

Cooperative learning reinforces Social Innovation

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In Ecuador, South America, social innovation is recognized as the main effort to achieve human development in democracy. There is a strategic correspondence between cooperative learning and social innovation partnership, which was discovered during the studies for the design of pedagogical instruments at Yachay University.

Cooperative learning is offered as MIL Curriculum Framework for the design of Yachay University. Yachay is a research and experimental public university supported by the Ecuadorian State. The use of cooperative learning is being proposed to enhance social innovation of communities connected at national level.

This process will improve the understanding and importance of informed decision-making. Cooperative learning refers to the instructional approach that puts students together to work towards accomplishing shared goals. Cooperative learning can range from simple paired work to more complex modes such as project learning for social development.

The wide mixture of culture and ethnics which characterize the society of Ecuador demanded the exploration of how to manage academic heterogeneity in classrooms with a wide range of achievement in basic skills. So, contacting community directly from classroom became the appropriate method in the learning and teaching of media education as it requires the sharing of ideas and learning from one another.

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The use of cooperative learning to improve social innovation is the educational strategy to engage with media for self-expression and democratic participation.

This process was proposed to underpin both community social learning and pedagogical approaches at the university level.

Key words: cooperative learning, social innovation, local development, epistemic community, paradigm shift, territorial development.

1. Exploring the underlying problems

One of the major problems facing Latin America as a region is the lack of interest in research, problem having to do both the State and the private sector and civil society. This lack of support shown by the actors mentioned has caused a brain drain, a reaction that is not exclusively of Ecuador¹.

Further, Ecuador is not alone in facing the challenges and difficulties related to funding education, solving unequal conditions of access to education, lack of skills-based training, enhancement and preservation of quality of teaching, research and services, among many other aspects to consider.

Not least also the problem of disconnection of the real environment that characterizes today's college graduates, a direct consequence of the social divide in Latin America. There is some evidence² of how social and economic gap remains one of the deepest problems of the region.

The effect-gap, characterized as a social and economic polarization within the UNASUR³, is heightened to the countries in the Pacific coast of South America (Chile, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia), on which CEPAL⁴ had shown the weight of a productivity gap⁵ relative to the U.S. economy.

Given the evidence⁶ that changes induced in the structure of only techno-economic system has led to the impoverishment of the cultural structure and policy in the

¹ Hernández Alvarado, Joaquim, 2009. "Problemas de la educación superior". Diario HOY, alandazu@hoy.com.ec, Publicado el 08/Septiembre/2009 | 00:09.

² Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), 2007, "Cohesión social: inclusión y sentido de pertenencia en América Latina y el Caribe". Tabulaciones especiales de las encuestas de hogares de los respectivos países y Banco Mundial, Gráfico III.5 América Latina: participación de los hogares en el ingreso total según deciles de ingreso alrededor de 2005 y relación de ingresos medios entre ambos, 1990-2005, World Development Indicators (WDI).

³ Union of the southern nations

⁴ Economic Commission for Latin America

⁵ CEPAL, GTZ, 2010 "Ciencia y tecnología en el Arco del Pacífico Latinoamericano: espacios para innovar y competir". Sexta Reunión Ministerial del Foro del Arco del Pacífico Latinoamericano Cusco (Perú).

⁶ *Tabla con los indicadores dinámicos de la UNASUR*

region, we need a transformation of elements very own social system of regulation, education and aspects define cultural appropriation techno-economic processes quick.

Thus, institutionalization as a cultural interpretation of real life is an aspect that has been raised in Latin America by Cuba and Venezuela. Learning from the experiences of Chile and Argentina it's needed the creation or increase of a social organization that is reflective.

The developments made by Brazil and Mexico indicate that it is necessary to delve into the formation of epistemic communities enabling cognitive evolution mediated collective interpretation. This involves developing a new model of education, particularly the direct involvement of the college in building learning systems to strengthen social innovation⁷.

2. Exploring solutions from higher education

We know that "Higher education and research are now part essential components of cultural, economic and environmentally sustainable development of individuals, communities and nations"⁸.

A sample of the direction taken by this recognition is the system (ECTS), same as the student intended to focus on quantifying the time commitment required to meet the objectives of the curriculum, which are specified in terms of the results of learning and skills you wish to acquire⁹.

Interestingly, Latin America, taking in some cases as an example the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has already had some common convergence initiatives and development of professional profiles in terms of generic skills, such

⁷ Rosero, José Augusto, 2012. "Interpretando el Territorio", en "Diseño del Manual UNASUR", página 126, SENESCYT, Quito.

