613, and 10.079 in each year; but in the self-financed universities, teachers were reduced to: 7.979, 5.786, 5.116, and 4.918 respectively.

These numbers show an increase in access to higher education in the last two decades. There is a tendency to increase in the private university and some slight decreases in the public one; this is because of the effect of the application of the national exam for higher education (ENES); there is a preference of high school graduates to study in the private institutions because of their financial capacity. It can even be said that they have pointed out the inequality in access to the higher institutions. To ratify this fact, we have data, which confirms that there were even a higher amount of students found in the quintile for rich people than in the quintile for the poor population. In the following years, there are not any increase in the enrollment, but there is high demand for accessing to the undergraduate level and dissatisfaction was clearly obvious in the population.

The presence of the female gender in the university is important since their enrollment is greater than the male gender. Beyond this achievement, it is mainly to remark that this new gap affecting the development of the society should be questioned; nonetheless, this study is not subject to this research.

The desire to change the productive matrix and the training of professionals is not reflected in the Ecuadorian university because almost 44% of students is enrolled in social sciences, business education, and law. About 13% in each case was enrolled in education, engineering, industry, construction, health, and social services leaving the remaining 18% of them in the other four areas. With this fact, the orientation of the careers has reproduced what was done in the previous years and even it is said that there is demagoguery in higher education based on public policy.

With this background of higher education in Ecuador, the Ecuadorian State in the Constitution of 1998 and with the Higher Education Law of the year 2000 proposes, through a public institution, to come up with the quality of education policy in the HEIs, although its direction is mainly oriented to evaluation with accreditation purposes. The National Council for Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEA) begins its activities by overcoming problems of political nature and resistance on the part of the Council of Higher Education (CONESUP). There is a first moment in which, some support and training is given to the Universities, this includes the internal evaluation and the construction of an improvement plan; subsequently, and at the request of the HEIs, an external evaluation is carried out for accreditation purposes.

From that moment on, several proposals have been designed, which will be analyzed and discussed in this document in order to establish the elements to consider in the construction of a management for quality in education.

METHODOLOGY

This work was carried out through a documentary review of several bibliographical and historical sources that allowed us to

propose the state of the art in regard to the quality of Ecuadorian higher education. The information, especially the qualitative one, allowed us to come up with a discussion that guides the choice of paths to be followed by HEIs in the achievement of their tasks. It is added the willingness of the team members to suggest new contributions in this sense, specifically for proposing a quality management system for higher education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

¿Was there a guiding concept of quality?

The existence of a conception about quality in Higher Education Institutions, not only at a global, but also at local level, is the consequence of the internal and external changes through which Education has gone through, especially during the past 30 or 40 years of the last century. It could be defined as a historical construct that keeps changing as times goes by.

Up to the beginning of the 60's of the previous century, there was a traditional and static view of quality for university education. The quality of teaching and learning was supposed to be constituent elements of the system; it was based, above all, on the tradition of the institution, in terms of teachers, students, and material resources. It was assumed that the more years of schooling a person has, the better and more productive citizens, as well as more democracy and citizen participation there would be [5].

Because of this situation, the university education system was a closed cloister in which the State did not intervene under the assumption of the university's autonomy in which there is no duty to render any account to the society, since it was assumed that what was done, it was well done.

According to Agila (2005), most of the Latin American cloistered universities and sometimes barricaded in their old conceptions of autonomy, quality, encyclopaedism, among others, did not take the lead to present adequate solutions to such situations. This was the cause to pressure to reform the higher education, such pressure came from outside rather than from inside influence; for this fact, almost no system or model of external evaluation has come up from the universities, but from State entities that are usually far from the universities realities. Such institutions introduce new concepts and criteria, which have been imported without the corresponding contextualization where the quality of education in universities should be prioritized.

Later on, a series of concepts based on students's excellence have come up, where pertinence, dependence on stated purposes applicable to an elitist education or based on the requirements made by interested agents only to set purely technical aspects have been devised.

