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THE SPLIT BETWEEN QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND QUALITY EDUCATION: A RESEARCH PROBLEM IN HIGHER EDUCATION¹

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1. Reflection article product of the research entitled “On a resignification of the concept of academic value for the understanding of quality higher education as a right: Interpreting the Experiences of Professors and Students at the Universidad de Antioquia, registered in the doctoral program in education.

Abstract: In a dialectical dialogue, a problem is posed for the University of Antioquia that reflects the rupture between quality in higher education: on the one hand, a traditional perspective centered on administrative and economic criteria, which measures quality in terms of efficiency and compliance with quantitative standards; and, on the other hand, a humanistic perspective, which understands quality education as a process oriented towards the professional and integral formation of the human being, with an emphasis on social transformation and the ethical, emotional, aesthetic and social development of students. From this tension, an educational model emerges that seeks to integrate both approaches. This model promotes an environment that fosters critical thinking, dialogue and equitable access to high quality educational resources. In addition, it supports a collaborative and respectful teaching and learning process between teachers and students, focusing not only on professional preparation, but also on the formation of citizens committed to social welfare and change. The central question that emerges from this analysis is: How is it possible to overcome the perspective of the quality of higher education as an assurance system, to evolve towards a system that considers quality higher education as a right? This question guides the exploration of the characteristics of an educational model that is not limited to the measurement of quantitative results, but incorporates a broader and more qualitative vision of higher education, oriented towards equity, inclusion and human development.

Keywords: quality 1; education 2; teaching 3; vocational training 4; didactics 5.

INTRODUCTION

This article analyzes quality in higher education, distinguishing between two predominant approaches: on the one hand, the quality of education traditionally defined by efficiency and compliance with quantitative standards; and on the other hand, quality education, which is oriented towards a humanistic formation of the student, including ethical, aesthetic and social dimensions.

The analysis is structured around a dialectic that contrasts the traditional thesis, which measures quality in education through efficiency and quantitative achievements, with the antithesis, which promotes a holistic approach to training. From this interaction, a synthesis is proposed in the form of a model of quality higher education. This model is characterized by its dynamism and reflexivity, creating environments that foster critical thinking, dialogue and access to high quality educational resources.

The method used to develop this analysis and proposal combines a dialectical dialogue with a conceptual review of the evolution of the term “quality” in different contexts, focusing especially on higher education. The concept of quality is examined from a historical and theoretical perspective, integrating contributions from various authors and perspectives. In addition, it explores how to configure an institutional model that promotes quality education in higher education.

In its conclusions, the article emphasizes that quality in higher education should not be limited to technical and administrative parameters. A broader view suggests that, in addition to acquiring technical skills and academic knowledge, it is essential to foster the humanistic formation of the student. This includes the development of values, emotional and social skills, critical thinking and an ethical conscience, all of which are fundamental for the formation of individuals who are suitable in their professional fields and, at the same time, responsible and reflective citizens.

In addition, the need for a balance between administrative and economic demands and comprehensive and humanistic education is emphasized. This implies that educational institutions should measure quality not only in quantitative terms, such as graduation rates or test results, but also consider the impact on the personal and social transformation of students. Therefore, quality higher education must include educational practices and institutional policies that promote both integral human development and academic excellence.

The article envisions a model of higher education that complies with administrative standards, but also promotes the integral development of the individual, thinking about the formation of students not only with professional and academic skills, but also with a social conscience and a commitment to the improvement of the community and the world in general.

QUALITY AND QUALITY: ORIGINS, EVOLUTION AND DIVERGENT MEANINGS

The need to clarify the meaning of the notion of quality in higher education is fundamental to understanding the differences between “quality of education” and “quality education”. This section examines the evolution of the term from its etymological roots in Greek and Roman philosophy to its contemporary usage, exploring how its meaning has changed over time. Quality is analyzed not only as a standard of excellence or value, but also as an essential characteristic that defines the identity and distinction of an object or concept. By approaching the term from a historical and theoretical perspective, it seeks to understand how these two approaches to quality in higher education can coexist or complement each other.