⁸ UNESCO DECLARACION MUNDIAL SOBRE LA EDUCACION SUPERIOR EN EL SIGLO XXI: VISION Y ACCION http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration_spa.htm#declaracion

⁹ *Sistema de Créditos Académicos UTPL-ECTS Hacia el Espacio Común de Educación Superior ALCUE América*

Latina, el Caribe y la Unión Europea; agosto 2007. Roberto José Beltrán zambrano, María Isabel Loaiza

Aguirre, Paola Salomé Andrade Abarca, Luis Miguel Romero Fernández. Universidad Técnica Particular de

Loja. Loja: Editorial UTPL, 2007. 124 p.

is the case of the Common Area Higher Education¹⁰ and the TUNING project in Latin America¹¹.

Ecuador's Constitution states: "Education respond to the public interest and will serve individual and corporate interests. Will ensure universal access, retention, mobility and exit without discrimination ... "¹².

Special mention is also made that the purpose of higher education is: "The academic and professional scientific and humanistic vision, scientific research and technological innovation, promotion, development and dissemination of knowledge and cultures, the construction of solutions to the problems of the country in connection with the development objectives of the scheme"¹³.

The Regulation of Academic System in Ecuador¹⁴, is the opportunity to "Ensure high quality training, regularly training at higher technical levels, undergraduate and graduate, in various forms, promote scientific, technological, social and the permanent links with community within a framework of quality and relevance"¹⁵.

It links with the community provides the bridge to anchor in the reality of the classroom. This rule emphasizes the need to link the university with the community, with local development.

3. Social Innovation and Local Development

The concept of social innovation refers to new practices and forms of organization which aims to solve a social problem, and also address social aspirations¹⁶. Social innovations have tangible dimensions (jobs created, products, improvement of living conditions, organizational forms, etc.). But also have intangible dimensions: trust, links, information, development of capacities¹⁷.

¹⁰ <http://www.alcuel.net>

¹¹ <http://tuning.unideusto.org>

¹² Art. 28 Constitución Política del Ecuador

¹³ Art. 350 Constitución Política del Ecuador

¹⁴ En la actualidad el CONESUP fue reemplazado por el CES, Consejo de Educación Superior, mismo que todavía no ha emitido normativa para el Régimen Académico y por tanto sigue vigente la anterior.

¹⁵ Art. 1 Reglamento de Régimen Académico CONESUP

¹⁶ CLOUTIER, J. (2003), *Qu'est-ce que l'innovation sociale?*, Cuadernos del CRISES, col.

« Working Papers » No 0314. UQAM, Montreal. (www.crisis.uqam.ca)

¹⁷ DE LA MAZA, G. (2003). "Innovaciones ciudadanas y politicas publicas locales en Chile". *Reforma y Democracia*, 26, junio (www.clad.org.ve).

It also innovates in the organizational structure. These organizations thus empirically discovered a novel type of cooperative, union solidarity that has emerged in other countries and has led to special legislation (cases of Italy and Quebec). Innovation is also apparent in terms of management: are participatory organizations where there are horizontal relationships based on communication and information exchange.

They perform processes of collective learning impacts on knowledge acquisition, changing attitudes and behaviors towards greater autonomy and cooperation. Relational activities that take place between members and between them and the community contribute to the formation of "learning organizations", mainly by way of direction and relations with their environment ¹⁸ while strengthening the social fabric and build trust in the community.

In Europe, since late 1980, research on social innovation from a territorial perspective was initiated by Jean-Louis Laville¹⁹ and Frank Moulaert²⁰ and has been happening since then²¹.

There is extensive literature²² on social innovation in relation to territorial development²³ (or regional), covering: first, innovation in the social economy, and that is the approach of strategies to satisfy human needs, and second innovation in the sense of changing and / or maintain social relationships, especially government relations at the regional and local levels²⁴.

In Latin America, especially in the central north, is manifested with increasing angle singularity expansion of the concept of innovation. Innovation is conceived as a solution to the problems of society²⁵.

Therefore, innovation emerges as a possibility to improve the quality of life of peoples. This focuses attention on the "social capital"²⁶, a concept that refers to

¹⁸ BOUCHARD, M. (2001), "La gestión de las organizaciones sociales para el desarrollo: características y desafíos", *Cayapa. Revista Venezolana de Economía Social*, vol. 1, no 1: 33-53.

¹⁹ *Greg Dees and others and the study published by NESTA In and out of sync: growing social innovations, London 2007*

²⁰ *Transformers published by NESTA, London, 2008*

²¹ [Moulaert, F. and Sekia, F. \(2003\) Territorial Innovation Models: a Critical Survey, Regional Studies, 37\(3\), 289-302](#)

²² Anand, S. & Ravallion, M., 1993. *Human Development in Poor Countries: On the Role of Private Incomes and Public Services. The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 7(1), 133-150.

²³ Ranis, G., Stewart, F. & Ramirez, A., 2000. *Economic Growth and Human Development. World Development*, 28(2), 197-219.

