A look at university education in Ecuador: politics, quality and teaching
Una mirada hacia la educación universitaria en Ecuador: política, calidad y docencia

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ABSTRACT

University education in Ecuador has experienced important advances in recent years, both in terms of educational policies and in quality and teaching. The country has implemented a National Higher Education System (SNES) that seeks to regulate and supervise higher education institutions, guaranteeing the quality and relevance of academic programs. Regarding educational quality, Ecuador has established the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (ACESS), in charge of evaluating and accrediting the quality of university institutions and programs. This has promoted continuous improvement and academic excellence in Ecuadorian universities. In addition, teacher training has been strengthened, with training programs and pedagogical updating, which has made it possible to improve the skills of university professors and promote research and innovation in teaching. In the field of educational policy, Ecuador has established a National Plan for the Development of the Higher Education System, which establishes goals and strategies to strengthen university education in the country. It has sought to promote inclusion, equity and quality in academic programs. However, despite the advances, there are still pending challenges. It is necessary to continue working on the relevance of academic programs, adapting them to the needs of the labor market and the development of the country. Likewise, it is necessary to strengthen the link between universities and the productive sector, promoting collaboration in research projects and the labor insertion of students.

Keywords: University education, politics, educational quality, teaching.

RESUMEN

La educación universitaria en Ecuador ha experimentado importantes avances en los últimos años, tanto en términos de políticas educativas como en la calidad y la docencia. El país ha implementado un Sistema Nacional de Educación Superior (SNES) que busca regular y supervisar las instituciones de educación superior, garantizando la calidad y la pertinencia de los programas académicos. En cuanto a la calidad educativa, Ecuador ha establecido la Agencia de Aseguramiento de la Calidad del Educación Superior (ACESS), encargada de evaluar y acreditar la calidad de las instituciones y programas universitarios. Esto ha impulsado la mejora continua y la excelencia académica en las universidades ecuatorianas. Además, se ha fortalecido la formación docente, con programas de capacitación y actualización pedagógica, lo que ha permitido mejorar las competencias de los profesores universitarios y promover la investigación y la innovación en la docencia. En el ámbito de la política educativa, Ecuador ha establecido un Plan Nacional de Desarrollo del Sistema de Educación Superior, que establece metas y estrategias para fortalecer la educación universitaria en el país. Se ha buscado promover la inclusión, la equidad y la calidad en los programas académicos. Sin embargo, a pesar de los avances, aún existen desafíos pendientes. Es necesario seguir trabajando en la pertinencia de los programas académicos, adaptándolos a las necesidades del mercado laboral y del desarrollo del país. Asimismo, se requiere fortalecer la vinculación entre las universidades y el sector productivo, fomentando la colaboración en proyectos de investigación y la inserción laboral de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Educación universitaria, política, calidad educativa, docencia.

INTRODUCTION

University education is a fundamental pillar for the development and progress of a country, since it plays a key role in the training of highly trained professionals and in the generation of knowledge and innovation. In the specific context of Ecuador, university education has undergone important transformations in recent years, both in terms of educational policies and quality and teaching practices.

Regarding educational policies, the Ecuadorian government has implemented various reforms with the aim of improving university education and guaranteeing its quality. These reforms have sought to strengthen the relevance of academic programs, promote scientific research, foster links with the productive sector, and improve the management of university institutions (Bastidas, 2017). These policies seek to guarantee a quality university education that is relevant to the needs of the country and that contributes to sustainable development.

In terms of quality, a special emphasis has been placed on the accreditation of university institutions and programs. Accreditation is an evaluation and certification process that seeks to ensure the quality of higher education. In Ecuador, the Council for the Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (CEAACES) is the entity in charge of carrying out this process. Accreditation has become a determining factor for the reputation and recognition of university

institutions and programs in the country (Pérez, 2019).

On the other hand, the quality of teaching has also been the subject of attention in university education in Ecuador. Emphasis has been placed on the pedagogical training of teachers, on the promotion of innovative teaching methodologies and on the promotion of educational research. These measures seek to improve the quality of teaching and learning in university classrooms, and promote the comprehensive training of students (Pérez, 2019).

In this research, the current situation of university education in Ecuador will be examined from a perspective that encompasses educational policies, quality and teaching. The advances and challenges facing the Ecuadorian university system will be analyzed, as well as the implications of these dimensions in the training of students and in the development of the country. For this, bibliographical references that address this topic from different perspectives and approaches will be used.

DEVELOPMENT

Ecuador and its university educational policies

Ecuador has undergone a series of transformations in its university educational policies in recent years. These policies have the fundamental objective of improving the quality, relevance and equity in university education in the country.