The dialectical dialogue between “quality of education” and “quality education” reveals

an apparent similarity, but an essential divergence. From an administrative and economic perspective, “quality” is a multifaceted term, linked to decisions, results, efficiency and effectiveness. In contrast, in higher education, “quality education” emphasizes training and academic excellence. These tensions and divergences, although lexically similar, require the analysis of their origin, evolution and current understanding, recognizing their interconnection despite their different contexts.

The word “quality”, according to the Royal Spanish Academy (2014), originates from the Latin “qualitas”, a reflection of the Greek “ποιότης (poiôtēs)”. Etymological analysis allows us to understand that “quality” alludes to a standard of excellence or value. Plato was one of the first to use “ποιότης”, related to “ποιος” (poios), meaning “which” or “of what kind”. Cicero mentions that “qualities” are referred to as “poiotetes” in Greek, stating, “I called, then, ‘qualities’ those which the Greeks call poiotetes, which even among the Greeks is not a word of the vulgar.” (Cicero, 1990, p. 10).

Quality can be understood as an attribute or characteristic that contributes to the essence of a being, to that which makes it what it is. In this sense, every entity possesses qualities that determine its identity. On the other hand, quality could refer to the excellence or category of that being in relation to others.

Over time, “quality” has evolved to refer to both excellence and an inherent attribute. (Harper, 2023) indicates that its historical lineage dates back to approximately 1300, with roots in the Old French “calibre”, evolving to “qualité” in modern French, and linking to the Latin “qualitatem” (nominative “qualitas”), meaning “quality, property, nature, state, condition”.

For his part, Aristotle addressed the idea of “quality”. In his work “Metaphysics”, he states that “Quality is called, in a sense, the difference of substance.” (Aristotle, 1947, p. 50). For him, “quality” is one of the main categories for classifying and describing the various aspects

of reality, encompassing both physical properties and moral characteristics. It is in this categorization that a direct connection between “quality” and “substance” is found, since quality defines and differentiates substances.

The evolution of “quality” reflects human interaction with the world, recalling the constant quest to understand, evaluate and improve. “Quality”, at its core, represents an intersection of intrinsic characteristics that confer identity and distinction. This term has adapted according to the needs and understandings of societies, ranging from excellence in manufacturing to well-being in everyday life.

It can be understood that both “quality” and “quality” describe inherent characteristics of objects, ideas or services. While “quality” suggests a value judgment, “quality” describes defining characteristics. These terms, although distinct in their usage, converge on the idea that things have intrinsic properties that define them.

Although the modern use of “quality” can range from excellence in manufacturing to well-being in daily life, its etymological roots take us back to a time when the contemplation of the essential nature of things led to the structuring of a vision of the concept of “quality” as a way of discerning and describing the “being” of an object.

The evolution of the term reflects the complexity of human interaction with the surrounding world. It is a reminder of the constant human quest to understand, evaluate and improve. Each adaptation of the concept of quality is a testament to the possibility to redefine and reimagine. Therefore, when we reflect on “quality”, we are not only considering criteria or standards, but also a historical and conceptual path in all areas of life.

QUALITY IN THE BUSINESS CONTEXT OR THE ORIGIN OF THE PERSPECTIVE OF EXCELLENCE: ABOUT THE THESIS²

The evolution of the concept of quality throughout history is revealed not only as a sequence of changes in industry and production, but also as a reflection of the transformation in the understanding and pursuit of excellence. From its beginnings, characterized by an inspection phase focused on the detection and solution of inconsistencies in products, to the contemporary era of total quality management, where customer satisfaction emerges as the core of quality, this concept has undergone a remarkable evolution.

