Toward a planning model for the peruvian university system as a competitive strategy

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Resumen

La educación superior universitaria en Perú está fundamentada en modelos de enseñanza centrados en el docente, basada en una concepción del conocimiento como algo cerrado definitivo y estático, y bajo la predominancia de un modelo transmisor de información y ahora se ha visto desbordada por múltiples factores que han apresurado un cambio: sobre todo si se quiere ser como las universidades más prestigiosas del mundo que han apostado por la diversidad cultural como un signo de calidad, por lo tanto interesa la movilidad de profesores y alumnos; intercambios y colaboración con otras universidades extranjeras. Esto supone responder pertinentemente a la presión del entorno laboral y el mundo de la empresa; además satisfacer demandas de formación continua e introducir nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación tanto en el plano educativo e investigador como en el administrativo y de gestión.
Si bien es cierto que hay avances, lo que necesita el sistema universitario peruano, es un modelo de planificación definido: "como una disciplina que pretende dar respuesta a las necesidades de una organización planteadas por los nuevos modelos culturales y sociales" (A. Cazorla, et al 2007).
Este artículo estudia el pensamiento no euclidiano de la planificación y su evolución de John Friedmann, 2001 basado en los cuatro dominios de la práctica social, como aporte para proponer un modelo de planificación para la universidad peruana de tal manera que responda a las exigencias mundiales.

Palabras claves: Modelo de Planificación; educación superior universitaria.

Abstract

University education in Peru is based on models of teacher-centered teaching and a conception of knowledge which is closed and static and under the dominance of an information model now overwhelmed by multiple factors hastened by international change. The world's most prestigious universities have chosen cultural diversity as a sign of quality and are hence interested in the mobility of teachers and students through exchange and cooperation with foreign educational institutions. These universities respond more effectively to pressure from the international business sector, better satisfy training demands, introduce new information and communication technologies into education and research and have improved administration and management structures.
While there is progress, the university system in Peru is a planning model defined "as a discipline that seeks to respond to the needs of an organization defined by new cultural and social models" (A. Cazorla, et al 2007).
This paper studies the non-Euclidean thinking of planning and development of John Friedmann (2001). Based on the four domains of social practice, it proposes a planning model for Peruvian universities that meets international requirements.

Keywords: Planning Model; university education.

1. Introduction

The creation of the European Space for Higher Education, which has been fundamental in order to foster and accelerate change in the university culture in Peru, proposes a comparable degree system, with the implementation of comparable degrees using the European diploma supplement, instituting a European credit system (ECTS), adopting a three-cycle system (bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctorate), promoting mobility programs among students and faculty, promoting academic interdisciplinarianism to ensure a level of quality and establishing comparable methodologies. (Sierra, Cabezuelo, 2009)
The Tuning Project is an effort by more than 175 European universities that since the year 2001 have worked on consolidating the search for common ground, convergence and mutual understanding in order to facilitate understanding of

educational structures, with the objective of creating the European Space for Higher Education as a response to the challenge established by the Bologna Declaration. It has sought to identify reference elements necessary for recognition of degrees throughout Europe. Tuning was exclusively a European experience until late 2004 when the Tuning Project – Latin America began in a context of intense reflection on higher education at both the regional and international levels.

The Tuning Project – Latin America is one of the most serious efforts seeking to initiate dialogue for the purpose of exchanging information and improving collaboration among institutions of higher education, fostering the development of quality, effectiveness and transparency.

2. Scientific basis

When planning is discussed in the public domain, in the majority of non-intellectual forums, classical planning or planning referred to by some authors as policy analysis is discussed. The epistemology of this planning is based on decision making by political authorities with regard to a problem, a need or an opportunity before it arises. "Decisions first, then action; that was the basic model" (Friedman, 1986)

The model for this type of planning implies a political structure that, with loosely defined criteria and objectives, seeks to implement an action. Within that political structure, a technical team is placed in charge of designing the programs to be undertaken and the team provides a set of alternatives, based on which the political authorities make a decision. Once actions corresponding to a given alternative are undertaken, a retrospective look can be taken to confirm whether these actions were taken according to the criteria and objectives established. Evidently, this is a type of design planning that does not fulfill the expectations of the population that will benefit from these actions because they were simply not involved. Perhaps, analyzing the situation from a positivist point of view, some of the population's demands have been satisfied due to its being the foundation supporting the political authorities. The model outlined unavoidably corresponds to a process for making political decisions on criteria and objectives subjected to political analysis. "Analysis is a posture, not a technique; no set of operations can be taught as the essence of analysis…. There is a model, a structure of resources and objectives, with a criterion for choosing among alternatives" (Wildavsky).

