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Internationalization, Extension and Dialogical Construction of Knowledge in Latinamerica

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ABSTRACT

The main challenge of Latin American higher education institutions is to promote new and better strategies for cooperation, internationalization and university quality, expressing from their identity the mission of doing with other actors, relocating their role as social actors and contributing to reduce the gap between countries. in terms of development. The internationalization of extension services presents the challenge of designing strategies and actions that integrate extension as an exceptional function of the university within the internationalization of higher education institutions. Multiple concepts are associated with the term "extension" and its consideration is somewhat ambiguous.

Extension processes and products contribute to the emergence of the comprehensive internationalization of higher education institutions as a response to the neoliberal globalization underway. However, this challenge is complex due to the diversity of concepts and ways of understanding university extension and therefore, of the actions promoted by university institutions. The debate on the definition of extension in universities is also crossed by internationalization from a regional perspective, in view of the dynamics of production and dissemination of knowledge that are generated in the region, establishing a marginal role in the agendas of scientific communities.

In this complex and changing context, extension should be considered as a critical and dialogic process that seeks to transcend exclusively technical training and promote an extensionist perspective focused on social transformation. A role that transcends the mere work of the actors in the internationalization processes and that should promote the debate on how the university relates to society within the framework of the co-production of knowledge and collective reflection.

The extension proposals in many of the Latin American universities assume a marginal role because they are limited projects in each call, with groups of teachers, and with a conception and dynamics, in many cases, still assistance and knowledge transfer, rather than of collective reflections and dialogic construction of knowledge.

Key Words: Latin-American universities, Internationalization, Extension and Dialogical Construction of Knowledge



Introduction

The macro trends of world higher education are advancing strongly in the processes of integration and internationalization, post-graduation and the virtualization of educational processes. This last topic has been considered sensitive in the scenario of the global pandemic COVID 19 and in the post-pandemic scenario. Over the past two decades, there has been an exponential increase in all forms international academic mobility: student and academic, programs and providers, policies and regulations, and the universal exchange of knowledge, ideas, values, and culture. The diversity in modes and forms of mobility is unprecedented (Knight,

The global landscape of higher education has changed significantly in the last 25 years due to increasing internationalization driven by factors such as increased student mobility, expansion of branch campuses, validated degree programs, franchising, and joint ratings. The internationalization of higher education is seen as a response to the opportunities and challenges of globalization, and is understood as essential for the economic and social well-being of a nation and its citizens. The predominant characteristics of global higher education that presents a clear trend towards privatization and commodification are exposing the globalization of processes, internationalization, post-graduation and virtualization of educational processes.

At the international level, academic trends coexist, such as the flexibility of the curriculum, the granting of intermediate degrees, the shortening of careers, educational models based on competencies, the increase in virtuality that tends to education without borders, the permanent and continuous education throughout life, interdisciplinary work, international study plans, recognition of studies carried out through credit systems, and the rise of foreign language certifications.

Internationalization

The internationalization of higher education is a phenomenon that has existed since the emergence of universities, but it intensified in the second half of the 20th century. In the 1990s, internationalization policies were implemented and agreements were signed between institutions from different countries, attendance at international conferences and participation in academic networks and alliances were encouraged. Higher education institutions are encouraged to participate in internationalization activities for different reasons, such as the search for income, the complementation of the educational offer, the improvement of competitiveness, prestige and strategic alliances. In Europe, academic internationalization is framed in the process of economic and political integration promoted by the Bologna Process. These activities are oriented towards European institutions, but can be applied to international programs in other regions, especially Latin America.

At first glance, it is possible to recognize two major opposing trends in the literature on the internationalization of higher education, in tension, one oriented towards the market of an exogenous nature, and another of an endogenous nature that refers to internationalization of solidarity. In the first perspective, with an Anglo-Saxon perspective, internationalization constitutes an almost hegemonic paradigm, which is linked to the logic of the market,



responds to the logic of North-South cooperation, and is guided by supranational extraregional organizations such as the World Bank. and the World Trade Organization (WTO), internationalization is subscribed within the framework of the challenges of higher education in the context of economic globalization and the liberalization of markets (Ramírez, 2017). The World Trade Organization and the OECD recognize Higher Education as a commercial good, and therefore, subject to market rules.

De Zan, et al (2011) suggests that internationalization in the academic-curricular approach refers to the pedagogical and curricular policies and strategies of universities that seek to take advantage of globalization and improve the quality of their teaching, research and projection functions. social. Its objective is to overcome social, linguistic and cultural borders to achieve a joint use of knowledge. This idea focuses on internationalization in the formative dimension of the university and is a commitment of the institutions in the globalized society to train students capable of competing in the international arena. Training in professional skills, according to the author, constitutes one of the alternatives to respond to internationalization in the academic-curricular approach.

