

# HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF UNIVERSITY EXTENSION IN THE FORMATION OF THE MICRO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER IN ECUADOR

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## ABSTRACT

The university extension was increased in Latin America at the beginning of the XX century, and it has as a principle its guiding social justice, because it was understood as the obligation to share culture and knowledge with the less favored people. Ecuador is not excepted from this assessment, hence the authors have been considering the main historical events to frame a proposal of periodization for the process of university linkage in economic formation of the micro agricultural producer in Ecuador, based on the theoretical systematization accomplished by the authors, their experience in research, the essential actions out of the concept of university extension, and some indicators for the study of the historical evolution.

**Key words:** University extension, cost-reducing formation, micro agricultural producer

## INTRODUCTION

There are different criteria regarding the emergence and appearing of the university extension. Díaz and Herrera (2004), locate the appearing of the university extension in Cambridge, in 1872. However, few historians have taken

into account, that, in India, Russia, China and the Arab world, extension actions in the Middle Ages were shaped. (Nanni, 1998).

For the majority of the Latin American countries, the emergence and development of the university extension was linked to the reform of Córdoba (1918), in Argentina, for the particularities that this event implicated at the own university institutions, although some authors, as Tünnermann (2008 ), consider that some movements before could be qualified related to the extension, as a series of political and social proposals have been directed to that goal, among them strengthening the social function of the university. (Tünnermann, 2010).

In the same way, Serna (2007) expresses that the University extension has been enlarged in Latin America at the beginning of the century XX, and has as the first principle the social justice; insofar it was understood as the obligation to share culture and knowledge with the less favored ones. Ecuador is not an exception from this assessment; therefore, the Reform of Córdoba is considered among the topmost historical indicators to frame a proposal of periodization for its characterization.

From the theoretical systematization carried out by the authors and from their experience in researching, the essential actions of the concept of university extension, the following indicators for the study of its historical evolution are assumed:

- Sense of problem solving (who benefits)
- Relation with the remaining substantial processes (including undergraduate)
- Implicated institutions
- Objective of extension

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The investigation accomplished, by temporality, is cross-sectional; by the level of study, is descriptive, and by the use of the techniques of data collection the approach is qualitative.

Finally, for the construction of the theoretical framework, we used the bibliographic method that gave sufficient input for the conceptual structuring of the topics addressed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **First stage: from 1918 to 1998 Genesis of the University Extension in Ecuador**

The reform of Córdoba (1918), in Argentina, leads to a rupture with the old impositions of the university in Latin America, with its degree of attachment to the people, which was the old yearning from previous leaders, that is, the strengthening of the social function of the University through the University Extension.

In Ecuador, on July 9, 1925, a Provisional Governing Board assumed power, which included among its programs a university reform inspired by the Córdoba Movement of 1918 and issued the Law on Higher Education on October 6 of that same year (JGP, 1925). The Law recognizes the autonomy of the Universities of the Republic (Article 2) and institutionalizes the student co-government (Articles 8, 10 and 14). The Plural Government of 1925 issues a Decree (of August 14, 1925) that constitutes the Review Commission of Higher Education. On June 7, 1937, another Law on Higher Education was issued. Its article 6 establishes that: (...) Higher education aims not only at legal, professional preparation, but mainly, adequate preparation for individual and collective life, in such a way as to develop and stimulate the initiatives and energies of the youth and make universities high centers of culture and scientific research, creators of national consciousness (p.5).

In 1938 the Third Law of Higher Education is issued by Decree. This law reaffirms and consolidates university autonomy as an essential part of the Public Law of the country, defining, as purposes of higher education:

(...) Contribute to National Progress; To train professionals for individual and collective life; Institutionalize professional defense; Defend human and natural resources through systematized studies; To scientifically investigate the exploitation and exploitation of the country's national wealth; Contribute to international scientific research (page 8).

On May 28, 1944, a revolutionary movement emerged from which a National Constituent Assembly arose. Article 143 of the new Political Charter of Ecuador, promulgated on March 6, 1945, which generated the creation of the Federation

of University Students of Ecuador (FEUE) and the Popular University, giving more opportunities for the development of the university extension.

In 1957 with the celebration of the First Latin American Conference of University Extension and Cultural Diffusion, a definition is issued by UNESCO (UDUAL, 1957), which can be classified as traditional today by its essence, since in it the university - society link is emphasized because it is assumed as a source of knowledge to contribute to society. However, in this definition it is highlighted that the problems to be solved by university extension are present in all social groups, therefore it must show dynamically and coordinated its culture and link the whole people with the university.