Different theorists have provided varied definitions and perspectives on quality, ranging from the zero-defect vision to the conception of quality as an achievable and economically viable entity. These approaches bring a range of perspectives to the concept of quality, which has transcended the realm of production into broader spheres of transformation. This invites us to consider quality not only as fitness for purpose, but as a qualitative change, a transformation that goes beyond the merely physical.

Authors such as Cuatrecasas & Gonzalez (2017), in tracing the genealogy of the concept, identify four fundamental stages from its origins to the 20th century: the inspection stage, characterized by the detection and solution of uniformity problems in products; the product control stage, marked by the emergence of statistical methods and an inspection based on sampling; the process control stage, where it is recognized that quality does not reside solely in manufacturing processes and requires support services integrating production and design efforts; and the total quality

2. In a dialectical conversation, for (E. M. González, 2011) the thesis represents “the being, a theory scientifically accepted in time by a specific community, but which still has a question to be asked” (p. 132).

management (TQM) stage, focused on the market and consumer needs, adopting organizational models of excellence. Cantú Delgado (2015), in this line, proposes a fifth stage, called innovation and technology, responding to market needs and social, political and economic contexts, and supporting quality processes in technology.

The evolution of the concept of quality, therefore, shows differentiated stages, resonating with the theorists' positions and in line with the progressive consolidation of organizations and companies over time. However, it is pertinent to clarify that quality systems evolve within a wide variability framework, conditioned by competitiveness factors, defined by Unesco-WHED (1979) as the "capacity of a company to produce and market products in better conditions of price, quality and opportunity than its rivals", and competition, understood as the confrontation between rival companies in constant dispute for market supremacy, integrating interests of consumers and directors or managers who seek to promote their companies Gutierrez (2012).

In his analysis, Deming (1989) approaches quality from a multidimensional and subjective perspective. He argues that quality is defined by the observer: for the operator, it resides in pride in his work, while, for the plant manager, it is related to compliance with specifications and numbers (Deming, 1989, p. 132). This duality highlights how the perception of quality varies according to the role in the production or service process. Extending this view, Deming points out that, for printers, quality in books may focus on technical aspects such as writing style and the absence of typographical errors, while for readers and authors, clarity and relevance of the message are paramount (Deming, 1989, p. 149).

On the other hand, Juran (1988) offers a comprehensive view of quality, identifying two main approaches: quality as product

behavior and as the absence of deficiencies (Juran, 1988, p. 3). His analysis highlights the complexity of quality and the need for a comprehensive understanding for effective management.

Ishikawa's (1989) perspective adds another dimension to the debate. He interprets quality in the Japanese context as "hinshitsu", combining the concepts of "goods" and "quality". Ishikawa considers not only product quality, but also aspects such as leadership and management quality (Ishikawa, 1989, p. 18). He details four key dimensions: inherent characteristics, cost and benefit, delivery and after-sales service (Ishikawa, 1989, pp. 19-20).

Crosby (1987), for his part, redefines quality as a tangible and measurable entity at the organizational level. Contrary to the belief that quality is unattainable, he argues that it is a measurable objective and essential for success (Crosby, 1987, pp. 13-17).

The view of Taguchi et al. (2005) further expands the concept of quality, extending it beyond the manufacturing process to include after-sales product performance and its value to the consumer (Taguchi et al., 2005, p. 129). This perspective emphasizes social responsibility in quality management.

Peters & Waterman (2004) and Cuatrecasas & Gonzalez (2017) provide their definitions, emphasizing adaptability and responsiveness to changes in the environment and satisfaction of user requirements, respectively (Peters & Waterman, 2004, p. 12; Cuatrecasas & Gonzalez, 2017, p. 15).

ISO 9000 (2015) provides a holistic view of quality, linking it not only to intrinsic characteristics, but also to customer perception and satisfaction. This standard states that "the quality of an organization's products and services is determined by the ability to satisfy customers, and by the intended and unintended impact on relevant stakeholders [...] the quality of products and services

includes not only their intended function and performance, but also their perceived value and customer benefit” (ISO 9000:2015, 2015, p. 7), emphasizing the impact on stakeholders and unintended consequences.

