

52

PARTICIPATION OF THE UNIVERSITY IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT

PARTICIPACIÓN DE LA UNIVERSIDAD EN EL DESARROLLO SOCIAL EN EL CONTEXTO LATINOAMERICANO

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to achieve a reflexive approach to the relationships that the university establishes with the community as an institution that generates transformations in the social environment. The methodological strategy was systematized through the methods: hermeneutics, documentary and deductive analysis, allowing to conclude that in the Latin American context the university as a key social actor must reach new modalities of representation and social participation, that promote the democratization of public policies, for the development and collective acceptance of ethical-moral values within the framework of a civic culture that promotes social development.

Keywords:

Society, university, participation, social development, social actors.

RESUMEN

El propósito de este artículo es lograr un enfoque reflexivo de las relaciones que la universidad establece con la comunidad como una institución que genera transformaciones en el tejido social. La estrategia metodológica fue sistematizada a través de los métodos: hermenéutica, análisis documental y deductivo, permitiendo concluir que en el contexto latinoamericano de la universidad como actor clave debe alcanzar nuevas modalidades de representación y participación social, que promueva la democratización de las políticas públicas para el desarrollo y la aceptación colectiva de valores ético-morales en el marco de una cultura cívica que promueva el desarrollo social.

Palabras clave:

Sociedad, universidad, participación, desarrollo social, actores sociales.

INTRODUCTION

In this article we reflect on the concept of social development and the participation of the university as a key social actor to promote change in the Latin American context. At first, the concepts of development, social development and participation are analyzed, then going on to deepen the participation of the university in Latin America. Finally, conclusions are formulated that strengthen the need to appropriate the social perspective in the consolidation of the purposes of the university according to the complexity of a society that seeks its development.

For this purpose, the participation of this institution is analyzed by consulting the theoretical sources authorized for a reflexive interpretation to answer the following questions:

What updated criteria are handled in the specialized literature on the relations between university and society?

Does economic development represent social development?

When does development imply social transformation?

How is the participation of the university articulated with the social actors to promote the development of the community?

What should be the projections of the university as a social actor mediating development?

This bibliographic review study was systematized through the methods: hermeneutics, documentary and deductive review; through hermeneutics and bibliographic review, the analysis, interpretation and comparison of the literature specialized in the subject was carried out in order to achieve a coherent explanation that would allow conclusions to be reached through the deductive method.

DEVELOPMENT

Before going into the analysis of the role of the university in social development, at first you need to understand what is meant by development and social development.

The term development has been used indiscriminately in relation to the economist processes, reaching the point of being understood as economic prosperity.

Under its influence, in the fifteenth century, America was conquered. Who did benefit this “development”? The position assumed regarding this question depends on the prism with which it is analyzed; the evolutionary logical development of the pre-Columbian cultures was abruptly violated, it was truncated with the arrival of the Europeans,

who with the pretext of achieving development through civilization seized the riches of the new continent to achieve their own “development”. Analysis necessary to understand the positions that are assumed in the current context, what is valid for some is not necessarily for others; the development of some is not the development of others.

With the promise of “development” the peoples have been manipulated by those who hold power. The promise of positive, gradual, linear and cumulative progress has become the source of hope for humanity in the last five centuries. Ironically, despite the fact that the promises made in his name are never fulfilled, the values, concepts, premises, etc., created to sustain this idea, still dominate the social imaginary of the people and the rhetorical strategies of the official speeches.

Although, the Atlantic Charter, 1941, represents the birth of the idea of development in the field of national and international public policies and the marked interest in economic growth models and national income accounts after the Second World War, the primary needs, goals, aspirations and participation of the human being were marginalized in benefits of macroeconomic objects.

Another milestone in the pursuit of social development was the San Francisco Conference in 1945 where the United Nations Organization (UN) is formed, who through the Regional Commissions and, in particular, through the Economic Commission for the Americas Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), makes development analysis a preferential topic both in reflection and in empirical studies.

Product to the inequalities that existed so much economic, political, cultural and social in the different nations allow the study of the theories of the development in search of the causes of such inequalities. This phenomenon is approached from different angles: economists, producers and technologists; and they emphasize in the urban context devaluing the rural environment. Within them occupied and still continues to influence, the economic theory that focuses on participation in power, the social layers are manipulated by it for the sake of “development” seen as synonymous with economic growth, for a long time was measured by economic growth and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) added and fundamentally the GDP per capita was the current measure of the level of development achieved by a society (Colectivo de Autores, 2000).