There are other concepts like the one about quality based on the dependence of the declared purposes that do not guarantee the quality of the university since its purposes can be suggested according to interests, which come from individual or segments of a group interest.

Thus, in the UNESCO Regional Conference on Quality of Higher Education held in the Havana in 1996, it was suggested that quality could be defined as the adequacy of the being and the task of higher education to its own being [6].

For facing this situation, some quality concepts structured on the basis of social relevance, the requirement of international standards and principles, and the comparison of developed standards through consensus based on processes of socialization with different actors has been raised. This fact involves another problem, which is the homogenization of institutions because their particularities and potentialities are not recognized.

For UNESCO, the relevance and quality together with internationalization are the three key aspects that determine the strategic position of university education. In Ecuador, there are at least two moments that affected the quality of higher Education: the first one occurs between the sixties and seventies of the previous century. The frictions between the governments in power and the students' requests result in unmanageable levels for the academy. The discussion and solutions were politicized and the budget was controlled by the State, but the struggle for both the students' organizations and the political groups resulted in one of the most outstanding achievements regarding to the free entry to the universities. After this, the massification of public universities and creation of others without responsible preparation by the society (State, Universities and direct and indirect interested parties) was done. And the second and most untidy moment was held in the nineties, such event takes advantage of the unstable situation of the higher education and with it the academic programs offer increases and businessmen and educational speculators take advantage of students's demand and they even agree to lead development policies. The Constituent Assembly of Sangolquí in 1998 issues a new Constitution, which commands the elaboration of a new Higher Education Law.

This new law passed in the year 2000 establishes that the "National system for the evaluation and accreditation of higher education", will work autonomously and independently and must coordinate with the "National Council of Higher Education" (CONESUP).

In this system, the universities had to be joined to each other, and at the end of the previous decade, they carried out the institutional self-evaluation, the external evaluation and the accreditation. The system had as an executing agency the "National Council for Evaluation and Accreditation" (CONEA).

However, the differences between CONESUP and CONEA, especially due to the interference of the former delayed the work of the latter for at least two years.

The law was clear when it stated that among the objectives of the System [7] it should "ensure the quality of higher education institutions and foster permanent processes for the improvement of the academic quality and management" (page 29). In addition, it was specified that another duty was to inform

to the Ecuadorian society about the level of performance in order to guarantee the quality of the higher education system.

While the CONEA was proposing a culture of evaluation of higher education, it should set the evaluation and accreditation policies and determine the characteristics, criteria, and quality indicators; additionally, it should determine the instruments to be used in the external evaluation.

Garage-like universities

At the end of the last century and at the beginning of the present one, it was obvious to notice in the Latinamerican countries the presence of universities in which, with great difficulty, it was displayed the lack of signs of quality in the offered educational programs and some of them even worked outside the law. In Ecuador, the situation was similar and this was the result of the last excessive process of creating new universities, most of them self-financed.

The fact that the approach to quality assessment did not come from universities favored the uncontrolled growth of private institutions and others without previously creating the systems that would filter their aspirations. On the other hand, they limited themselves to hide their lack of adaptation before the massification of the enrollment and did not look for novel solutions to the same situation and practically they declared passivity as their main weapon [5].

Among the characteristics with which these universities were recognized was their lack of academic transparency, their lack of research, their functioning in inadequate places; in general, in adapted houses. This was the origin for the name as garage; in other words, "garage-like universities", which did not have enough (or absence) training facilities such as laboratories, auditoriums, technical teaching equipment, except for a set of desks arranged in places so called classrooms. Their lack of rendering accounts, which was hidden for almost the whole system, the commercialization of undergraduate and graduate educational programs with advertisements that insulted what the academia should be. Such institutions even offered double-degree programs in lesser time in relation to the normal time for studying. They even offered tuition discounts for prompt payment as well as they promised to accept students from other universities to give them a degree in less time than the normal one. These universities became niches for population that in the past did not have any access to study higher education at the university level.