The convergence of these perspectives in a managerial and quantitative approach reveals both differences and similarities in the understanding of quality. Despite the diversity in their approaches, all theorists agree on the importance of integrated and systematic quality management, oriented toward measurement and continuous improvement. This orientation reflects a significant shift from an exclusively product-focused quality perspective to a more holistic one, focused on customer value and organizational efficiency. Quality, therefore, is configured not only as an attribute of the product or service, but as a business management philosophy, where excellence is the result of well-designed processes, efficient management and a deep understanding of customer needs.

The conceptual analysis reveals that the nature of the concept of quality has evolved, reflecting not only technical or business demands, but also the changing expectations of society at large. This evolution can be seen in how quality, initially seen as a purely business and technical objective, has transcended into broader spheres such as education, adapting to its specific contexts and needs.

Looking to the future, this adaptive approach is expected to continue, recognizing that quality, in its diversity of dimensions, will continue to be a central pillar in various fields, beyond its traditional frame of reference. In this sense, quality emerges not only as a principle of efficiency and effectiveness in production and services, but also as a standard of excellence in areas such as education.

As this concept was transformed from its purely business focus to broader spheres,

3. In that same conversation that initiates the thesis, to González (2011) the antithesis represents the “non-being, the opposite, that which has denied the thesis, also in time, to which there is room for another question” (p. 132).

such as education, tensions intensified. The adaptation of a concept born in the industrial and business sphere to the educational world posed significant challenges, which is when the question arose: How was the concept of quality sustained in the business sphere transferred to higher education?

QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION OR ITS TRANSITION FROM THE BUSINESS CONTEXT TO THE ACADEMY: ABOUT THE ANTITHESIS³

The notion of quality, originally associated with the business world, has been transformed by its integration into the context of higher education. Initially, this notion was intrinsically linked to principles such as efficiency, compliance with standards and the achievement of specific objectives. However, its adaptation to the academic sector has merged it with essential concepts such as training and knowledge generation. This transition has made it necessary to reevaluate the meaning of quality in education in order to achieve its adaptation and implementation, recognizing the complexity and multidimensionality of the educational process.

Higher education institutions have adopted self-regulation mechanisms and accreditation processes to ensure compliance with quality standards. It should be noted that these procedures have been, to a certain extent, influenced by business practices and regulations. With the incorporation of the concept of quality in higher education, the question arises: How has the concept of quality been adapted from its industrial origin to its application in higher education?

According to Brock (2007) the incursion of the concept of quality in higher education has generated an interconnection with fundamental components of education, such as pro-

fessors, students, institutions, and educational objectives. This phenomenon has not been a mere chance occurrence, but a social process comparable to the transmission of customs between generations, signaling a significant change in the conceptualization and application of quality. (Brock, 2007, pp. 24-25).

In this sense, authors such as Calle Pinto et al. (2010) have pointed out that the notion of quality in education was consolidated in the 1960s, marked by an economic vision that began to consider individuals not only as recipients of education, but also as agents of change capable of improving their socioeconomic status. This reinterpretation of education placed it in a strategic place within the economic landscape, modifying its role and function in society.

This multidimensional perspective of quality in higher education has been analyzed and reflected upon over time by various theorists. Sanyal & Martin (2007) define quality as the ability to specify and achieve valuable learning objectives, considering the expectations of various sectors, including society, government and the private sector. On the other hand, (L. E. Gonzalez & Espinoza, 2008; Harvey & Green, 1993) have identified several paradigms related to quality, such as “quality as exception”, “quality as perfection or consistency”, “quality as fitness for purpose”, “quality as value added” and “quality as transformation”.