²⁴ R. Conteras, "How the Concept of Development Got Started" *University of Iowa Center for International Finance and Development E-Book*

²⁵ Lopera, Luis (2002). **Las interacciones entre información e innovación desde la perspectiva de una ética bibliotecológica.** Ponencia presentada en el Séptimo Congreso Nacional de Bibliotecología. Bogotá.

26 Johnson, B. & Lundvall, B-A. (2000): "Promoting Innovation Systems as a Response to

certain aspects of social organization, such as levels of trust, the rules actually in force and interaction networks, which can increase efficiency by facilitating the coordination of collective action and, in particular the spontaneous cooperation²⁷.

The cultural values of a society affect the economic performance of the same²⁸, innovation in social relations is carrying out important work in cooperation, mediation and conciliation between the various economic and institutional actors involved to achieve a culture of consultation and dialogue, which also involves innovations in the form of government as well.

An example of dynamic generation of articulating is the action of Innovation Center “Un Techo para Chile”, a program that has connected 22,500 university students to serve the community²⁹.

The central strategy is to transform the social problems affecting families in extreme poverty into opportunities for integral development (economic, academic and social) generating levels of co-creation among people with fewer economic resources, academia, private sector and public. This process may well articulate a link between the university and the community.

4. Pedagogical model focusing on the epistemic community building

To achieve the goal of new model of teaching and learning based on “learning process” and shift the paradigm of learning as “centered teaching” the pedagogical proposal of Yachay University has defined a new profile of the university teachers.

This action expresses three characteristics presented in this paper: the first refers at the profile as “product” of a Community of Thought; the second refers to “participated process”, a working model that allowed the construction of the profile with the teachers, the administrative and the human resources staff of Yachay University; the third presents the tools and technologies used in integrated way (Virtual Collaborative Learning Environment, the human resource Management, video-research, e-portfolio).

the Globalising Learning Economy”, ponencia para el Seminario “Arranjos e Sistemas Produtivos Locais e as Novas Políticas de Desenvolvimento Industrial e Tecnológico”, Rio de Janeiro.

²⁷ Putnam, R.D. (1993): Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.

²⁸ González Romero, Gema, 2006, “Innovación Territorial y Políticas Públicas” Boletín de la AGE No. 42.

²⁹ <http://centrodeinnovacion.org/>

The project-developed by action-research has defined a shared idea of teaching quality, research-based and supported by tools that allow self-assessment of every teachers, to monitor the quality of Yachay University educational Centers, to develop plans of continuous improvement building a community of learning.

4.1 Paradigm shift: the investment is in people not products

The teacher is an adult educator who accompanies the students in their search and discovery process, which is learning. It reverses the transmissive teaching practice and involves the student as the principal aware of their learning. Thus, the teacher is responsible for building a context that favors the conscious acceptance of responsibility by each student toward their life project.

Teaching System Yachay promotes acceptance, freedom, creativity, ability to collaborate and cooperate with others, sense and sensibility duty toward entrepreneurship and innovation as the basis for social change.

The essence of the system is to provide Yachay University, transverse and real-time contact with the community (national or international) by introducing relationship in the classroom open to the generation of knowledge and experience in enabling extended learning environment.

4.2 Cooperative learning: the university and the community

The competencies acquired through media and information literacy can equip citizens with critical thinking skills enabling them to demand high-quality services from media and other information providers. Collectively, they foster an enabling environment in which media and other information providers can provide quality services.

By educating students to become media and information literate, teachers would be responding first to their role as advocates of an informed and rational citizenry, and second, they would be responding to changes in their role as educators, as teaching moves away from being teacher-centered to becoming more learner-centered.

The development of enquiry-based skills and the ability to engage meaningfully with media and information channels using technologies that allow the drive to social creativity while allowing the growth of knowledge between students by solving the problems at community level.

In terms of pedagogy the user-generated content (people at the community who needs technological solutions for their problems) is used for teaching and learning, connecting community and the classroom in real time.

Then, problem-based learning is a curriculum development and instructional system that simultaneously develops students' interdisciplinary knowledge bases and skills, as well as at the same time underpins community's critical thinking and problem-solving strategies.

On the side of the university's curriculum assessment, the connection of community's needs with the classroom, improves the skills to explore how information and media texts are produced, and mainly how social and cultural context of information and media production is used by citizens to underpin social learning, to straightforward social innovation.

From policy and vision side, this process enriches the community by fostering of media- and information-literate society, as well as by allowing the students of the university to use creative solutions to catch up with social demands. This process also ensures leadership and model citizen; championing the promotion and use of MIL for teacher and student development. It is a highly structured, cooperative learning mode to enhance both individual and collective knowledge by engaging students in critical and deep enquiry of real-life problems. The learning objectives, enquiry questions and methods, and the outcomes are all managed by students.