In general, the transformation process in Latin America sought to adapt higher education to the new economic and social requirements derived from the adoption of the so-called "inward development" model promoted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) based on the industrial protectionism, import substitution, exploitation of natural resources and external indebtedness (Tünnermann, 2003).

The Second Latin American Conference on Cultural Extension and Diffusion, held in Mexico in 1972, unlike the previous one, recognizes that education is a social subsystem that forms part of a global system, but with sufficient autonomy to influence society and to promote change. (Serna, 2007).

After several years of dictatorship, the military triumvirate restored democratic freedoms and a referendum approved a new Constitution on January 15, 1978, and in Chapter III, About Education and Culture, Article 28, it reads:

(...) The main functions of universities and polytechnic schools are the study and solution of problems in the country; the creation and development of the national culture and its diffusion in the popular sectors; the scientific research; the vocational and technical training; the contribution to create a new and more just Ecuadorian society, indicating for this purpose methods and orientations. (p 8).

Chapter III of the General Regulations of the Higher Education Act (1978) lists among the aims of education: "To promote the full knowledge of the national reality in order to achieve social, cultural and economic integration of the people and to overcome underdevelopment in all its aspects ". (General Regulation of the Organic Law of Higher Education, 1978 p.9).

During this time, its objectives were aimed at the training of qualified workers, so that they could respond to the demands of the labor market.

An important milestone event happened following the Unesco Declaration in the framework of the World Conference on Higher Education in 1998, and some changes were observed in the conception of university extension in the Ecuadorian universities.

There was a need recognized to strengthen the functions of higher education, of service to society, in relation to the eradication of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, violence, intolerance, deterioration of the environment, through interdisciplinary efforts to analyze the different problems. It also states that links with the world of work must be strengthened by exchanges of various kinds between the academy and the labor world.

That declaration affirms that the relevance of higher education must be evaluated in terms of the adequacy between what society expects from institutions and what they do. To this end, we must strive to achieve a better articulation with the problems of society and the world of work; the purposes of higher education must have as their ultimate goal social needs, respect for cultures and protection of the environment. (Tünnermann, 2010).

These significant changes also occur in Ecuador, with the 1998 constitution where it is established that: "among higher education institutions, society and the State, there will be an interaction that will allow them to contribute in an effective and updated way to improve the production of goods and services and the sustainable development of the country "(Political Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, Legislative Decree 000, Official Register 1 on August 11, 1998, p.3).

The University Extension started from a conception in which the sense of the solution of problems was for the benefit of the society and the university and with the objective of the sustainable development, which did not get to develop properly in the practice and therefore the relationship with the essential processes was poor, in addition, the universities became involved just a little and even less with the potential possibilities that the alliances gave to them.

In 2000 as an influence of the economic crisis generated in the previous period, a new stage arises (From 2000 to 2008), which the authors call: **Development of University Extension**.

The Higher Education Act of 2000 seeks a broader range of action that includes interaction with productive sectors. It establishes the unvarying exercise of services to the community, pre professional practices or internships. It is institutionalized in the IES the Permanent Commission on Linkage with society (National Congress, 2000). In the art. 1 of the aforementioned Law, it is specified, among other things, that:

(...) The institutions of the National System of Higher Education in Ecuador have as their mission the search for truth, the development of Ecuadorian and universal cultures, science and technology, through teaching, research and links with the community. It will be their fundamental duty to constantly update and adapt teaching and research activities to respond with relevance to the requirements of the country's development. (p.4).

Article 3 lists among the objectives of Higher Education Institutions to carry out outreach activities aimed at linking their academic work to all sectors of society, through community support programs over consultancies, advice, research, studies, training or other means. Article 64 institutionalizes the Community Service as a requisite for obtaining a university degree by establishing that:

(...) In accordance with the general guidelines defined by the National Council of Higher Education of Universities and Polytechnic Schools (CONESUP) and the standards that each institution follow before registering in the respective ministry or professional college their title, the universities must accredit services to the community and pre-professional internships or internships in the fields of their specialty. These activities will be carried out in coordination with the community organizations, companies and State's institutions, related to the respective specialty, which will grant the necessary facilities. (pp. 4-5).

Although they began to be developed in practice, these actions were very formal and unsystematic, the meaning of problem solving was for the benefit of society between quotation marks, as this work remained in the hands of school principals, in addition, the goal of sustainable development was a slogan rather than a reality, the relationship with the essential processes was improved, but was still insufficient and the university was not involved with the potential that their alliances gave. However, during this period the university-enterprise linkage was exaggerated, motivated by the economic crisis.