That is why for Latin American countries these theories were not valid for their progress since they only aimed at countries with an advanced economy; many of the countries showed economic growth, however, they experienced a worsening of the conditions and the quality of life of

their citizens. In contrast to this reality, some societies with relatively modest incomes have achieved levels of human well-being that are certainly satisfactory, thus being shown that economic growth is not synonymous with social development.

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The development seen as an integrating concept in which the human being and the satisfaction of their needs constitute the supreme object, covers the environment, social relations, education, health, culture, etc. being at the same time very rich in values, production, consumption and welfare.

This approach from the economic and social perspective, is limited by the actions to face the inequalities accumulated during centuries. It is not until the decade of the 90s of the last century, after the UN declaration on the right to development recognized that it is a global economic, cultural, social and political process that tends to the constant improvement of the population and of each individual in particular, which is taken into consideration in the development analysis.

The UN Development Program (UNDP), introduces a new way of measuring development through the concept of a Human Development Index, understood as the process through which a society in a sustainable way improves and reaches a higher level of material and spiritual quality of life, evidenced in the satisfaction of basic and

complementary needs; as well as the creation of a means where human rights are respected.

The Human Development Index, is an indicator composed of different factors, its constituent elements are:

Level of knowledge, represented by the level of adult literacy of more than 25 years and the average number of years of schooling.

Longevity, represented by the average life expectancy.

Quality of life, represented by national income per capita or by the purchasing power parity of GDP.

As can be seen in this analysis, development is not only an economic problem as it was understood in the 40s of the last century, the theories of constructivism are present in it; we must consider it in a much broader and more complex context than the economy, it is very close to the subjective, axiological, intangible, holistic, systemic, recursive, cultural, transdisciplinary, multidimensional and diachronic, it is the means that allows man to be empowered and transform as a human being (Díaz & Acuña, 2013). It can be said that the concept of development has evolved in the evolution of the history of man in its beginnings was visualized from an economic perspective to the current humanistic tendencies, where it is understood as the transformation of reality in function of the improvement of the standard of living of the population in general (Horejs, 1994).

For its part Coraggio (2003), introduces a new element to the concept of development to consider it as a collective learning process on the own capabilities of individuals, groups, communities and societies, which enhances communication, transparency and participation in the taking of decisions and fair distribution of results. In this concept, a new category is specified to take into account, learning, and its direct influence on the evolution of the intellect and abilities of those involved, which will be effective if the relationships and participation of those involved in this process are fostered.

Then you can understand by development a process of transformation, in the different spheres of human endeavor that establishes relationships between individuals through which the necessary change is fostered to satisfy the material and spiritual, individual and collective needs, based on the real possibilities, capabilities and knowledge of those involved.

Consequently, social development must be analyzed as an objective phenomenon, which does not only depend on expectations, aspirations and wills in relation to it, but also on tangible changes that allow a qualitative leap in

one's own development, marked by conscious participation of the community. The one that can be understood as a process of organization of a territory, result of the concertation and planning effort made by the fusion of the social actors, in order to develop the human and material resources of a specific territory, maintaining a negotiation or dialogue with the economic, social and political decision centers in which they are integrated and on which they depend (Arocena & Sutz, 2015, Arocena, Goransson & Sutz, 2015).

According to Cárdenas-González (2003), for the achievement of the purposes of social development it is necessary to take into account the following axes: cultural, environmental, social, political, gender and economic; recognizes that through the empowerment and evolution of these axes, human development is achieved; then it is impossible to talk about social development without human development, the first is based on the postulates of the other; but for them it is necessary to articulate the different social actors: educational and cultural institutions, companies, unions, public or private organizations, representatives of power groups and other social entities, and that are willing to promote collective projects that are beyond private or corporate interests, that work for the public interest and the development of the community as a whole (Águila, 2004).

