

MENDIVE



REVISTA DE EDUCACIÓN

Translated from the original in Spanish

The university and its social commitment at present

La Universidad y su compromiso social en la actualidad

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Higher Education as a subsystem of the National Education System in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (ALyC), being part of the social framework, has before it a set of responsibilities that need to be assumed by the community of its teachers and also by institutional managers and national policy makers.

The transformations in this education have been claimed by Latin American societies both in the twentieth century and in the current period of the first half of the twenty-first century.

Since the Reformation of Córdoba, already recognized by university history as an important moment of change, the purposes and actions have continued to

ensure that this educational level offers the appropriate answers to the society in which the teaching institution resides.

It is considered by the author that the regional conferences on higher education convened by Unesco have contributed to keep the alert and make efforts for university transformations.

Next, a selection of aspects on this subject raised in them is made.

The Regional Conference (CRES) in 1996 was held in Havana in November, it is important to note that for the first time an event of this type was held, which among other purposes, was to link its results with the World Conference convened by Unesco, for this level in 1998.

This Conference established criteria of comparability for quality accreditations in the universities of ALyC, at the same time, supported the importance of internationalization processes that favored regional integration by facilitating the mobility of students and professors and sharing scientific work and its results. The Conference worked on essential issues, such as the relevance, management and financing of Higher Education and the impacts of new information and communications technologies.

The venue of the event in the city of Havana favored student participation, given the support offered to students by universities and other sectors of society. The second Regional Conference was held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia in June 2008, sponsored by Unesco, begins its Declaration with the following:

«Higher Education is a social public good, a human and universal right and a duty of the State. This is the

conviction and the basis for a strategic role that must play in the processes of sustainable development of the countries of the region » (CRES, 2008).

The importance of the aforementioned that constitutes a criterion and commitment of the academic community of the Latin American and Caribbean region and that was subsequently assumed at the World Conference in 2009 should be highlighted.

The Declaration, referred to above, states:

«The construction of a more prosperous, fair and supportive society, with its model of sustainable human development, must be assumed by all the nations of the World and by the global society as a whole. In this sense, actions for the fulfillment of the Millennium Goals must be a fundamental priority.

Our region is markedly multicultural and multilingual. Regional integration and addressing the challenges facing our peoples require their own approaches that value our human and natural diversity as our main wealth.

In a world where knowledge, science and technology play a leading role, the development and strengthening of Higher Education constitute an irreplaceable element for social advancement, the generation of wealth and

the strengthening of cultural identities, the social cohesion, the fight against poverty and hunger, the prevention of climate change and the energy crisis, as well as for the promotion of a culture of peace» (CRES, 2008).

The previous ideas broaden the vision of the commitments that education has towards society and the importance of the participation of the entire university community.

The CRES 2018 was held in the city of Córdoba, Argentina and allowed to commemorate the centenary of the Reformation. Its activity focused on the analysis of sustainable human development, in accordance with the 17 objectives agreed by the UN until 2030 and in which, from a horizontal perspective, education has duties in all, particularly in objective 4, which raises: «Ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all» (ONU, 2018).

The III Regional Conference was organized in the following thematic axes for ALY C:

- The strategic role of Higher Education in sustainable development
- Higher Education as part of the education system
- Higher Education, internationalization and integration
- Higher Education, cultural diversity and interculturality
- The role of Higher Education in the face of social challenges
- Scientific and technological research and innovation as engines of social and economic human development

- One hundred years after the University Reform of 1918

The activities carried out in each one of the axes contributed favorably to the drafting of the final declaration and ratified ideas raised in the Liminar Manifesto, where there are still unresolved problems and, logically, new ones, as a result of changes in society. All of them require attention today, such as equity, peace, the environment and the migration of people to economic risks and difficulties, which lead them to look for other areas to reside.

These situations, sometimes maintained and others that arose later, have, by way of example, the following proposals taken from the speech given by Fidel Castro before the United Nations General Assembly, in October 1979. Among the demands he presents for underdeveloped countries are relate the following:

«The unequal exchange ruins our peoples. And it must cease!

Protectionism ruins our peoples. In addition, it must cease!

The financial resources received by developing countries are insufficient. And they must be increased!

Arms expenses are irrational. They must cease and their funds used to finance development!

Debt economically overwhelms the rest of the developing countries. Moreover, it must be relieved!

The economic chasm between developed countries and countries that want to develop, instead of decreasing, is enlarged. In

addition, it must disappear! (Castro, 1979).

In relation to peace, in this speech he says that:

“The bombs can kill the hungry, the sick, the ignorant, but they can't kill hunger, disease, ignorance. Nor can they kill the just rebellion of the peoples and in the holocaust the rich will die, who are the ones who have the most to lose in this world. Let's say goodbye to weapons and let us devote ourselves civilly to the most pressing problems of our era. That is the most sacred responsibility and duty of all statesmen in the world. That is also the indispensable premise of human survival» (Castro, 1979).

Let us remember with respect to the unequal distribution of wealth, that Latin America is among the regions of the world with the most negative results. According to a press release, the wealth accumulated by the 26 richest people in the world is equivalent to the budget of at least 3.8 billion poor people, said the international organization OXFAM.

The problems of the environment are increasingly serious, denouncing the extractive policies that entail the permanent exploitation, usurpation and contamination of the ancestral territories and of the ecosystems that we share with the plants and animals in countries of our region.

In summary, 100 years after the Cordoba Reform, it is possible to recognize that

positive results have been achieved, but that much remains to be done. This reiterates the commitment of the academic community to continue the work and, particularly, the expectation in Latin American and Caribbean youth as essential actors in achieving the goals of the aforementioned document and the fulfillment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

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