According to Gonzalez Fiegehen (1996); L. E. Gonzalez & Espinoza (2008); Harvey & Green (1993) the concept of quality has undergone various interpretations over time, which, although heterogeneous, converge in certain key aspects that offer a broader understanding of what constitutes “quality” in the context of higher education. These paradigms, from “quality as exception”, characterized by its distinctive and rare nature, to “quality as transformation”, which considers quality in terms of qualitative change, reflect

the complexity and evolution of this concept in education.

In the contemporary horizon of higher education, the concept of quality is revealed as a polymorphic entity, subject to constant transformations and reinterpretations. When we investigate the predominant lexicon in discussions on quality, terms such as “student”, “institution”, “mission”, and “education” emerge, which directly evoke the essence of higher education. In contrast, words such as “efficiency,” “effectiveness,” “standard,” and “objective” resonate with business narratives, suggesting a terminological convergence that raises questions about the intrinsic purpose and nature of higher education.

Faced with this duality, the question arises: How can quality in education be redefined without distorting its essence? This duality is evident in the work of Manrique Boepler (1996), who warns about the potential reduction of the student to a mere “product” in a business-oriented educational framework.

In a historical retrospective, we observe that quality in higher education has undergone a remarkable metamorphosis. For example, the 20th century in the United States witnessed the establishment of academic self-regulation mechanisms, which gave rise to accreditation and research processes aimed at the optimization of teaching, as pointed out by Manrique Boepler, (1996). This evolution, which occurred in different geographies, has served as a catalyst for current theories and practices.

González & Espinoza (2008) offer a distinctive perspective, defining quality as the value attributed by certain stakeholders to the characteristics of an entity, based on pre-established criteria. They argue that the definition of quality should be adaptable to the specific context of each educational institution, considering the singularities of each discipline and the expectations of stakeholders.

Deming (1989) emphasizes quality from the student's perspective, arguing that quality improvement should focus on optimizing the student's situation and, therefore, teaching. In Colombia, the Consejo Nacional de Acreditación CNA provides a comprehensive definition of quality, focusing on social, cultural and environmental demands, Consejo National Accreditation Council (2019).

The discussion on quality in higher education has evolved significantly, transforming from a concept initially perceived as external, to a full integration within educational institutions. This discussion, however, has raised persistent questions about which evaluation models are most effective and how they differ from each other. The growing relevance of this issue worldwide is reflected in the creation of agencies dedicated to ensuring educational quality.

The process of quality assurance and institutional accreditation varies considerably among countries. Its primary objective, as pointed out by Unesco-Iesalc (2020) is to ensure educational quality and prevent the proliferation of irregular institutions. This approach highlights the importance of fostering a culture of excellence in higher education.

Ospina Duque (2011) highlights how quality models have evolved from a practical application to a conceptual development. Over time, it has been recognized that the exclusive measurement of academic achievement does not fully reflect the essence of educational quality. In this context, concepts such as "value added" have gained relevance. Most quality assurance models in higher education focus on measuring the quality of institutions, based on various methodologies, including input measures, educational rankings, graduate salaries as indicators of quality, efficiency measures, and value-added models Muñoz Gómez (2016). This illustrates the incorporation of concepts from the business and industrial sphere, such as value added,

in higher education. However, the question arises: How is "value added" conceptualized in this context?

Harvey & Green (1993) note that the concept of value added in higher education is based on the idea that educational institutions not only transmit knowledge, but also transform students. The true measure of an institution's quality is not limited to the academic excellence of its graduates, but to the difference the institution has made in their academic and personal development. The challenge lies in measuring that added value. Quantitative measures, while offering insight, do not fully capture student transformation. Qualitative measures, such as interviews and surveys, can provide a deeper understanding of the student experience (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 25).