On the other hand, the ideas linked to internationalization at home, horizontal and supportive (Didou Aupetit (2007); Siufi, (2009); De Wit, (2011), are based on institutional development and strengthening and quality improvement of higher education in a broad and horizontal conception (Ramírez, 2018). The internationalization of higher education is defined by Knight (1994, p. 2) as the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension in the functions of teaching, research and service of the institution", alluding not only to the international projection but also to interculturality (Ramírez, 2017). Yarzábal (2005) argues that, although the internationalization of Higher Education is an old phenomenon, there are different academic, political, economic, and socio-cultural motivations that give it meaning, since the different actors involved decide the emphasis and intensity that each one of the motivations that establish the internationalization of Higher Education acquires.

We live in an era of increasing provision of knowledge and recognition of the diversity of viewpoints, perspectives evaluations, possible risks and recognized areas of ignorance or knowledge deficits. With the amplification and multiplication of the available expertise, decision making evolves towards an uncertain bet on the future. In recent decades, scientific claims to social accountability and truth have been increasingly subjected to criticism, as the uncertainty and loss of social trust (Vessuri, 2013).

2. Educational Integration

2.1 MERCOSUR Educational

MERCOSUR has the MERCOSUR Education Sector (SEM) for the configuration of regional education policies. The SEM is made up of different bodies such as the Regional Higher Education Coordinating Commission (CRC-ES), the Postgraduate Work Group, the Degree Recognition Work Group, etc. Actions in higher education focus on three axes: recognition or accreditation, mobility and inter-institutional cooperation. In practice, the advances in higher education policies have been incremental, beginning with the field of accreditation and have evolved towards mobility programs and inter-institutional cooperation.



Perrota (2015) argues that the regional integration processes underway in South America are promoting policies for the internationalization of higher education through agreements such as the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - Peoples' Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP), the Pacific Alliance (Alliance) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). These agreements have agendas for higher education and the deepening of these agendas in the last decade has made visible the actions of university cooperation between the governments of the region and the experiences of university institutions. The author identifies at least three internationalization trends of the university in regionalism strategies: one in line with the global trend without questioning it, one that is close to the global trend but questions some aspects, and another that is frankly critical of the global trend. Perrota (2015) differentiates between a Phoenician internationalization and a solidarity internationalization.

MERCOSUR constitutes an agreement whose objective is the institutionalization of educational policies in South America. The MERCOSUR Education Sector (SEM) is the institution in charge of coordinating these policies. Within the SEM there are various agencies and work groups that work on three main axes: recognition or accreditation, mobility and inter-institutional cooperation. The Meeting of Ministers of Education is the highest instance of the SEM and the work is organized by the Regional Coordinating Committee and aims to improve the quality of education, stimulate evaluation and promote mobility and cooperation between universities.

The educational MERCOSUR was an instance of coordination between the Ministries of Education of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. In 1992 in Las Leñas, Argentina, the Triennial Plan for the Education Sector in the context of MERCOSUR was approved by the bodies of the Treaty of Asunción and the Regional Coordinating Committee and the Meeting of Ministers were created. This initiative revealed the willingness of the universities of the region to cooperate, above local governments and policies. This Committee has formed working groups of a technical nature in various areas: technological education, higher education, official languages of MERCOSUR and information systems. It was one of the first successful Latin American attempts to converge higher education at the regional level, and it turned out to be a pioneer in terms of the intention to advance in the recognition of titles for professional practice and academic mobility. In the case of MERCOSUR, the program accreditation process began in 1998 with the application of the Experimental Mechanism for Graduate Program Accreditation, called MEXA. This mechanism arises from the actions carried out within the framework of the Cultural and Educational MERCOSUR that began to function from the beginning of the regional bloc, in 1991.

The Association of Montevideo Group Universities (AUGM) has become a network of public, autonomous and self-governing universities from Latin American countries that share similarities in their academic structures and objectives. It was founded in August 1991 to contribute to the strengthening and consolidation of high-level human resources, scientific and technological research, continuous training, university management structures and operations, and interaction with society. Its main objective is to promote the integration



process in the region through scientific, technological, educational and cultural cooperation among its members.

Among its objectives are to contribute to the development, strengthening and consolidation of public education, the training of high-level human resources, scientific and technological research, continuing education and interaction with society in general. The AUGM promotes and supports the implementation of postgraduate courses, multi- and interdisciplinary programs, teacher exchanges, investigators, students and managers, programs in strategic areas, projects linked to the productive sector, environmental management programs and plans to preserve and disseminate regional culture. Currently, the AUGM implements a dozen programs, including mobility programs, the Conference for Young Researchers, the Summer and Winter Schools, the Network of Cities and Universities and the University-Society-State International Seminar.

3. Extension

The main challenge of Latin American higher education institutions is to promote new and better strategies for cooperation, internationalization and university quality, expressing from their identity the mission of doing with other actors, relocating their role as social actors and contributing to reduce the gap between countries. in terms of development.