Therefore, planning in a classical public domain is based on top-down planning "that uses technical reasoning to design the possible courses of action to be taken" (Cazorla, 1994).

One of the unknowns presented by this classical model is the action put off for the future; therefore, the political authorities' knowledge or perception is not linked to it. It could be argued that, actually, the action met criteria and objectives that were not communicated by the players themselves; that is to say, the beneficiaries of the action.

Therefore, the problem posed is how to resolve the time dimension if the action is not linked to the decision-making process. Normally, analysts operate in real time, disregarding past experiences, evaluating the variables operating at the time and preparing statistical forecasts as a panacea to the completion of their work. However, reference to the past, the introduction of an unanalyzed variable or the imprecision of statistical models can disrupt the entire decision-making process. In fact, statistical forecasting models, which are increasingly popular, tend to have major errors (Morgenstern, 1963); (Lee, 1973); (Meadows et al, 1982). However, on occasion, politicians have to make decisions because of uncertainty among the electorate or because of an unusual occurrence; politicians cannot expect quick answers from the scientific community, so relying on what they can (previous studies, similar cases in other administrations, etc.), they decide upon a response.

Planning in the public domain as social learning is an alternative that has been proposed. The fundamental difference lies in the fact that this begins and ends with action. To some authors, social learning means linking knowledge with action; that is, the entire theoretical planning process is limited to concrete actions. If actions form part of the process, the agents of change must act and doing so implies acting early on. The agents' participation in political decision making is nothing other than a learning process. Firstly, social learning is typically a tacit and formal way of learning (Polanyi, 1966). Secondly, it involves the agents of change in planning. "In order to be effective, agents of change must develop a relationship geared toward mutual learning" (Schein, 1960).

3. Non-Euclidean thought on planning:

The conventional concept of planning is closely related to the Euclidean model. The only way to resolve this dilemma – either Euclidean or nothing at all – is to define planning independently of engineering. This definition is the link between knowledge and action (Friedmann 1991).

Therefore, planning is defined as the professional practice that specifically seeks to connect forms of knowledge with forms of action in the public domain. Although this definition is quite abstract, it enables us to conceive of planning as something different from engineering, where the means are effectively related with the objectives and projects define the course of action that others must follow. It enables us to think of a non-Euclidean planning model. Basically, what we need to do is reflect upon the matters of knowledge and action. What is relevant knowledge and what actions does it imply?

In order to venture into this uncharted territory, first we need to consider the implications of what I have identified as a collapse of the space time continuum. What would be the time and space of a non-Euclidean form of planning? The planning

time is the real time of daily occurrences rather than an imagined time in the future. Consequently, planning would take place more in the middle of things rather than distanced from the actions that their planning was intended to guide under the old model. Viewed in this manner, planning is no longer so much a manner of preparing documents, such as analyses and plans, but rather a manner of drawing up knowledge and the practice of planning closer to the action itself. With the switch from the central planning model to the non-Euclidean model, planners act as professionals and responsible, thinking individuals. The planning model is face to face interaction with real time.

This does not mean that imagining a time in the future is useless, or that projections, simulations and other hypothetical studies on what could or should happen next year or in five or fifteen years have no purpose. Human imagination can not be confined to the practical solution of problems here and now. Being open to the future, one's mind skips around in time. Concern for the future will continue to play an important part in planning

With regard to the planning space, I believe that we need to give priority to regional and local space over national and international space. Planning is established in every plan for public decision-making processes, but what should be given more emphasis when thinking about a new model? Planning problems and conditions are not the same in every place, and the particularities of a place should guide us in planning. The problems of planning infrastructure, housing, employment, the environment, and education must be solved where their impact is felt. There is no standard solution for every problem in the public domain.

The second reason is the ever increasing presence of an organized civil society in public decision-making processes. This is a relatively new phenomenon. It means that a space must be found for the participation of an entire group of new factors in addition to the state and the nation's capital. The regions and cities are the places where significant citizen participation can take place. It is much less likely to occur at higher levels.

The third reason is that the regions and localities are where people's daily lives take place. Therefore, they are of great importance. The national and international space is typically the space pertaining to high-level bureaucracies and business entities. It is not a space where ordinary people can have much influence on events. However, ordinary people affect the spaces where they earn a living and go about their daily lives. Therefore, the quality of this space is extremely important to them.

Decentralized planning is also attractive for other reasons, such as greater distribution of risks, the possibility of social experimentation and the revival of democratic practices. It is true that national and international conditions naturally tend to limit local and regional actions, and that often structural changes are required at high levels before significant progress can be made locally. Neither politics nor planning can be abandoned at high levels of government and their role is truly crucial. However, whether or not they have changed, these conditions are merely the framework for the daily practice of planning, and planners should focus greater attention on the regions and cities.