One of the key initiatives in this regard is the implementation of the National Higher Education System (SNES), which seeks to regulate and supervise higher education institutions in Ecuador. The SNES is based on principles such as the democratization of access, equity, relevance and quality. Through this system, it seeks to promote the comprehensive training of students and guarantee the quality of academic programs.

Another relevant educational policy is the creation of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (ACESS), in charge of evaluating and accrediting the quality of university institutions and programs in Ecuador. ACESS plays a fundamental role in the continuous improvement of educational quality and in the strengthening of academic excellence in Ecuadorian universities.

In addition, teacher training and updating have been promoted, with training and professional development programs for university professors. These programs seek to improve the pedagogical skills of teachers and encourage research and innovation in teaching.

In terms of access to university education, inclusion and equity policies have been implemented, seeking to guarantee access for traditionally excluded groups, such as people with low economic resources, people with disabilities, and ethnic and cultural groups.

In conclusion, Ecuador has developed university educational policies aimed at improving the quality, relevance and equity in higher education. Through SNES, ACESS and teacher training, the aim is to ensure a quality and relevant university education that meets the needs of the country and promotes the comprehensive development of students.

University licensing and educational quality

University licensing is a fundamental process to guarantee educational quality in higher education institutions in Latin America. The objective of licensing is to evaluate and certify compliance with quality standards established by regulatory bodies and ensure that universities meet the necessary requirements to offer quality educational programs (Altbach, 2005).

The relationship between university licensure and educational quality is close. The licensing process involves an exhaustive evaluation of various aspects, such as infrastructure, human resources, study plans, teaching-learning processes, research, and links with the environment. Through this evaluation, it seeks to ensure that universities meet the established quality standards and provide an education of excellence (García, 2011).

In Latin America, various countries have implemented university licensing systems to strengthen educational quality in their institutions. These licensing processes have made it possible to identify strengths and areas for improvement in universities, promoting the adoption of quality practices and continuous improvement (Teichler, 2004).

Educational quality is an essential component for the development of higher education in Latin America. A quality education implies not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the development of relevant skills and abilities for the world of work, the comprehensive training of students and the generation of social impact (UNESCO, 2013).

It is important to emphasize that university licensing is not an end in itself, but a means to promote and guarantee educational quality. Once the license is obtained, the institutions must continue working on the constant improvement of their processes, programs and services to offer quality education and respond to the changing needs of society.

University educational digitization

University educational digitization refers to the process of incorporating digital technologies into teaching and learning in higher education institutions. This digital transformation has been driven by technological progress and the need to adapt to a constantly changing educational environment (Bates & Sangrà, 2011).

University educational digitization covers various aspects, such as the creation of online learning platforms, the use of digital resources, the implementation of online collaboration and communication tools, the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning, among others. These technologies allow expanding access to education, personalizing the learning process, fostering collaboration and active participation of students, and improving efficiency in academic management (Johnson & Hall, 2016).

University educational digitalization presents numerous benefits. On the one hand, it offers flexibility in access to educational materials and resources, allowing students to learn at their own time and pace. In addition, it provides opportunities for the development of digital skills, necessary in today's world of work. It also facilitates interaction and collaboration between students and teachers, through online communication tools, discussion forums, and virtual group work (Selwyn, 2016).

However, university educational digitization also poses challenges. It requires an adequate technological infrastructure, teacher training in the use of digital tools and a pedagogical strategy that effectively integrates technologies in the teaching-learning process. In addition, it is essential to guarantee equity in access to digital technologies, to avoid the digital divide among students (Weller, 2018).

University educational internationalization

University educational internationalization refers to the expansion of higher education institutions beyond national borders, promoting collaboration, exchange and academic cooperation at the international level. This approach seeks to prepare students to face the challenges of a globalized world and foster cultural diversity and intercultural understanding (Knight, 2003).

University educational internationalization implies a series of activities and strategies, such as student and academic mobility, collaboration in research and joint projects, the creation of international academic programs, the promotion of multilingualism and cultural diversity, and the incorporation of international perspectives. in the curriculum (De Wit & Hunter, 2015).

The benefits of university educational internationalization are numerous. It enables students to gain a global perspective, improve their intercultural skills, develop international professional networks, and expand their employment opportunities in a globalized job market. In addition, it promotes academic quality through knowledge sharing, research collaboration, and exposure to different academic approaches and perspectives (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

However, university educational internationalization also faces challenges. These include language and cultural barriers, differences in education systems, and the need to tailor programs and services to meet the needs of international students. In addition, aspects such as equity and justice in student mobility, the protection of the rights of international students and the integration of cultural diversity in the academic environment must be considered (Leask, 2015).