But not only institutions, companies and organizations are considered social actors, so are those people who actively or passively intervene in the management processes for their own development or who attend the process; it covers the inhabitants of a community or nation, in general, all the people whose quality of life is affected and who influence or receive the effects of use and conservation of resources (Arocena, 2005)

It is essential that social actors have the reflective capacity and potential to generate knowledge, think about themselves and the reality that surrounds them, design and implement change actions, and self-transform as a premise and condition of development, where participation plays a fundamental role.

Social development demands that the state and local governments are willing to undertake it and for that they must be able to diagnose in a participatory manner the relevant needs that exist in their territory, designing together with the social actors a strategic planning that contains tactical-operational plans, and propose development policies, identifying existing human resources and making rational use of the rest of the resources, basing education, indigenous ethical and cultural values (Vallaey, 2012, 2014).

As has been analyzed so far to encourage participation in social development, the needs and interests of the people as a result of the diagnosis should be taken as a starting point and axis of direction; This participation demands solid interpersonal and institutional relationships, cohesion among those involved, orienting the process to the satisfaction of spiritual interests, creativity, initiatives, knowing how to listen to the opinions and criteria of citizens, respecting the ideology and identity of those involved, identifying the contradictions and conflicts, promote overcoming, promote reflections and analysis, stimulation to the factors that lead to success, provide a critical approach access to information, to new communication technologies.

Without the integrated and conscious participation of social actors in the search for a common goal, it is impossible to achieve equitable, harmonious and sustainable development in the current circumstances that a globalized society is going through as a consequence of technological mediations; many bet for the participation of the individual in a disinterested and just way with the supreme purpose to act in favor of the development of the human species; However, this participation was ignored until the second half of the 20th century; the importance and relevance it has for the development of social, scientific, economic and political relations was not conferred (Arocena & Sutz, 2016).

But what is meant by participation in the Latin American context of social development?

In the late twentieth century and the dawn of the present, participation plays a significant role in almost all spheres of human endeavor. Participation in social development emerges in Latin America as a response to the problems of marginalized and oppressed communities, through the participatory work of social actors: educators, organizers, social leaders, religious, facilitators and members of the communities themselves (Díaz & Acuña, 2013).

Gyarmati (1992), points out that participation is the real, effective capacity of the individual or a group to make decisions about matters that directly or indirectly affect their activities in society and specifically in the work environment. Then, participation can be seen as the search for solutions to social problems; Wright Mills (1954) cited by De la Riva (1994), adds that participation is a permanent process of opinion formation, within the working groups and intermediate bodies, around all the problems of common interest, as they arise and require decisions for their solution.

These definitions indicate not only as a characteristic of participation the actions of the individual, but also the

awareness to decide the actions to be taken in the solution of the existing conflict.

In this same line of analysis Kisnerman, et al. (2005), they consider that participating is being and being part of something, is making decisions and not simply being an executor, is being a subject in a whole process, therefore, participation is the essential strategy in all community promotion.

The reflexive analysis of these considerations makes it possible to distinguish that participation is the joint and solidary decision making in pursuit of a common objective; shared responsibility, involving all involved and promoting teamwork.

In these concepts, participation implies action, intervention, sharing and forming part of a project, denotes decision which promotes commitment and individual responsibility in an environment of inclusion in which everyone plays a role or a role in equal importance (Ezcurra, 2011). Participation implicitly leads to multiple relationships of different types, leading to the possibility of all members of a group or community to be informed, to give their opinion and, most importantly, to decide on the objectives, goals, plans and actions, in each one of the stages of the process through which a gradual but constant growth, responsibility and capacities must be generated, collective and individual, which at the same time transforms the participants and serves as a source for their learning.

Participating is a complex and dynamic concept that refers more to a process than to a state or a goal; but also participation can be a means to a goal, which includes the formation of leaders in a more complex participatory process than the decision to participate, that is, in this case the government's self-management is discussed, since participation can or it is a means to improve and speed up the effectiveness of a project, and is an end in itself in that it strengthens the population's self-esteem, by providing them with control over the events of the context in which it operates (Cárdenas-González, 2003; Kehm, 2012).

It should be seen as an active process aimed at transforming power relations and has the strategic intention of increasing and redistributing the opportunities of social actors to take part in the decision-making processes. It is an exercise that provides the means to intervene in development and allows creating spaces, to influence the decisions that affect life and its organic base are human groups that include forms with different levels of structure Coraggio (2003).