4. Contrasting the classical planning model with the non-Euclidean model

Contrasting the new model with the well-known Euclidean or technical planning model is useful. Whereas planning in the new model is normative, the main criterion of the old model is effectiveness in achieving externally established objectives. Whereas planning under the new model is innovative (a definition of action according to this model would be to "establish something new in the world"), the old paradigm is centered on the allocation of budget resources, the use of maps, the location of public facilities, etc. Whereas according to the new model, planners should be political in the sense of being concerned about putting strategy and tactics into practice, the old model advocates strict adherence to the civil service code of neutrality and non-political practice. Whereas the new model promotes a negotiable, empowering planning style, the impacts of the old centrist model are essentially disempowering. Lastly, the new model is based on social learning and the old model is primarily an activity geared toward documents, long-closed to public scrutiny and, therefore, has little learning potential within the new continuum of real time and local space.

5. Proposal for a planning model for university education in Peru

Based on the real situation of university education in Peru, the planning model proposed following the study conducted is a policy analysis model that gradually comes more in line with the non-Euclidean planning model as we design the model, due to the following reasons:

First, the planning assumes a subject who plans an object, where the role of the subject is represented by the state and the object is university education, both are independent, and the former can "control" the latter.

Second, the subject who does the planning must assess the actual situation in order to become familiar with it, seeking the objective truth. Consequently, it is unique. For each player involved in planning, there must be a single assessment.

Third, in order to understand the actual situation and acquire capacity for foresight of its future evolution, the laws under which it operates must be discovered, due to which every social situation can be explained by designing analytical models.

Fourth, planning refers to the design of what should be, where uncertainty, probabilistic events, opponents and political matters are not considered; these elements are considered to be external restrictions with regard to the plan.

Fifth, the state has exclusivity regarding the plan, where a set of objectives is proposed with a "closed ending", since the final situation of the plan is known, as are the means with which to achieve it, all coming down to adherence to the plan to achieve the objectives.

Planning university education means taking legal determinations (descriptors) into consideration, taking the basic content of our discipline (the common places, which usually include all of the manuals on the discipline) into consideration, taking the curricular framework to which the discipline corresponds into consideration (in which curriculum?, in relation with which professional profile?, in which course?, how long?), taking our own view of the discipline and its didactics (our teaching experience and our personal style) into consideration, taking our students' characteristics (their number, their educational background, their potential interests) into consideration and taking the resources available into consideration".[1]

In order for planning to be a useful process, it must be capable of linking variables that are endogenous and exogenous to the process, the interests of the players with their view of the world and levels of power, the effort of organizations, the conception and position of planning in the social game; for this purpose, a network of planning relations with these and other variables must be built at the national level, taking the international context into account.

The need for compatibility, comparability and competitiveness in higher education is not exclusively a European aspiration. The current globalization process we are witnessing is marked, among other things, by growing mobility among students, which requires reliable and objective information on the educational programs available. In addition, mobility among professionals must be taken into account. Current and future employers in and outside of Peru and Latin America will require reliable information on what a specific training program or degree means in practice. Lastly, in an internationalization phase such as the one we are experiencing, the university, as a social player, faces challenges and responsibilities, regardless of which side of the Atlantic we are on. Institutions of higher education must assume a more active role in the different processes that we are building as a society, and that role becomes crucial when we discuss reforms in higher education.

With in-depth knowledge of the current situation of university education in Peru and its need for an effective, transparent quality system that permits mobility among faculty and students, four objectives considered to be the most important are proposed: competences (generic and specific to thematic areas); teaching, learning and evaluation approaches; academic credits; and program quality.

The current Peruvian university system is structured with credits defined according to the number of teaching hours (theory and/or practice). The ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) groups all of a student's academic activity and measures it according to the student's work volume (class hours, assignments completed in and outside the classroom, guided academic activities, study time, etc.). The European credit system not only obliges the university to reconfigure the subjects composing the curriculum in order to structure it according to this new academic measurement unit; it also requires reestablishing the role and functions of faculty members.

With regard to the first objective, the idea is to identify shared competences that can be generated in any degree and are considered important by certain social groups. There are certain competences, such as capacities for learning, analysis, synthesis, etc.... which are common to all or most degrees. In this proposal, generic competences and others related to and generated in each thematic area are of great importance and confer the identity and consistency of any program. (Project Tuning Latin America; 2007)

The competences are different for each discipline. Therefore, it is necessary to obtain results from learning and competences for each degree. Academics are responsible for the definition of these competences, following consultation with the stakeholders from society and employers. Upon defining the competences and learning results in the manner indicated, agreed upon points of reference will be attained to lay the foundations for guaranteeing quality, and an evaluation that will be internal at first, and subsequently national and international.