The debate on quality in higher education is complex, encompassing historical, conceptual and practical aspects. Despite differences in approaches and definitions, there is a consensus on the importance of ensuring quality higher education for the benefit of society and individuals. Value-added models, originally designed to evaluate basic and secondary education institutions, have recently expanded to higher education, particularly in Colombia. This transition has been facilitated by the availability of data from the Saber Pro exam. (ICFES, 2016), which measures the learning acquired at the end of professional training. In addition, ICFES has innovated in methodology by introducing the concept of "Relative Contribution", a mechanism that evaluates the relative educational contribution of one institution compared to another (ICFES, 2016).

Rodríguez Revilla (2020) emphasizes the importance of the value-added approach, which allows isolating and analyzing the knowledge acquired in an institution, eliminating the influence of previous learning. The use of the Saber Pro test, which evaluates all graduates in a uniform manner, aims to

avoid biases related to the previous academic quality of students. However, this model is not without its critics. The Technical Report of the ICFES (2014) identifies specific biases, such as the systematic underestimation of measurements for certain populations, particularly low-income students. Muñoz Gómez (2016) also mentions the possibility of measurement errors and the need for accurate longitudinal data.

The conception of “value added” in education has significantly influenced how educational quality is perceived and measured. However, its eminently quantitative character has led to criticisms based on the depth and multidimensionality of the educational process. Reducing the quality of education to mere numbers can obscure the true essence of learning and personal transformation.

Taking up the concept of “quality” in its original meaning leads us to consider “quality” - the essence or inherent nature of something. In education, this implies understanding it not only as a process of knowledge transmission, but also as a path towards personal and collective transformation. True quality higher education should be intrinsically related to an institution’s capacity to foster this transformation.

Education, in its purest form, is a tool for transformation. It goes beyond the simple accumulation of knowledge; it is a process that provides the individual with his or her own vision of the world, interacts with it and contributes to its improvement. Quality education should allow students to question, reflect and, above all, grow as autonomous and thinking individuals.

Herein lies the importance of reconsidering the idea of “value” in higher education. Beyond quantitative “value added”, it is essential to explore what might be called “academic value”. This concept moves away from metrics

and goes into the essence of what it means to be in an educational institution. It is about the spirit of the university, which allows students and faculty to coexist and live together in an ever-changing world, a world of life.

Strengthening this “value” perspective with the idea that education is not only a service, but also a transformation is fundamental. Philosophical traditions that discuss “dialectical transformation” remind us that education and research are not mere transfers of knowledge. Instead, they empower the individual, fostering critical and autonomous thinking.

Regarding the set of models and perspectives of quality assurance in higher education, the vast majority still retain the traditional normative vision, adjusted to the quality perspective of the business environment in which responsibility is downloaded on individuals, is atomized and does not consider the development of a pedagogical and educational culture that rescues the influence of the context on people, students, professors, in the teaching-learning processes and academic life.

It is possible to observe that the process of searching for the quality of education in Colombia preserves the perspective of quality inherited from the business context, a field of analysis and research in higher education, since from it derives the formation of the professional who will be integrated into society to transform it and contribute to it. Within this framework, a fundamental question arises: How is it possible to overcome the standardization perspective and find a quality higher education that goes beyond metrics?

TOWARDS QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION: A TRAINING PATH WITH A HUMAN PERSPECTIVE: ABOUT THE SYNTHESIS⁴

The university and quality, a dialogue that exists in current academic times, the institution in its purpose of improving to serve society has taken the path towards the search for quality, a situation in which two paths are identified, one in which the quality of education is highlighted and the other in which quality education is emphasized, generating a semantic reflection, what is the difference between the two perspectives?

When we talk about the quality of education, we are talking about a perspective that corresponds to educational administration and economics, we talk about planning, organization, management, control and evaluation, in its language there are figures, data, numbers; giving a greater meaning to quality, it refers to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services, giving a sense of economic value to education, the vision of effectiveness, efficiency and standardization arises; in this horizon of learning results, the focus is on the result, leaving aside the learning processes of students.