These characteristics and many practices prostituted the university, which commercialized knowledge and prepared professionals that were the result of a fake process. Later it was determined as the biggest academic fraud in a country.

The statement which is included in the National Council of Evaluation and Accreditation is lapidary [6] "The subsystem of Universities and Polytechnic schools has been growing excessively in the country" and it concludes that "additionally, there are numerous institutions that attributed themselves as if

they have a university level and they work in the country outside any regulation".

Higher education as a commodity market

The unselective increase of private Universities has a close relationship with the commercialization of higher education, as well as the increase of the tuition fee (in absolute and relative terms). In this tendency, it is unfair to include all the Universities, but few of them remained in the quality and service setting. This fact does not exclude the Public Universities as far as the level of academic fees proposals and self-management; it also included charges that contradict their compromise with educational service.

Thus, the student-client does not refer to the search for comprehensive training with quality, but it is established a non-benchmarked system of monetary value concerning to the degree to be obtained. Prior to start the studies, any student analyses and quotes prices and based on it, he/she determines his/her membership to the "alma mater". The aforementioned causes the proliferation of professionals with diversity of quality in their training, but what is noticeable is the elements of incompetence held by them.

In the CONEA report, which was the result of the first evaluation of the universities, it was "evidenced the purely commercial tendency of an important segment of the university education; public universities were not exempt from this tendency and the idea of the higher education as a service was questioned"[8]. The dangerous aspect of this process is that, as a whole, universities not only were accomplices, but also they were the first line-actors. Higher Education was another product for purchasing and selling goods. The result of this aspect should be studied based on the graduates' performance in the labor fields.

1. The Higher Education Law of 2000 and the CONEA

At the end of the 20th century, the governing body of the Universities was the "National Council of Universities and Polytechnic Schools" (CONUEP), but on May 15, 2000, the new "Higher Education Law" was issued; such law was passed at the beginning of the twenty first century [7]. In this law, it is set up the "National Council of Higher Education" (CONESUP), which became the planning, regulating and coordinating body of the National System of Higher Education. It also establishes the "National System of Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education", that will work autonomously and independently in coordination with CONESUP. This system, which will integrate the institutional self-assessment, the external evaluation, and the accreditation, must be incorporated in a compulsory way in the universities and polytechnic schools among others.

It is determined that the National System of Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (SEAES) is normed by the "National Council for Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education of Ecuador" (CONEA) and it is ratified that this body

should be established as an independent organization from CONESUP.

However, there is some ambiguity in the norm and it comes up from debates carried out for a couple of years. After this time, the objective for quality prevails over the dispute of spaces of power, and the task is reoriented to fulfill its mission, which in the beginning, it is the assurance of the quality of higher education and it encourages permanent improvement processes.

Proposal of the CONEA to define and set up Quality in HE.

The CONEA, as the accrediting body, issues a series of technical documents with the purpose of fulfilling its obligations.

The first duty defines the "Structure, policies, strategies, processes and projections" [9], the most important aspect of the document is summarized in the evaluation and accreditation process that establishes as mandatory references for evaluation to the "characteristics and standards" approved by the CONEA; and to the mission, vision, purposes, and institutional objectives as well. The process itself has three stages, the first one corresponds to the "self-evaluation", which is the rigorous and systematic examination that the University or Polytechnic School performs over all its activities; two vital elements should have happened: the participation of its members and the motivation for improvement actions based on their results. It is worth to propose an improvement plan. The second stage is related to the "external evaluation", which is the examination carried out by the CONEA on a University, and it is performed by academic peers and with strict respect for the university autonomy and the particularities of the Institution. Moreover, the final stage is the "accreditation" whose responsibility falls on the CONEA and is the body that grants the certification that guarantees a sustained performance of quality. The observed possibilities were accreditation, conditional accreditation, and denying the accreditation.