In 2008, another important milestone emerged, the arrival of a socialist government, so the authors call this stage from 2008 up to now: **Consolidation of the University Extension.**

Thus, in 2008, with constitutional changes, the Article 27 of the valid Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, states that: (...) Education will focus on the human being and guarantee its holistic development, within the framework of respect for human rights, sustainable environment and democracy; education will be participative, obligatory, intercultural, democratic, inclusive and diverse, of high quality and warmth; to promote gender equity, justice, solidarity and peace; to stimulate the critical sense, art and physical culture, individual and community initiative, and the development of competences and capacities to create and to work (page 32)

Article 350 from the constitution states that: The Higher Education System aims at academic and professional training with a scientific and humanistic vision; scientific and technological research; innovation, promotion, development and dissemination of knowledge and cultures; the construction of solutions for the country's problems, in relation to the objectives of the development. (page 40).

In the Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES) from October 2012 the Article 8 expresses: Higher education will have the following purposes: (...) h). Contribute to local and national development on a permanent basis, through community work or university extension "(LOES, 2012, p. 40).

In Article 13, it states: "These are functions of the Higher Education System": a). - Guaranteeing the right to higher education through teaching, research and its relationship with society (...). (LOES, 2012, p. 41).

The Ecuadorian university had to be integrated into the community and vice versa, with projects and programs that favored the popular sectors from being beneficiaries to being part of the process. As the university achieved strategies, in which these sectors were building their role in the praxis from the local environment, it was possible to conclude with greater success in other regional and national areas, with projects conducted in a more adequate and realistic way. The process of transformation of higher education in Ecuador now has to be reflected in a broader, articulated dimension of the global crisis and the changes that are experienced in the region and the necessary link with actions for *buen vivir* (good living). It is necessary to locate the change of IES within the framework

of this historical moment, analyzing the characteristics and identifying the critical nodes that need to be addressed if one wishes to build a different higher education for a different society.

The IES have an unavoidable responsibility with the society that comes into effect in its action by the improvement of development: economic, social, political and cultural. The new paradigm of national development in the construction of *Buen Vivir* as a way of living for the people cannot be satisfied only with the development of their functions of teaching and research, but also must develop the function of linking, to fulfill the social order. In this way, it promotes the professional level through the participation of women and men as active agents of their own development, which includes teachers, students, and graduates. So, it turns to be necessary the participation of several disciplinary and technical visions to respond to the multiple and complex social demands.

The process of extension or linkage within the socializing role that corresponds to IES in the struggle of ideas, in defense of values, as a national identity, social justice and in the achievement of a better quality of life; is inserted from its essential processes: teaching, research and linkage, in the programs that are currently being developed in Ecuador to maintain the possibility that the people reach the *Buen Vivir*.

The practical applications of these laws began to change the scenery of Ecuadorian high education, and the direction towards problem solving began to move a compass towards the benefit of society, now directed to sustainable human development, but even though the relationship with essential processes is still insufficient, and the universities do not engage their potential with the power of their alliances.

The historical characterization of the process of university extension, with emphasis on its link with the agricultural enterprise, allows us to underline that the selected indicators showed a lack of integration and harmony between the university and society to let the university play a decisive role and decide a link through the academic potential and not for the sake of solving at first the real social problems, in order to move gradually towards the recognition of a need to reinforce the functions of higher education, of service to society, particularly in relation to the suppression of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, violence, intolerance,

and the deterioration of the environment. Interdisciplinary efforts are pursued for this purpose, which implies a new vision in the solution of the different problems. However, despite the fact that the links with the world of work are strengthened and exchanges of different types are promoted between academia and the working environment, the university's relationship with other fundamental processes is poor and its scope is very limited. The potential of their alliances is considered insufficient, focusing mainly on the solution of problems within the framework of the educational institution itself. Actions are not materialized in terms of sustainable development, which is a slogan rather than a reality. The last stage reflects, together with a process of transformation of higher education, the understanding of the IES responsibility with society, in economic, social, political and cultural terms.

On the other hand, it is intended from the teaching, researching and linkage functions, the fulfillment of the social regulation that society gives to the university, promoting the participation of all people as active agents of their own development. There is an increasingly consolidated vision from the participation of several disciplinary and technical specialities to respond to the multiple and complex social demands. For this reason, although the sense of solving problems is gradually implemented to the benefit of society, to the sustainable human development, but the relationship with essential processes is insufficient, and the university does not engage with the potential that the alliances provide.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The historical analysis showed three well defined periods:

- First period: from 1918 to 1998 Genesis of the University Extension in Ecuador.
- Second period: from 2000 to 2008, which the authors call: Development of the University Extension.
- Third period: from 2008 up to now: Consolidation of the University Extension.

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