When we speak of quality education, quality is placed as an adjective applied to education, even knowing that it can have many qualifiers: pertinent, flexible, inclusive. If the perspective is broadened, other ideas come, fundamental human right, education of excellence; it is a humanist position that speaks more of warmth than quality, warmth of teachers, warmth of students, the love of teachers and students for the university, as a matter of belonging, are aspects that are not seen from the data, they are seen from human beings, from human development and the ability we have to transform ourselves. (González, 2021).

Quality education brings together other areas of education such as pedagogy, curriculum and didactics to show a broader panorama than that of educational administration and economics. For example, how do we co-exist in educational institutions, coexistence, since Aristotle, is a topic addressed from politics and denotes living in society, how does this contribute to quality education? Pedagogy speaks of formation and formation is the construction that each one makes of his own image, it is the historical conscience of the being, according to (Regenbrecht, 1987) How does it contribute to quality education? If the conception of the curriculum is culture, how does it contribute to quality education? If the didactics carries students' self-evaluation processes, how does it contribute to quality education? (González, 2021).

In this perspective of broadening the field of quality education to include knowledge other than economic and administrative knowledge, we find:

On the humanistic approach to education, Muñoz Montaña (2018) states that, "... The indicators of quality education cease to be simple records or measurements for classification and comparison lists, they collect the projects of what one wants to be and of a better state of the human condition of its members, they are no longer indicators, they are ways of being of the educational that resemanticize..."(p. 197).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) considers that quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept that should include the activities and functions of the university, the evaluation process itself, internal self-evaluation and external review by independent experts. Taking into account diversity and avoiding uniformity, due attention should be paid to the particularities of the institutional, na-

4. The synthesis, for González, (2011) is the result of the evolution of the thesis and the antithesis. It is a conciliation of the opposite elements found in the antithesis of the supposed thesis. (E. M. Gonzalez, 2011, p. 132).

tional and regional contexts, making the protagonists an integral part of the institutional evaluation process. (Unesco, 1998). From this perspective, in which the meaning of quality in higher education is complex and diverse, it highlights the need for the participation of the protagonists, who, inspired by the context, demarcate it; it also emphasizes the need to avoid uniformity and take diversity into account.

The Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI) states that the quality of an educational system is established by evaluating the dimensions of efficiency; equity, a fundamental dimension of the quality of education that emphasizes the achievement of good results for all students, and the impact of the results achieved in the medium and long term. In addition, it states that in order to understand the meaning of quality education, it is relevant to take into account the primary objectives established by the (Unesco, 1996), which in turn are presented as the pillars of knowledge: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be, (OEI, 2010).

With reference to the processes for applying quality to institutions, the Inter-University Development Center CINDA, points out that “the concept of quality in higher education does not exist as such, but rather as a comparative term of reference in which something can be better or worse than another, within a set of comparable elements, or in comparison with a previously determined reference standard -real or utopian-” (González Fiegehen, 1996, p. 8), a framework from which he affirms that “any strategy to increase the quality of higher education depends on the capacity to harmoniously and differentially integrate the different components involved in all educational action, including ethical aspects” (p. 9). This also supports the perspective of the definition of quality and the way to carry it out, which is consistent with the approach of

a deliberative and free university, in which the different strata must contribute to their own contextualized creation.

From the above it is clear that for the university understood as a social institution, whose meaning obeys a dynamic of its own nature, in which the common denominator is the participation of identifiable subjects in their singular context, the understanding of quality higher education is not a subject that can be framed in functional matters, given that the vision of coverage, academic production, research, infrastructure, its educational and pedagogical models, its didactics and its curriculum are subject to the reflection of those who live them, it is from them where the meaning of any function is born; according to Murcia (2009), “If the so-called substantive functions of the University do not go beyond the functional boundaries and penetrate the daily life of the university community, they run the risk of not being taken, not even as a point of reference in the real life of the higher institution” (p. 263).