The second technical document deals with "Principles, characteristics, and quality standards", it was proposed that quality should be understood as the set of qualities of the institution assessed in a certain time and specific situations, so that they reflect their being and acting. It surpasses the success of the graduates and seeks a greater "...contribution of the people to the cultural, political, social, economic, and environmental development of the country" [10]. In this way, it ensures greater relevance and rigor in the offer of services and as a consequence a more meaningful education, and better correspondence with the labor market. Quality is sought in: 1) training of professionals, 2) research, 3) activities of linkage with the community, and 4) administration and university management. The above mentioned determined the functions, scopes, characteristics, and quality standards for evaluation according to the model, the functions are: 1) Administrative Management (Scope: mission and plan, administration and management, budget and financial resources, and university welfare). 2) Teaching (Scope: teaching and training of human

resources). 3) Research (Scope: scientific and technological research). And 4) Linkage with the community (Scope: social interaction and institutional impact). Each function has its own characteristics that constitute the framework of desirable and possible traits with which each Institution will be compared; in summary, they constitute feasible aspirations to reach. The characteristics are compared with quality standards (qualitative and quantitative) that are the framework of reference for the issuance of evaluative judgments; the standards must be measurable, comparable, confrontable, reliable, and pertinent.

2. First evaluation of the Universities and Polytechnic Schools.

In the first decade of the 21st century, the Ecuadorian higher education is in discussion about the definition and search for Higher Education Quality. In this task, there are variables and actions that influence, among them it should be considered to: 1) The politicization of certain Public Universities in different levels. 2) The commercialization of Higher Education, especially in the majority of Private Universities and without excluding the public ones. 3) The application of Autonomy without limitations, whose responsibility is not discussed in its interior and in society because that is an affront to its institutionality. 4) The search for the market (By history, quality, accessibility, academic degrees, success). And 5) Institutional transcendence.

The evaluation is carried out by the CONEA. There was an accompaniment process since 2004; this work was largely the result of the relationship that each university motivated in the Council and this body in turn, advised them. The external evaluation phase that in some institutions began in 2007 and according to the request, they were motivated in a continuous manner and the certifications were issued. The evaluation had, between June and October 2009, new actions as an effect of the Mandate 14, which ordered the obligatory and temporality of the process.

Mandate 14

In 2007, a new Government was inaugurated and it promoted the establishment of the Constituent Assembly with the people's support through the Referendum, and the assemblymen passed the "Mandate 14" on July 31, 2008. This Mandate in its principal section, this Mandate promulgates the banning of The Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia⁷. In the first transitory disposition, it is found the fundamental part of its enactment, in which it is determined that:

The National Council of Higher Education (CONESUP) must, within the period of one year, determine the academic and legal situation of all educational institutions under its control based on the compliance with its dispositions and norms that are valid on higher education in the country.

It will be mandatory that in the same period the National Council of Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEA),

delivers to the CONESUP and to the Legislative Function a technical report. It should be about the level of institutional performance of higher education organizations in order to guarantee their quality and propitiate their depuration and improvement as determined in the Article 91 of the Organic Law of Higher Education.

The CONESUP and the CONEA reports with the final results should be sent to the Legislative Branch for they to be informed and, if necessary, for making a final resolution [11].

That coincides temporarily with the Institutional evaluation, which was carried out to notice the situation in which the Universities of Ecuador were found. Some of them had already completed their external evaluation and were waiting for the certification.

The National Council of Evaluation and Accreditation [12] states that the Mandate instructs not only to the revision of the legal situation, or defined as the substantial quality as well; but also to the adjectival quality of the university, which consists on analyzing the different levels of conformity, the criteria, and standards defined by the Council. Since it is a constituent disposition, self-evaluation is not necessary as part of the process.