A second objective proposes preparing a set of materials for the Peruvian university system that make it possible to determine the most effective teaching, learning and evaluation methods for achieving the competences and learning results identified. This leads to the training of university faculty members on different teaching approaches in order to develop the competences designed in the profile. Changes in teaching and learning approaches and objectives also imply the corresponding modifications in evaluation methods and the criteria for evaluating their execution. These must consider not only knowledge and content, which is the current practice, but also general skills and abilities. Each student must experience a variety of approaches and have access to different learning contexts, regardless of his/her area of study. Of course, transparency and the capacity for comparability of the methods and criteria for evaluating execution are essential if we want to strengthen the guarantee of quality. If the first objective of the project seeks the definition of generic and specific competences, this objective proposes the most adequate method for learning, teaching and evaluating them.

The third objective is to relate the competence system with students' work, and that of its measurement and its connection with the resulting time measured in academic credits.

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1. Zabalza, M.A. (2003): *Competencias docentes del profesorado universitario* (Teaching competences of university faculty members). Madrid: Narcea, p. 73.

Lastly, the fourth objective of academic accreditation and quality. In the United States of America, Canada and European countries, there is a solid and proven experience with regard to university evaluation and accreditation. The experience in Peru is limited and recent, although growing interest in incorporating this methodology in the national education systems has been noted. This can be seen in the large number of seminars and publications there have been on the subject over the last five years. Quality is a fundamental element in the construction of a common space in higher education. It is the basis and foundation for the recognition and comparability of degrees; therefore, it is considered an aspect of vital importance. For this purpose, universities need to develop systems to guarantee quality, as well as certification and accreditation mechanisms. In this process, the state plays a role through the Council for the Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification of the Quality of University Education (CONEAU), which published the Quality Model for the Accreditation of Professional Degree Programs and Standards for the Education Degree Program in the official newspaper, "El Peruano", on January 13, 2009. Accreditation in the field of education is a matter which the competent education authorities in our country have just recently dealt with. The institution responsible for guaranteeing university quality is the Council for the Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification of the Quality of University Education (CONEAU). Among other functions, the CONEAU will be responsible for establishing the standards, criteria and indicators for evaluation and accreditation. The quality of the design of the competence-based curriculum is fundamental. For this reason, it must be developed by deans' offices, departments and research groups organized by centers or university schools, participating in faculty innovation projects, in pilot programs or in strategic plans, not only for the design and academic accreditation, but also for fostering faculty mobility to European universities, as well as student exchanges, which are fundamental actions for guaranteeing quality.

6. Conclusions

- Based on the actual situation of university education in Peru, this research work seeks a planning model defined "as a discipline that seeks to respond to the needs of an organization defined by new cultural and social models" (A. Cazorla, et al 2007).
- Interest in the development of competences in educational programs is in line with an approach to university education centered on students and on their capacity to learn, requiring greater active participation and commitment from them, since the students themselves must develop capacities, skills and abilities. (Sierra, Cabezuelo, 2009). In addition, it will make innovation possible through the preparation of new teaching materials that will be of help to students as well as faculty members, facilitating teaching, learning and evaluation processes.
- A policy analysis planning model that gradually comes more in line with the non-Euclidean planning model is proposed, because the impacts of the policy analysis model are centered on the existence of a political decision and very well structured administrative support for university education in Peru, and this structure will, in turn, make it possible to gradually draw society closer to a more negotiable, empowering planning model.
- This planning model for policy analysis that gradually comes more in line with the non-Euclidean planning model will lead to transparency in professional and academic profiles, in degrees and in curricula, and contribute to increasing emphasis on results. In this manner, the idea that students acquire more concrete competences will have a positive effect on transparency in the definition of established objectives for a specific educational program. This will be achieved adding indicators that can be measured in detail, while establishing that these objectives must be dynamic according to the needs of society and employers. Such changes will almost always lead to a transformation in the approach of educational activities, since they will provide student participation, whether individual or as a group, in the preparation of pertinent works, in presentations, etc. (Project Tuning Latin America; 2007)
- University management has an impact on society, in virtue of the fact that a university is a leading institution of higher education in knowledge and science that is considered by social players as a reference with regard to phenomena, situations and/or events of a political, cultural, scientific, humanistic and social nature. Therefore, it must earn society's trust due to its efficiency, effectiveness and quality. This planning model is geared toward fostering and strengthening the incorporation of a Peruvian university system. The institutions dedicated to providing university education must orient the creation and production of knowledge toward the country's real requirements, considering the accelerated advances or incidents of the globalized world. (Ferrer 2004)

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