The internationalization of extension services presents the challenge of designing strategies and actions that integrate extension as an exceptional function of the university within the internationalization of higher education institutions. Multiple concepts are associated with the term "extension" and its consideration is somewhat ambiguous. Extension processes and products contribute to the emergence of the comprehensive internationalization of higher education institutions as a response to the neoliberal globalization underway. However, this challenge is complex due to the diversity of concepts and ways of understanding university extension and therefore, of the actions promoted by university institutions.

The debate on the definition of extension in universities is also crossed by internationalization from a regional perspective, in view of the dynamics of production and dissemination of knowledge that are generated in the region, establishing a marginal role in the agendas of scientific communities. In this complex and changing context, extension should be considered as a critical and dialogic process that seeks to transcend exclusively technical training and promote an extensionist perspective focused on social transformation.

A role that transcends the mere work of the actors in the internationalization processes and that should promote the debate on how the university relates to society within the framework of the co-production of knowledge and collective reflection. Like any social process, it cannot be thought linearly and extension has developed as a limit and bifrontal concept. In this sense, thinking of extension as processes that articulate the university with society in a situated and regional manner, with a transforming function, leads to the generation of comprehensive training processes that go beyond the diffusive tradition or transfer of this substantive function of the institutions.

4. Cooperation Networks

University cooperation networks are associations of stakeholders in higher education whose objective is to achieve agreed results through mutual participation and collaboration



(Sebastián, 2004). In Latin America, these networks can be promoted by universities or by governments and are tending to be more symmetrical, autonomous in the choice of topics and supported by communication technologies. International cooperation in universities strengthens regional integration processes and allows the exchange of knowledge between universities and between them and society, and this form of organization in networks is part of its historical ethos.

South-South cooperation networks can contribute to the construction of knowledge of other characteristics, more diverse, plural and representative, which takes into account the needs and realities of the countries and regions of the global South. That is to say, that this historically situated partner. In addition, these networks serve to create scientific and technological capacities in less developed countries, thus strengthening their autonomy and capacity for development.

There is hegemonic knowledge. The idea of hegemony presupposes the inclusion of the qualitative aspects of the conflict of power that underlies capitalist international relations. In the case of the production of knowledge, there would be a hegemonic science that responds to the cognitive problems raised in the central countries. This suggests the existence of center-periphery relations in the production of knowledge, where in a hierarchical international context characterized by asymmetries between centers and peripheries of knowledge, the center concentrates material, cognitive, human, and symbolic resources.

Meanwhile, scientists from the periphery have historically debated between the desire to join the international scientific system and the desire to have their own voice, autonomy to define their profile and legitimacy. This tension is manifested in the tension between social utility and international visibility. Can these two visions be reconciled?

South-South cooperation networks can help break down linguistic and cultural barriers that often hinder the dissemination of scientific and academic knowledge in the international arena by promoting collaboration and exchange between countries and regions with different languages and cultures, these frameworks they could contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and diverse global space, in which cultural and linguistic diversity is recognized and valued.

Undoubtedly, South-South cooperation networks in the production and dissemination of knowledge represent a valuable and necessary alternative to the hegemonic logic of internationalization, since they promote collaboration, exchange, and diversity in the exchanges and production of knowledge.

Knowledge production

Beigel and Sabea (2014) point out that university rankings and scientific journal indexing systems have been established as "two great inventions from the top of the academic system", which draw attention to the dichotomy generated among Argentine researchers who participate in the international circuit and those that do not.

Quiroga (2021) describes the current characteristics of the production of scientific knowledge a social good produced in local and international environments. It discusses the idea of scientific periphery and center and resumes it in local settings, where the product of research and the exercise of free thinking are basically deployed in academic and/or scientific publications that expose the tension between a universal science and a scientific local and the asymmetry of scientific power. This deployment of knowledge exists in the multiple platforms of today's society, such as academic and/or scientific publications that account for scientific production.



Oregioni (2013) highlights that the main imposition is made through the publication system, because researchers with a certain prestige, renowned institutions and the most outstanding universities, are more pressured by the need to publish in certain internationally prestigious journals that establish limits, themes, methodologies, publication styles and knowledge production styles that guide the dissemination of knowledge in alternative publications. The scientific production of universities has begun to be measured —among other indicators— in Argentina by the results of research published in the formats of scientific articles, books, book chapters, communications in congresses and symposiums, as well as through technical reports.

Ricardo Pérez Mora and Judith Naidorf (2015) point out that the current conditions of intellectual production considerably affect creative work and the fulfillment of the social and intellectual function of research teachers. These conditions are characterized by increased competition between peers; hyperproductivity calculated in quantitative terms; the tension between individualization of evaluation and promotion of group work and networks; the bureaucratization of investigative tasks; short-term work and specific projects; the pressure between hyperspecialization and inter, multi and transdisciplinary approaches; the constant search for research subsidies and the pressure generated by carrying out relevant studies.

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