In the studies by Cárdenas-González (2003), the concept is concretized by referring to participation as a means to

reach goals and transform power relations. It gives great importance to the relationships that arise in the process among social actors. Actually participation becomes effective when power is transferred to the population so that it can exert its influence on the development of society, that is, the diversification of social protagonism with its corresponding spaces of influence is shared, not forgetting the limits pre-established by the own society for the action of that power.

One of the most complete concepts is that which assumes as participation an educational process, conscious, in which, goals and commitments of the subjects involved are established and learning of links and attitudes are promoted, and where the quality of it is essentially given in decision making. In one way or another these conceptions allude to a group of principles that govern participation; Díaz (2004), in his book "Participación y Sociedad" summarizes them in:

It is a human need and therefore constitutes a right of the people.

Is justified by itself, not by its results.

It is a process of developing critical awareness and empowerment.

It is learned and perfected.

It can be provoked and organized without necessarily meaning manipulation.

It is facilitated by the organization and by the creation of efficient communication flow.

Individual differences in the way of participating must be recognized and respected.

Can resolve conflicts, but also generate them. Participation should not be sacralized, it is not necessary at all times.

From the analysis of the above considerations, participation can be understood as a powerful tool for the transformation of the different economic, political, social and cultural processes, which implies a conscious and committed preparation and mobilization of those involved towards an objective or purpose. Participation confers means and mobilizes people to act as actors and supervisors of their own development. Participation is not only a response to a call for mobilization of the social masses, it is an active intervention in the entire social process, from the identification of problems and needs, the definition of policies and strategies, to implementation through implementation and control around these policies.

Participation from the social perspective is a constructive and strengthening instrument of learning and social fabric.

The state must see it as the recognition of the fundamental aspiration to grow, as well as ratify the right of every person to participate as a protagonist of the social and global development of their community and their country, which is expressed in very different ways and in different types of organizations, oriented to satisfy needs, reach common objectives and improve their living conditions.

At this point, a question arises: how can the University, from its position as a social actor, participate and contribute to the development of society?

At the end of the twentieth century, a current of critical opinion reviewing the role of universities emerged in the academic field, which fostered the reflection and analysis of the traditional and main function of the university as an institution of higher education (Schugurensky, 2002).

The emergence of the new paradigm of the autonomous and entrepreneurial university, linked to the solution of social problems as a result of the transfer of knowledge that must be transformed into innovation for social development through certain processes oriented towards the permanent achievement of a vigorous capacity for creation and change (Marúm and Alvarado, 2010).

On the other hand, in recent decades there have been major changes in economic, social and educational policies in most Latin American countries that in one way or another were reflected in the relations of the university and society (Mureddu, 2008, Fernández, 2012, 2014).

According to the meaning that these changes represent for society, whether in a positive or negative sense for the development of the community, this will be the effort that the university has to make as a social actor to achieve this commitment; this institution not only has among its functions the preparation of future professionals to participate in the development processes; it must also influence the transformation of the community through projects, strategies and concrete actions directed to that end.

These circumstances require a university for man and his environment, aimed at economic and social progress within the framework of sustainable development at the service of man and his habitat; a university that contributes to expand the capacity of its society to live in an interdependent world and whose future is the patrimony of the global society (Fernández, 2010, 2014).

However, although reforms in higher education are being undertaken in many Latin American countries, the inheritance of the Napoleonic University model prevails in practice, which privileges the teaching function and weighs the role of social actor and participation of the institutions

of education. Higher education in the development of society (Villavicencio, 2013, 2014, 2015).

To overcome these barriers, Almeida and Arrechavaleta (2016), consider that the university as a social actor should stimulate critical thinking and creativity; generate, disseminate, conserve and contribute to the implementation of knowledge; develop science and technology; train professionals and researchers; contribute to the sustainable development of society and, in this same sense, promote the necessary transformations.

In the current globalized and neoliberal context, the *raison d'être* of the university institution is the generation, application, diffusion of thought, knowledge and science, as well as its management and conservation; where scientific research and technological innovation should be seen as a social process, an element capable of promoting the transformation of a community and country (Bojalil & Luis, 2008; Fernández & Coppola, 2014; Almeida & Arrechavaleta, 2016). This is an aspect that evidences the university-development relationship (Malagón, 2006).