The quality that translates to higher education in its original conception speaks of consolidating itself based on the vision of the student as a finished product; quality higher education considers the training process as perfectible, susceptible to continuous improvement, which takes place in the human being.

Faced with this synthesis of perspectives, the question arises: How is it possible to achieve quality higher education centered on the formation of the human being? This question invites reflection on the nature of quality in higher education, seeking a balance between administrative and economic requirements and an education that values human development and personal transformation.

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION: THE POSSIBILITY OF A HIGHER EDUCATION MODEL BEYOND STANDARDS

In the higher education landscape, the notion of quality unfolds as a dynamic concept, intertwined between the administrative and the humanistic. Emerging initially from a business base, focused on efficiency and quantitative measurement, this concept has traveled, transforming itself, towards a more integral and humanistic terrain. In this journey, a tension emerges, a dialogue between administrative pragmatism and a pedagogy focused on human formation.

The underlying thesis of this analysis proposes that quality in higher education has traditionally been defined through the lens of efficiency and compliance with quantitative standards. This perspective, while providing a necessary structure, tends to simplify education to a set of numerical indicators, distancing it from the complex human reality it aspires to serve.

The antithesis to this vision emerges from a humanistic understanding of education. It is recognized that quality higher education is that which, through a dynamic and reflective process, forms citizens committed to social transformation. This education transcends the mere acquisition of technical knowledge and enters the realm of ethical, emotional, aesthetic and social training, fostering personal growth and the ability to act as agents of change in society.

From the synthesis of these two currents of thought emerges an educational model that seeks the harmonious integration of both aspects. In this model, quality is conceptualized not only as an institution's capacity to guarantee efficiency and compliance with standards, but also as its ability to foster critical thinking, enriching dialogue and equitable access to high quality educational resources. Quality education seen from this perspective

transcends mere quantification and becomes a collaborative and respectful process between teachers and students, where meaningful and transformative learning is the goal.

The central problem addressed in this article is therefore defined as the exploration and definition of an educational model in higher education that, aligned with these principles, is oriented to the formation of a being committed to society. The central question that emerges from this analysis is: How is it possible to overcome the perspective of the quality of higher education as a system of assurance, to evolve towards a system that considers quality higher education as a right?

This question focuses on the need to move from an approach centered on measuring results to a paradigm that conceives higher education as a public good and a fundamental human right, accessible to all. Under this perspective, quality should not be limited to quantitative indicators of institutional success, but should focus on guaranteeing a comprehensive education that not only prepares students for the labor market, but also for a full and meaningful life.

Looking to the future, several research paths are opening up, all converging in the desire to deepen and expand our understanding of quality higher education as a right. It is necessary to explore how educational practices can effectively integrate humanistic elements, fostering the integral development of the student, in a framework where equity, inclusion and commitment to social justice are relevant pillars.

In addition, there is a need to investigate methodologies that connect learning with life experience, seeking an education that transcends the walls of the classroom and is linked to the daily reality of students. In this sense, it is crucial to analyze how higher education can effectively address and contribute to the solution of social problems, fostering critical awareness and an active commitment to social change.

Finally, it is imperative to explore ways for educational institutions to recognize and adapt to the socio-cultural context of their students, thus promoting a more inclusive and relevant education. This requires an institutional approach that not only responds to international quality standards, but also considers the specific needs and realities of each community, ensuring a truly equitable and transformative education. In this sense, higher education is revealed as a vital space for human and social transformation, where quality is not an end in itself, but a means to guarantee the right to an education that fosters integral development and active participation in society.

It proposes to investigate how higher education can be shaped and respond effectively to the specific needs and realities of students, offering a more personalized and contextualized training.

In this context, higher education is revealed not only as a learning scenario, but also as a vital space for human and social transformation. Quality, seen through this lens, transcends mere quantification to embrace and nurture the more qualitative aspects of education, preparing students not only for the labor market, but for a full and meaningful existence.

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