Because of the evaluation process, universities are ranked into five categories. In the Category A, it is found that institutions with the best scores including eleven of them, seven public and four private. They were classified based on the following aspects: 1) Academia, 2) Students and learning environment, 3) Research, and 4) Administrative management. Their performance average is close to 75%. In the Category B, there are six public and three private the same aspects were taken into account and their performance average is close to 50%, 60%, 40%, and 70% respectively. The institutions that belong to the Category C are seven public and six private, and those of the Category D are three public and six private, four of them had short-term functioning. In both cases, the results in the four aspects are less than 50% of efficiency and in research is less than 20%. In the Category E, there are two public and 24 private universities, all of them were created in the last twelve years and get less than 25% in their performance, and in regard to research, it is practically null.

In the conclusions section and with greater emphasis on the lower categories of universities it can be found that there are some aspects that make it clear the subsequent actions, especially the conclusion that forced to polish the higher education system; therefore, universities should have a stable as well as prepared teaching faculty, which guarantees a good quality teaching and eliminate the teacher's precariousness. The business orientation and the low levels of demand for student permanence and subsequent questioning of their professional capacities were ratified. The academic offer can be seen in programs that do not require major investments, for this reason it is common to find careers in administration, accounting and auditing, business management, marketing, and other similar ones. Other programs get commercial names while others adopt advertising names and use words like engineering in ..., in the

publicity, they qualified themselves as entrepreneurs, seekers of excellence, and, leaders. The universities lost the direction of both the society and the social debate. Some of those institutions, which were born in the last boom never raised these discussion elements, because they did not have any time to be concerned about the problems of the society.

The report makes clear the recommendation for closing the branches and support centers of those universities, which at that moment were 145. They were found in 107 institutions and they were organized with such autonomy that they appear to be other institutions different from their main headquarters. The academic offer was always thought from their own sake, so its proposal does not help the local group, so the outcome motivated the suppression of most of them. In addition to those decisions from the governing bodies, there was short-sightedness in the coverage and potential of some headquarters, particularly for public universities.

Another recommendation was the regulation of the academic offer since there were more than two thousand undergraduate degrees and about one thousand graduate degrees. The names of the programs were not used with coherence according to the area of knowledge where they belong. There were engineering programs in administration or in services and they were certified in the first evaluation. The duration of time to get through the studies was different and the demands of study and the programs differed significantly; that is to say, with the same academic training, different academic degrees were obtained, for example, higher technicians, technologists, bachelors, engineers, and even doctors. Later on (2014) the regulation of harmonization of titles and degrees of higher education was issued.

In the inform presented by Arturo Villavicencio, president of the CONEA, as a summary, seven axes of transformation of higher education are identified, these are: 1) harmonization of concepts and practices about higher education. 2) recovery of memory and university historical identity. 3) expansion of university democracy. 4) development of a comprehensive program system for teachers and researchers. 5) guarantee of equal opportunities. 6) encouragement of scientific research and assurance of its social relevance, and 7) towards the integrality of the educational system.

Outcome of the CONEA evaluation and Mandate 14: Mobilize the quality of higher Education.

The new Constituent Assembly of 2008 that promoted the Mandate 14 also ordered the design of a new law of higher education, named this time as Organic (LOES). This law had to take into account the results of the evaluation to the system and above all it had to come up with a law that strengthens the system and its institutions. With a little margin of error, it can be assured that what was built is very incipient compared to the request made by the created bodies by this law, the Higher Education Council (CES), the Evaluation, Accreditation, and Quality assurance of Higher Education Council (CEAACES), and the National Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT) as a State body.

What was achieved was to bureaucratize the System; to frighten the university and its daily activities at the cost of sacrificing its own thinking; to intervene in the autonomy through excessive regulations, and to co-govern from the organisms to the institutions.

In order not to fall into negativism, some achievements must be recognized, for example the closing of several universities that tarnished the system. Yet there is a thought that others were forgiven; the command to have a promotion system; the issuance of certain dispositions that allowed to organize the school system, and the organization of the academic offer for a degree.