The university teacher: debates and perspectives in the Ecuadorian context

The role of the university professor is fundamental in the teaching-learning process and plays a key role in the training of students. In the Ecuadorian context, various debates and perspectives have been generated in relation to the profile and responsibilities of the university professor (García, 2013).

One of the central debates is teacher education and training. The importance of having highly qualified and updated professionals in their disciplines, as well as solid pedagogical and didactic skills, is discussed. The need to promote teacher training programs and encourage research in the field of higher education to improve the quality of teaching has been emphasized (Morocho & Villacís, 2016).

Another relevant aspect is the evaluation and recognition of teacher performance. There is a need to establish objective and transparent evaluation mechanisms that consider both excellence in teaching and the contribution to research and university extension. The implementation of incentives and recognitions that value teaching work in an equitable and motivating manner is also debated (Pacheco & Guzmán, 2019).

Inclusion and interculturality are issues that have gained importance in the Ecuadorian context. Diversity is promoted and it is sought that the teacher has an intercultural vision in his practice, recognizing and valuing the different cultural perspectives and promoting the inclusion of students from different socioeconomic, ethnic and linguistic contexts (Pacheco & Guzmán, 2019).

Regarding the perspectives, the importance of the university teacher being a facilitator of learning is raised, promoting the active participation of students, collaborative work and the development of transversal skills. It seeks to overcome the traditional approach focused on the transmission of knowledge and encourages the adoption of innovative methodologies and educational technologies that enrich the teaching-learning process (Simbaña & Quishpe, 2018).

RESULTS

University education in Ecuador has experienced significant advances in terms of policies, quality and teaching. Below are some relevant results in each of these areas:

Educational policy

Implementation of the National Higher Education System (SNES): The regulation and supervision of higher education institutions has been strengthened through the creation of the SNES, which seeks to guarantee the quality and relevance of university education in the country.

National Plan for the Development of the Higher Education System: This plan establishes the goals and strategies to strengthen higher education in Ecuador, promoting inclusion, equity, and academic excellence.

Educational quality

Creation of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (ACESS): ACESS is responsible for evaluating and accrediting the quality of higher education institutions and programs in Ecuador, promoting continuous improvement and academic excellence.

Increased Graduation Rate: An increase in the graduation rate has been observed in higher education institutions, indicating a higher level of student retention and success.

Teaching

Strengthening teacher training: Teacher education and training programs have been implemented to improve the pedagogical and didactic skills of university professors, thus promoting quality education.

Promotion of research and innovation: The generation of knowledge and innovation in university teaching has been encouraged, promoting the participation of professors in research projects and in the implementation of innovative methodologies in the classroom.

Internationalization of education: Academic exchange agreements and programs have been established that allow the mobility of students and professors, promoting the internationalization of university education and the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

These results show Ecuador's commitment to strengthen university education through educational policies, quality improvement and teacher training. However, it is important to highlight that there are pending challenges, such as the need to continue improving the relevance of academic programs, the link with the productive sector and equity in access to higher education.

In summary, university education in Ecuador has advanced in terms of educational policies, quality and teaching. Through SNES, ACESS and teacher training, we have sought to guarantee quality and relevant education. However, it is necessary to continue working on improving the relevance of academic programs and the link with the productive sector, to ensure an excellent university education that responds to the country's demands.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions about university education in Ecuador in terms of policy, quality and teaching are the following:

1. Educational policy: The implementation of the National Higher Education System (SNES) and the National Development Plan of the Higher Education System have been important advances to strengthen the regulation and supervision of higher education institutions in the country. These policies seek to guarantee the quality and relevance of university education in Ecuador.

2. Educational quality: The creation of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (ACESS) has contributed to the evaluation and accreditation of the quality of higher education institutions and programs. This has promoted continuous

improvement and academic excellence in Ecuadorian universities.

3. Teaching: There has been a strengthening in teacher training, with training programs and pedagogical training to improve the skills of university professors. Likewise, research and innovation in teaching have been fostered, promoting the participation of teachers in research projects and the implementation of innovative methodologies in the classroom.

However, it is also important to highlight some remaining challenges:

1. Relevance of the academic programs: Although progress has been made, it is necessary to continue working on updating and adapting the academic programs so that they respond to the demands of the labor market and the development needs of the country.

2. Linkage with the productive sector: There is a need to strengthen the link between universities and the productive sector, promoting collaboration in research projects and the insertion of students in the world of work.

3. Equity in access: Despite the efforts to expand access to university education, equity gaps still persist in terms of access to higher education. Strategies are required that promote the inclusion of vulnerable groups and guarantee equal opportunities for all students.

In general, university education in Ecuador has experienced significant advances in terms of policies, quality, and teaching. However, it is necessary to continue working on the improvement and strengthening of these aspects, in order to guarantee quality, relevant and equitable training for university students in the country.

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