In this way the research processes and technological innovation have moved to occupy higher levels in university management; for this it is necessary that social development plans conceived from the university in close relationship with the rest of the social actors involved are planned with greater intentionality, where the resources of science, technology and technology are used as development tools. ; This depends to a large extent on the political-institutional relevance of university systems, defined in terms of their contributions to the consolidation of democratic governance in the region as a whole and in each of its countries.

In this sense, university institutions must work to achieve new modalities of social representation through institutional channels, which promote the democratization of public policies, for the development and collective acceptance of ethical-moral values within the framework of a democratic civic culture , for the achievement in students and graduates of critical attitudes and judgments for their optimal performance as social actors for development, capable of reflecting and establishing critical judgments about institutions, processes and actors, and for the university to constitute efficient means of mobility, integration and social development (Fernández & Costa de Paula, 2011, Fernández, 2014, Vallaey, 2014 & Espinoza, Guamán, & Gómez, 2016).

Participation for development, as a requirement of democratic governance, needs the promotion of a greater role of organized society through higher education policies. One of its actions is to assume education as a task for

all and for all, with the centrality of the state, with a pluralist and negotiating attitude, where decisions are adopted in a participatory and consensual manner within the framework of a new relationship between state and society; higher education must provide tangible and satisfactory responses to the needs of society as a whole.

The autonomous position of the university allows to regulate the tensions between society and the powers: state, ecclesiastical and economic. Autonomy is the most powerful source of freedom enjoyed by the university as an institution constituting the essence of its inherent critical capacity (Almeida & Arrechavaleta, 2016). According to Malagón, (2006), institutional autonomy, interpreted as independence and freedom to think, create and take thought into action, constitutes its critical capacity of incalculable value that well used can channel not only the thought but also the actions of the social actors in the collective well-being of the community.

On the other hand, it is true that university education is a personal choice, but as a nation it is a strategy that seeks to prepare a large number of citizens to meet the economic and social demands of development; what is closely related to the plans for local and national growth depends on the quantity and quality of the personnel prepared. In addition, more and more often, universities are involved in social activities, some relate to workers' organizations or the countryside, trying to influence the development of the country; others are linked to industrial production, seeking to transfer technologies; others seek to be linked to scientific production through research and technological innovation (Cano, 2002, Rodríguez, 2002). In this way the universities maintain a link with the community, which influences in the better knowledge of the local, regional and national problems and informs about the directionality of the sources of work, while they recover a knowledge that must be introduced in their plans of study to look for greater capacity of adaptation of its graduates (González-Casanova, 2001, Bojalil & Luis, 2008, Espinoza, Gómez, Guamán & León, 2017).

The actions of the university management must be oriented to satisfy the needs of the social welfare and to cooperate with the public and private objectives that allow the university to develop its social function, on this depends the relevance of higher education; which must be analyzed taking into account the challenges, challenges and demands imposed by society as a whole (Gómez-Campo, 2000). The aim is to translate the overall goals and objectives of society in terms of the tasks incumbent upon higher education: training of high-level specialized personnel, research, extension activities and services, among others. The global contribution that higher education can

make, through its different functions, to the human and sustainable development of society should be estimated (Didriksson, 2000, González-Casanova, 2001, Falconí, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

Development is not only an economic phenomenon, it is first and foremost a process of transformation, in the different spheres of human activity, which establishes relations between individuals conducive to the participation of social actors for the necessary change oriented to satisfy material needs and spiritual, individual and collective, based on the real possibilities, capabilities and knowledge of those involved.

Participation must be seen as an educational process, conscious, in which learning links and attitudes are promoted, and where the quality of it is essentially given in decision-making in order to overcome the limitations that hinder development Social.

In this context, university management must be oriented towards the fulfillment of the social function in order to ensure the welfare of the community; The importance of the university-society relationship lies not only in the need for a solid integral, technical and scientific formation of the students, with the purpose that they can intervene in the environment with the necessary preparation to generate changes towards a more equitable and just society ; besides, as a key social actor in the Latin American context, it must reach new modalities of representation and social participation, that promote the democratization of public policies, for the development and collective acceptance of ethical-moral values within the framework of a civic culture. The university must be a mediator and participant in the new relations between the state and society that promote social development.

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