3. LOES 2010

The new law determines that its purpose is "to define its principles, guarantee the right to quality of higher education that fosters excellence, universal access, permanence, mobility and graduation without any discrimination" [13]. This reverts benefits for students' right to access to a higher education of quality and for teachers who provide this education under the freedom of teaching and research. Also, to have the necessary conditions, and to access to training as a teacher and a researcher, and to management positions.

One of the seven principles of the system is quality within the framework of knowledge, universal thinking, and global scientific and technological production.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) will benefit from the distribution of economic resources based on the academic quality they offer.

In the principle of quality, according to the LOES, "it consists of the continuous and systematic search for excellence, relevance, optimal production, transmission of knowledge, and development of thought through self-criticism, external criticism, and continuous improvement" [13].

The evaluation of quality in an HEI will be carried out through the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, which allow to issue a judgment or diagnosis by analyzing its components, functions, and processes. The norm refers to improving programs and institutions. The task will be carried out through the CEAACES.

The legal framework is circumscribed to the dispositions of the LOES and to what the CES, the CEAACES and even the SENESCYT legislate. There is a lack of HEIs participation as an integral part of the system, and finally the request to have a better higher education. The principles of the State are surpassed even by the obvious experience of the Academia. The demands in the change to the law are only one edge, but it is clear that the validity of the seven axes of transformation of higher education could be the starting point for the definition of educational policy in the university system.

The CEAACES and its evaluation models for: determining the Quality of the HE, or establishing its ranking?

The evaluation models in the country, which were designed by the CONEA and the CEAACES were necessary at that specific

time, since there was not any evaluation culture in search of the quality of higher education. For the evaluation needed for re-categorization in 2015 there was already a strong signal of imposition, therefore, for that process some level of debugging of the system was achieved, this should allow a better participation in the model by the evaluated party, so that it becomes in a natural process that arises both in the system and in the institutions.

From the society and specifically from the university society, the result of evaluation has a greater impact on the category obtained and the evaluated indicators remain anecdotal. The dynamics in the evaluation system could request new questions such as the following: Should the categories of the universities be maintained?. When the categories are eliminated, will the validity of the accreditation have a different expiration period?. Must the obligatory nature of evaluation be based on the law and favor in the delivery of resources by the State?. Should public and private universities have the same evaluation indicators?. Is it the same to evaluate a university with a small number of careers, programs, students, or teachers versus others with greater responsibilities?. Is there the same reference for treatment and resources for the public university and for the emblematic ones?. And Do their results deserve to be compared?

Initiatives of the Universities in their search for Quality.

Universities should come up with debates, actions, and plans that allow themselves to define the quality of higher education; the work should be collaborative among them because this is what unites them even more and their problems are common to each other, many more than they imagine. The divorce among State agencies and universities must end and be recognized as complementary for university responsibility.

One strategy will be to share the same problems to be overcome that are presented in universities and to carry out their own evaluations of the results of the assessment processes carried out.

The design of strategic plans should have clearer references than the national plan of The Good Living, the system and in particular the CES should establish a participatory way for a Plan for the "Ecuadorian University of the year 2030". This plan should include the minimum tasks and achieve the necessary flexibility so that HEIs can be adapted with all their particularities, recognizing that not all of them must do everything, they must do well what is proposed in their constitutive agreements.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

To carry out an in-depth analysis of the CEAACES 2012 and 2015 evaluations, such analysis must recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the system over the individual results.

To consider the axes of the university transformation proposed by the CONEA in 2009 to overcome the deficiencies introduced in the higher education system.

To build up the concept of quality of higher education from IES, for this, they must develop partnerships in order to propose a clear path for the Ecuadorian university with a scope to the year 2030 and to the year 2050 and to generate collaboration among them to build mechanisms that allow them to achieve that defined quality.

To insert a quality culture into the state agencies and the society a culture of quality, which be effective in teaching, research, linkage, and university management.

The research team is responsible for the organization of the realities found by means of the construction of quality indicators that are grouped into the functions of teaching, research, linkage, and administrative management. The resulting management system should allow adequate decision making to university performers.

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